

Best Practices from the CCTA: Centers Collaborative for Technical Assistance

The National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (NSF ATE) program focuses on the education of technicians for the high-tech fields that drive the nation's economy. The faculty members of community colleges, which are the main source of technician education in the United States, have leadership roles in the initiatives that involve partnerships with industry and other educators. Since 1994, NSF ATE initiatives have developed a wide-range of innovations to better serve students and inform educators.

Five NSF ATE centers formed the Centers Collaborative for Technical Assistance (CCTA) in response to a Department of Labor request to NSF for technical assistance services to recipients of Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grants. The five centers are National Center for Convergence Technology (CTC), South Carolina ATE National Resource Center (SCATE), Florida Advanced Technological Education Center (FLATE), Bio-Link National Center (Bio-Link) and Maricopa Advanced Technological Education Center (MATEC). The identification and sharing of NSF ATE best practices are among the services CCTA offers.

ORCHESTRATING EFFECTIVE WEBINARS

Webinars provide excellent formats for presenting information to geographically dispersed people. The technology allows participants to learn and ask questions without travel costs. Recording and archiving webinars increases the potential to reach more viewers who can assess the audio and photos of these "talk shows" at their convenience. The following tips and techniques for creating well-crafted, engaging webinars have been used by ATE centers to achieve their educational and outreach goals.

INITIAL STAGES OF PRODUCTION

- Define the audience.
- Identify 3 to 5 content objectives.
- Recruit presenters who agree to rehearse.
- Plan email marketing of the webinar.

CONNECT WITH AUDIENCE IN ADVANCE

- Identify individuals whom you would like to attend your online event.
- Email this target audience two weeks in advance of the webinar with a description of what they will learn or accomplish by attending the webinar.
- Require participants to register in advance.
- Give participants the option to join the webinar by logging in online or calling on the phone.
- Send reminder emails one day and again one hour before the webinar.
- Maintain participant contact information for future webinars and other activities.



ESSENTIALS DURING WEBINAR TRANSMISSION

- Start on time.
- Mute all audio except the presenters' microphones during their turns.
- Do not let someone with connection problems disrupt.
- Staff a help line to deal with technical issues.
- Do not stress if audio or other technical problems occur.

WAYS TO ENGAGE AUDIENCE

- Prepared question breaks
- Hand-raise virtual interactions
- Yes/No and Multiple Choice
- Real-Time Questions
- Live text chat



TECHNICAL OPTIONS FOR WEBINAR DELIVERY

- Consider audience size and array of services necessary to create engaging, well-crafted webinars.
- Discuss with college personnel the potential for transmission from on-campus facilities within information technology or communications departments.
- Search online for webinar service providers.

FOR Q&As

- Assign the question-moderator role to someone not speaking at that point.
- Encourage use of text chat for participants to ask questions during the webinar.
- Have questions ready in case the audience does not ask any.
- Make feedback survey short.

For more information about CCTA visit:
www.atecenters.org/ccta

Upcoming webinars and registration can be found at:
www.atecenters.org/upcoming-webinars

Slides and recordings of past webinars are available at:
www.atecenters.org/recorded-webinars

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PRODUCING WEBINARS WITH MULTIPLE PRESENTERS

- Plan the order of presenters and allot time minute-by-minute.
- Pace slides at 1 to 1.2 per minute as presenters speak.
- Require presenters to script what they will say.
- Check presenters' slides to ensure they feature only key words and quality images.
- Script the moderator's introduction, transitions to presenters, closing summary.
- Moderator needs to keep tone light.
- Rehearse entire webinar with all presenters.
- Check equipment and make sure the producer can see what participants see.
- Record webinars and publicize how to access them.



CCTA

CENTERS COLLABORATIVE FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For more information, contact:

Christina Titus, Program Director at ctitus@collin.edu or 972.377.1786
Ann Beheler, PI at abeheler@collin.edu or 972.377.1649

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