

# Recorded Web events click

## On-demand events better at converting registrants to qualified sales leads

BY RICHARD KARPINSKI

**O**NLINE EVENTS HAVE proven their worth as a way to deliver qualified leads to b-to-b marketers. Now, the challenge is how to run them more often and more efficiently.

Merrill Corp., which provides software and services to help large legal firms manage case documents, has built a closed-loop marketing process driven from an event Web site—[www.merrillcorp.com/law](http://www.merrillcorp.com/law)—that hosts a variety of recorded online events, qualifies attendees with survey questions and then drives the leads directly into its sales force automation system for followup by sales reps.

“It’s a completely integrated solution and a tremendously powerful tool,” said Toby Younis, Merrill’s VP-marketing.

Merrill’s approach highlights a number of key webinar trends: recorded rather than live online events; well-focused and content-rich material, and an integrated process for turning viewers into qualified leads.

The end result is that marketers can deliver more recorded events—ultimately driving more sales leads.

“Marketers are becoming more comfortable with the fact that the day of gigantic, live webinars has kind of passed us by,” said Stephanie Downs, president of Conferzone, an online

mand events increase the ability for marketers to convert registrants to actual sales leads, while also helping marketing organizations better utilize their resources.”

WebEx now has some customers, such as enterprise software vendor BMC Software, delivering more than 100 online events per month worldwide by leveraging this on-demand approach, Baker Simon said.

### MERGING CONTENT, DIRECT MARKETING

Typically, online events have delivered better-than-average results for key marketing metrics, such as converting touches to leads. But because live events were difficult and time-consuming to manage, webinars also typically delivered far fewer total customer touches than other marketing approaches. Happily, recorded online events help change that equation.

“When you combine recorded content with sophisticated direct marketing tactics, you can really scale online events up as a marketing tool,” said Brian Burch, chief marketing officer of Raindance, another Web conferencing vendor. “Your total number of leads becomes higher, not just your [conversion] percentages.”

Another way to gain value and deliver more marketing results is to integrate rich content, such as video, into the online event.

Coapt Systems uses online events with video to educate plastic surgeons on new surgical technologies and techniques, said Coapt Systems Senior Marketing Manager Rob Griffin.

“We shoot a videotape of a surgical procedure and deliver the clips over the Web as part of presentation online to show what a product looks like and how it’s used in true surgery,” Griffin said. Coapt delivers its events live and then archives them on its Web site.

Time-shifting is especially important for reaching busy executives. Foresight Corp., a provider of software tools for managing medical information, uses Web conferencing several times a week for one-on-one customer demos as well as to deliver webinars to prospect for leads. □

### Need to know 5 tips for producing successful online events

1. Start planning for your Web event as far in advance as possible. Planning a top-notch Web event requires months of planning and four to six weeks of aggressive outbound marketing.
2. Use every possible method to market your event—Web site advertising; e-mail newsletters and one-time blasts; search engine advertising; press releases, and third-party co-sponsors (industry organizations, trade journals, etc.).
3. Web events need attractive content to draw attendees. Come up with a snappy event topic and title, fine-tune the content and offer some kind of strong, related value-add—a white paper or a free trial, perhaps.
4. Create a strategy document and event plan. Assign a leader. Over-prepare speakers, hold a rehearsal and try to foresee every possible logistical or technical fail-point, creating contingency plans to avoid any problems.
5. Follow up with event attendees via e-mail or phone calls. No-shows should get a “sorry you couldn’t attend” e-mail and a link to the event archive.

conferencing consultancy. “Nowadays, people want to gather information when it works best for them. Marketers are finding that 70% of their traffic [to a webinar] comes after they post the recorded event to their Web site.”

“It’s one of the main trends we’ve seen—the heavy utilization of on-demand [recorded] seminar content,” said Vanessa Baker Simon, group manager-strategic marketing for WebEx, which provides the technology for Merrill’s online events. “From what we’ve seen, on-de-

### MORE REACH WITH RECORDINGS

The move to recorded events is particularly notable, as many marketers associate Web event technology with delivering live, online events that mimic a live trade show or conference event. But especially online, marketers are finding they can reach more viewers by recording events and archiving them on their Web sites, leaving customers in control of when and how they view the content. Recorded events also reduce the burden on marketing staffs.

### ASK THE EXPERT

#### What makes online events and webinars effective?

**Ira Weinstein:** First of all, they are an extremely cost-effective way to reach a large number of people. Whether you have 30 people or 300 on the far end listening and receiving slides, it’s about the same. For an in-person event, the difference between 30 and 300 attendees is tremendous. With online events, you do the work once and it scales beautifully. No. 2, they are terribly convenient for participants. They don’t have to leave the work space or office, and they can actually attend a one-hour briefing in one hour. No. 3, the



**IRA WEINSTEIN** is senior analyst and consultant at Wainhouse Research

requirements for participation are now ubiquitous. Any computer with reasonably current software will enable you to attend these events.

#### What advice would you give to a marketer considering running its first online event?

**Weinstein:** Right up front, I’d say this is not perfect for everybody. The reason is, you

have to have something fairly compelling to say. Media or format or venue doesn’t make up for not having the right topic. The topic has to be very compelling. Know your audience. Make sure at the end of a session, the participants walk away with something they are going to look at or use, and feel their time was well spent. We recommend a trivial part of the presentation be sales; everything else has to be education. In terms of preparation, people have a tendency to overdo the PowerPoints, just as they do for live events.

#### What about event followup?

**Weinstein:** You need to contin-

ue with the idea that people who attend a webinar are not necessarily saying, “Please follow up and sell me your services.” Ask them if they have any feedback. Did they get all their questions answered? At the end, put in a polite sales pitch. You need to tread politely. They’ve agreed to listen and be educated, not necessarily to be sold to.

#### What factors should a company consider when choosing a technology platform?

**Weinstein:** The first thing to consider is what technology and

## RESOURCES

### On-demand events

More marketers are recording their online events for playback at a later time:

Year	Percent of webinars with on-demand replay
2002	75%
2003	80%
2004	90%
2005	95%

Source: Vendor Communicast/Vcall, customer statistics

### How to blogify events

What to include in a “conference blog,” a weblog that runs alongside a real-world event:

- Real-time coverage of the sessions, done in a coherent fashion.
  - Links to slide presentations, articles and relevant data.
  - Post-session commentary and reflection, ideally by session participants, as well as by blogosphere observers reading the posts and sharing their responses.
  - A variety of voices to ensure multiple points of view.
  - Audio feeds and webcast archives, if possible.
  - A conference RSS feed and an aggregated feed of blogging attendees and related posters.
  - Blogroll with XML buttons and the URL of an exportable OPML file.
- Source: Media Center Blog (partial list), [http://mediacenter.blogs.com/morph/2004/02/successful\\_conf.html](http://mediacenter.blogs.com/morph/2004/02/successful_conf.html)

### Must-read blog

Conferzone Blog, <http://myst-technology.com/mysmartchannels/public/blog/52313>

### They said it

“More and more people are doing online trade shows or trying to do them, and we’re hearing about some successes.”  
—Adam Schaffer, publisher, *Reed Business Information’s Tradeshow Week*, in *BtoB’s Media Business*, March 2005