



a guide to WEB CASTING

Webcasting has matured from the days when it was dominated by technologists, but had little practical corporate application, to the stage where it is now an integral part of corporate communications. It is especially important for investor relations, where it is the only cost effective way of reaching a company's entire shareholder, and stakeholder, base on a regular basis.

Webcasting's use in the investor relations market can only grow as shareholders and regulators demand more frequent and open communication, underpinned by legislation. Webcasting is also being used for: capital raisings, analyst briefings, product launches, crisis management as well as internal company communications.

An increasing use of web casting is for crisis management. Web casting is probably the most effective means of communication in a crisis as it allows a company to communicate their message on a very regular basis to all appropriate parties. Instead of the daily press conference covering a large range of subjects, executives can communicate on specific points as they arise.

The unseen advantage of the web cast is it allows the company to communicate directly with the stakeholders, without having to pass through the filter of the press, where pre-conceived views or prejudices may cloud or colour the reporting.

As a relatively new industry sector, there is a lot of misunderstanding of what is required, what is available and what is realistic. This brief overview offers some guidelines on things to consider when webcasting.

What is a Web Cast?

Web cast is becoming a generic term for a number of different forms of communication. It is sometimes used as a way of repackaging old forms of communication in a new and more enticing manner in the same way mining companies became dotcoms.

A web cast is either an audio only or audio-visual communication using the web. It is now becoming associated with a wider industry group "web conferencing" although these two sectors serve two different market requirements. Web casting is used for the dissemination of information where "web conferencing" is more associated with online team collaboration.

Webcasting solutions offer the capability of performing online polls and/or questions. In certain circumstances, a web cast might be bundled with a web conferencing solution.

There are existing conference call suppliers who offer telephone based conferencing services. These can be operator assisted or automated. These suppliers are starting to offer some web based services but their key environment remains the telephone.

Elements of a Successful Web Cast

To ensure your web cast is a success, it is important to:

- * Understand your communication objectives
- * Choose your communication options
- * Manage your event including pre-publicity and measurement of viewer statistics

Communication Objectives

The first step in presenting a successful web cast is to identify the messages you want to convey and the target audience for the information. A web cast does not replace face-to-face contact or the phone. A web cast is not appropriate in all cases and may detract from the key message if used incorrectly. The key value proposition of a web cast is the ability to reach any group of people in a timely and cost effective manner. If your objective is to reach people in more than a single location or a number of people in a single location then you must consider web casting.

Choosing Communication Options

Web casting offers you a diverse range of video and audio options. For example, video or audio from a meeting can be streamed and accompanied by a synchronised multimedia or slide presentation, video footage or photographs. Your announcements can be made live and also archived for viewing on-demand. Web casting allows viewers to interact with your event, through on line surveying and polling. Immediate feedback can be made available to viewers.

Web Cast Design

A number of factors need to be considered for a web cast:

- * The distribution mechanism. Will the web cast be distributed via: your company website, a third party website, your company intranet or even as part of a multimedia cd-rom (using a product like Business Buddy from BHM)? Does the format and content remain consistent for each distribution mechanism?
- * Indexing. A web cast can be indexed allowing the viewer to jump to a specific topic. What are the logical index points?
- * Retention. Will the company simply archive the web cast or will the contents be repurposed at a later stage for use in a wider context.

Event Management

The amount of time spent on managing a web cast is obviously at the discretion of the organiser. It is possible to simply turn up, plug the camera into the encoding equipment and start the web cast. However, depending on the event and location the following should be considered:

- * Lighting
- * Sound
- * Number of cameras
- * Location of cameras

For a large event, an independent event organiser will probably be used. In the case of shorter and more ad-hoc web casts a single room with sufficient lighting is more appropriate. The size, duration and amount of forewarning of the event will probably dictate the degree of event management required.

Measuring Viewer Statistics

One of the key advantage of web casting is the capability to provide real-time, or after the event, feedback on viewer location and duration of viewing. This feedback allows companies to identify new clusters of interested parties for possible targeting at a later stage as well as the areas of main interest during the web cast for viewers.



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