



Everything DiSC® Pulse: The Three P's of Effective Webinars

Webinars are everywhere and available for everything. With all the webinar training that goes on, and all the tools available, we wondered what makes an effective webinar. We surveyed 1,908 recent training participants about their experience with webinars. Overall, 66 percent of participants agreed that the training was effective. Not bad, but it's almost 12 percentage points lower than when we've asked the same question of participants in classroom-based learning.

Want to boost the effectiveness of your webinar? Remember the "three P's": Pre-work, Post-work, and Participation.

Pre- and Post-Work

We asked respondents in our sample to rate methods used in webinar training and compared this to ratings of effectiveness. The two practices that were most related to perceived effectiveness were pre-work, like readings and assessments, and post-work, like readings and quizzes. Like any form of training, webinars seem to work best when they include reinforcement and extend the learning to a variety of contexts in the learner's life.

Participation

The third component of an effective webinar was good old-fashioned participation. The ability to ask questions was tied to greater perceived effectiveness. Small group discussions (e.g. participants in the same location having time to discuss among themselves) also contributed to people's perception of effectiveness. This mirrors an earlier survey we did on traditional training that found the inclusion of group discussions was one of the best predictors of a successful training (Everything DiSC® Pulse, February 2009).

Equally important for webinar curriculum designers, our survey results call into question some assumptions about process factors that help make webinars more effective.

Topic

We were surprised to find that topic didn't make much of difference in how people evaluated the webinar. While training on new products or procedures was rated the highest (with 75 percent saying it was effective), and compliance training was rated the lowest (with 67 percent saying it was effective), these differences were generally not large. The general appeal or perceived practicality of the topic may have more to do with perceived effectiveness than the fit of topic to the webinar format. Or in other words, new things are more, well, new and interesting.

Class Size

Class size also didn't make a large difference. Oddly, the minor differences that we found indicated that smaller class size (those with 10 participants or fewer), were judged to be slightly less effective. Perhaps the casual feel of a smaller webinar may encourage a less structured approach by the presenters.

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High-Tech

Finally, webinars that included cutting-edge technologies like whiteboards, polling, real-time leader video, or live chat only show a small improvement over more stripped-down sessions. These higher tech elements did seem correlated with a greater enjoyment of the webinar experience.

Conclusion

Perhaps what we were most struck by was the similarities between effective webinars and effective classroom training. The three P's of effective webinars, Pre-work, Post-work, and Participation, are really the three P's of effective training. The tools may have changed, but the principles are the same. As a trainer, solid preparation and solid practices will help you win everyday, regardless of the medium. Or in the words of journalist Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr, words, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose." The more things change, the more they stay the same.

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