



**Interactive Insight Report Series**

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## **Six Web Conferencing Myths Debunked by End Users**

Industry Concerns Compared to Real User Experience

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# Six Web Conferencing Myths Debunked by End Users

## Introduction:

Web conferencing is well on the way to becoming a multi-billion dollar industry. Its dynamic growth however, is still comprised primarily of pioneers and early-adopters.

Nearly all companies, government agencies, financial institutions, and private organizations would be more profitable and run more effectively by integrating Web conferencing as their primary meeting method. Most organizations spend major portions of their members' time in meetings—internal and external; large and small. If only half of those meetings were handled as online conferences, Web Conferencing would have earned its position as “THE NEXT BIG THING,” joining the ranks of PC's, cell phones and the Internet itself.

What stands in the way of Web conferencing achieving mainstream status?

As with most other major technology shifts in history, Web conferencing represents replacement of an age-old standard. Many reluctant organizations have waited on the sidelines, articulating concerns that have little basis in fact.

Like other technologies, Web conferencing must transcend marketplace concerns that become barriers to rapid acceptance. The barriers in this case are beliefs that persist among many potential users. Interviews with non-users consistently register the same potential objections, which can be boiled down to six major “myths.”

This paper is based on feedback from interviews with Web conferencing users, who responded to each of the “Six Web Conferencing Myths”, relative to their own experiences with PresenterNet or competitive systems.

## **MYTH NUMBER ONE: “WEB CONFERENCING COSTS REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN SOFTWARE AND SYSTEMS.”**

### **User Experience:**

Web Conferencing is a low-cost technology with a large immediate payback. Even high-priced systems like Webex and Microsoft Live



Meeting, can be rapidly cost-justified by savings in travel, and scheduling efficiencies. With PresenterNet, the savings are more dramatic.

Most PresenterNet users pay only \$29.95 a month. There are no extras or hidden costs. For that single fee they can run unlimited meetings, store unlimited presentations, and hold presentations of any duration. Even companies presenting Webinars to hundreds of audience members pay only a small premium.

Fitting Web conferencing into a budget is easy, and the financial returns can be dramatic. For example, a sales representative who normally makes 25 out-of-town meetings annually might use Web Conferencing for 12 of them, eliminating travel expenses each time. If meetings expenses average \$300 for each trip, annual savings would be \$3,600 a year, compared to PresenterNet fees of approximately \$359.

Perhaps more importantly however, the same salesperson would commonly save 12 workdays that would have been lost in unproductive travel, and could then be used for more productive activities.

In addition, companies may use their Web Conferencing system for Webinars that produce new sales leads leading to a better prospect mix. If they were to use PresenterNet, there would be no additional costs for this capability.

In summary most users see Web conferencing—especially at PresenterNet's low cost—to be easily cost justified. As one user said, "It's a no-brainer."

## **MYTH NUMBER TWO: "WEB CONFERENCING USERS ARE SUBJECT TO EMBARRASSING TECHNICAL ERRORS"**

### **User Experience:**

Running an online conference is usually much easier than presenting the same material face-to-face. For those who use PresenterNet the experience is especially smooth and easy.

For example, audiences logging into a PresenterNet event can use the browser of their choice, and any Macintosh, Windows or Linux platform. They are never required to download or install special software plug-ins, and can directly enter a conference with a single click on an emailed link. This ease of use translates to presenter confidence that all of their audience members will be able to join them seamlessly.



The actual presentation is also a easy. Presenters simply choose a thumbnail picture of a slide and click to send it to all audience screens. Presenters can even advance through an entire presentation by clicking a single arrow, to move to the next slide.

In summary, most existing users see Web conferencing on PresenterNet to be the easiest possible experience. Users of all brands feel that technical errors are only a mythical problem. “Even the worst mistakes, are easily handled, usually without any audience notice,” said one user.

### **MYTH NUMBER THREE: “CUSTOMERS WON'T DO BUSINESS IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT”**

#### **User Experience:**

Contrary to concerns about customer acceptance, most users report that their clients and customers have no hesitation about meeting online, and in many cases prefer a Web Conference to an in-person session.

The most common preference heard from customers and clients is the need to use time effectively. The greatest meeting challenge facing many large companies is calendar conflict—the need to find a time and day when all necessary participants can attend. Web conferencing makes this task much easier, since attendees can be at any location with a PC and a phone. This easy calendaring also eliminates meeting delays, due to people being out of town, working from home, etc.

In many cases, customer audiences viewing presentation materials are more comfortable with slides displayed on their PC screens than with viewing difficulties from conference room screens that might be several feet away from them.

Nearly all users interviewed felt that their customers gained from their use of Web conferencing, especially when meetings were primarily comprised of presentations. In actual practice, they reported little or no resistance of online meetings.



## **MYTH NUMBER FOUR: “WEB CONFERENCING REQUIRES SPECIAL MEDIA AND RESOURCES”**

### **User Experience:**

New Web Conferencing users seldom use media different from materials they would use in their usual face-to-face presentations. Most of the leading systems support PowerPoint. Besides PowerPoint, PresenterNet users can select media from MS Word, Excel, or PDF documents. In fact any printable document can be converted to a PresenterNet slide for online viewing.

Though presenters can use the same media online and off-line, they can also modify presentations within PresenterNet. Modifications to slides include addition of interactive graphics that enable audience members to participate in presentations. Audience participants use these slides to respond with onscreen feedback that the presenter can view or capture for later use.

In other media modifications, presenters can bring audience members to various Web pages, or select online videos to become part of any presentation.

Though the final result of these enhancements will deliver exceptional presentations, they require no special skill or training. So there are no additional resources required to deliver top-notch media results.

## **MYTH NUMBER FIVE: “WEB CONFERENCING ELIMINATES THE PERSONAL TOUCH”**

### **User Experience:**

Few presenters use Web Conferencing to replace all face-to-face meetings with their contacts. Many sales professionals report that they prefer online meetings in early engagements, enabling them to qualify sales prospects before committing to person-to-person meetings. In actual practice, they integrate Web conferencing for a major portion of their meetings without eliminating all personal contact. Others use Web conferencing for large meetings, especially those with scheduling challenges.

Most ongoing business relationships require a series of different meeting types, many of which are equally effective online or in-person. Some



meetings actually work better online, especially when presenters use interactive features to keep audience members engaged.

Though many PowerPoint presentations—online or in-person—seem like one-way lectures, interactive capabilities in PresenterNet offer several ways to keep participants personally engaged.

For example, a presenter may ask the audience to enter some specific information onscreen as feedback to fine-tune the presentation flow to the audience's specific interests. They may ask questions like, "What industry do you represent," or "What would do you want to get out of this presentation?" The presenter can then see all responses, and use them to personally address selected people.

Interactive features can also capture requests from participants for later contact, or for introducing questions. The overall experience for audience members is that they are participants, and that the presenter is paying attention to them.

While users continue to value the "personal touch", Web conferencing never undermines it. In most cases, use of online technology creates more opportunities to engage, and supports good business relationships.

## **MYTH NUMBER SIX: "WEB CONFERENCING REQUIRES SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL RESOURCES"**

### **User Experience:**

Securing attendees to promotional events like Webinars requires a good deal of work, though it is no different than attracting people to an in-person event. Fortunately, there are excellent tools available for developing Webinar audiences.

A Webinar differs from an in-person event, because many people will attend online who would not travel to a presentation. Webinar presenters can use standard techniques like email, and search engine advertising to attract initial attention and gain registrants.

PresenterNet also offers a unique feature that develops interest beyond initial advertising or email contact. A PresenterNet Showroom provides a method of posting an interactive PowerPoint present that can be accessed by individual Web visitors. Many users create a unique presentation for Webinar registration, typically providing enough information to whet the appetite of prospective attendees.



When an ad brings viewers to a promotional presentation in a Showroom, interested people can register using PresenterNet's interactive features. The user can then send each registrant an email invitation with a single-click link that will connect directly to a Webinar session.

Numerous PresenterNet users develop Webinar attendees with no special resources, by launching email promotions that leverage Showroom capabilities, attract attendance, and ultimately produce new sales or client contacts.

**Conclusions:**

Like most major technology changes, Web conferencing will explode when the "mental barriers" of the marketplace disappear. The six myths discussed in the foregoing pages are understandable, yet largely irrelevant to actual operating environments. As industry players address them with improved information and new features, they are likely to disappear, as Web conferencing becomes the most popular method of conducting meetings worldwide.