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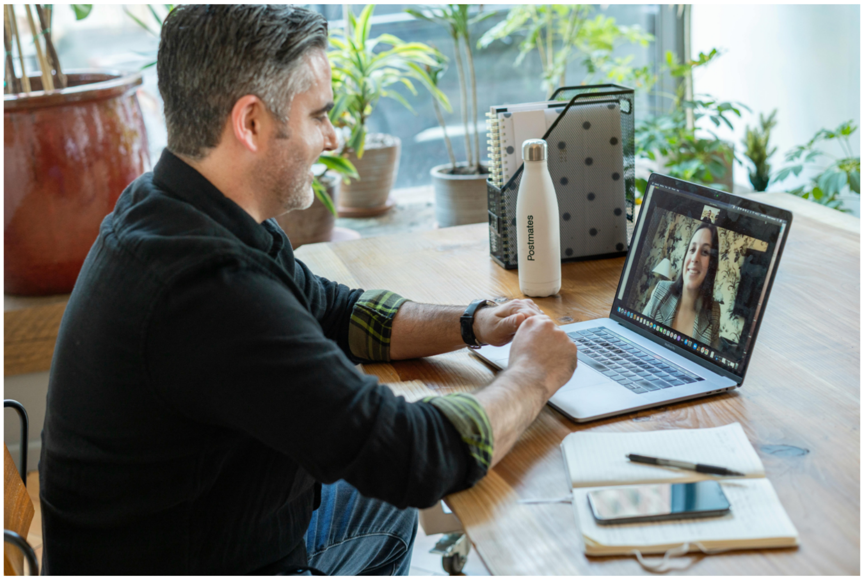
The Webinar Code

10 Lessons Learned from 1,000+ Webinars

CRAFTING CAN'T-MISS CHANNEL PARTNER RECRUITMENT WEBINARS: *LESSONS FROM THE PROS*



Prepared By:

Erick Simpson

CRAFTING CAN'T-MISS CHANNEL PARTNER RECRUITMENT WEBINARS

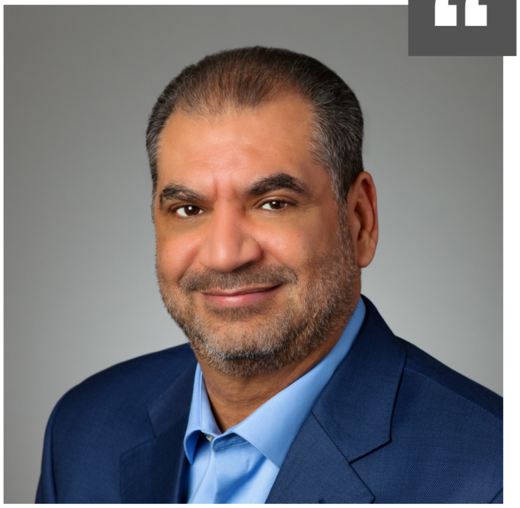
LESSONS FROM THE PROS

As an MSP channel vendor, how do you keep the top of your partner recruitment funnel filled with qualified leads? If you've been in the industry a while, you know that the absolute, hands-down best way is through trade shows, peer groups, and other events where you can meet and connect with your prospects in person. But between sponsorship fees, travel, and other expenses, live events can also be your costliest recruitment activities. So what can you do to keep those partner prospect leads flowing consistently between the few live events you can afford?

Webinars, when done effectively, can be a great answer. How effective are *your* webinars, though? Are you hitting your target registration and attendee goals with ideal partner prospects? How much do your attendees engage and participate during your webinars? And most importantly, what percentage of attendees actually respond to your calls to action when your webinars conclude?

Quality webinars will grow your channel cost-effectively. Webinars that fall short can be expensive disasters that damage your brand, erode trust among your MSP prospects, and hand your competitors easy opportunities to undermine you. With so much on the line, you must ensure that every one of your webinars crushes it. But how?

In this guide, I'll share some of the proven strategies I've honed over 20 years of delivering successful partner recruitment webinars for channel vendors. Follow this framework, and your webinars will engage your prospects emotionally, build their urgency to act, and deliver the highest ROI of any other demand-gen activity you conduct.



"With so much on the line, you must ensure that every one of your webinars crushes it."

Erick Simpson
CEO & Chief Strategist
Channel Mastered | MSP Mastered®

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Chapter 1: Target Audience

The first key to delivering successful recruitment webinars is identifying and targeting your ideal partner prospects. These include:

- Partners currently selling competitive solutions or adjacent technologies that your offering would complement. Your solution enables them to broaden their portfolio and expand deal sizes.
- Partners with a strong presence, client base, and credibility in your target vertical markets. They have deep domain expertise and relationships in segments you want to penetrate.
- Partners that fill white space in your geographic coverage map. Recruiting them allows you to scale in new regions and countries more quickly.
- Partners that expand your reach into new customer segments like enterprise accounts, public sector, or SMB. Adding them diversifies your go-to-market.
- Partners that have a robust digital marketing engine and active demand generation programs. They drive a high volume of leads and pipeline that your solution can now capture.

With these targets in mind, curate your prospect list carefully to ensure every attendee who registers is a partner you want.

Chapter 2: Webinar Title and Abstract

1. **Craft a Benefit-Focused Title**
   Your title should clearly communicate the main benefit attendees will get from your webinar. For example, "How to Increase Technician Utilization by 25% with Our New Platform Update" or "Top 5 Ways to Reduce Service Delivery Costs by 30%." Avoid vague, generic titles like "Incident Management Strategies." You want prospects to immediately understand why they should attend and what takeaways they should expect in exchange for their time and participation.

2. **Create Intrigue with the Abstract**
   While the title focuses on the main benefit, the abstract tells just enough about what will be shared to create intrigue. For example, "Join us to learn about our new AI-powered service ticket bot that allows techs to close 2X more tickets. We'll demo the tool and share proven service strategies to help you implement it." The abstract builds anticipation for the webinar and convinces prospects to register.

   I always reference thought leadership content in my abstracts too, as well as a giveaway that provides strategic value, such as a checklist, white paper, or calculator (but not a gift card). Make certain that registrants must attend to get your valuable giveaway assets.

3. **Align the Title and Abstract**
   Make sure your title and abstract work together to communicate consistent messaging. The title attracts attention, while the abstract provides helpful specifics that support the title's promise.

4. **Speak Directly to the Audience**
   Use "you" and "your" to speak directly to your target audience. For example, "See how our solution helps your team close tickets 37% faster." Make it about their pain points and desired outcomes. This helps your message connect with them at an emotional level and increases registration.

5. **Limit Text to Short Sentences or Fragments**
   Keep your title to less than 10 words and your abstract to 1-3 short sentences or sentence fragments, followed by a few bullet points highlighting attendee takeaways, and conclude with your free offer. You want your messages to be ultra-scannable.

Chapter 3: Registration Page

Your registration page is arguably the most important part of the webinar recruitment process for converting prospects into attendees.

The page should clearly communicate the value proposition of attending the webinar. Use a compelling title and description that speak directly to your target audience and build FOMO.

Simplify the registration process as much as possible—requiring just a name and email address reduces abandonment. Only ask for additional information like a company name if needed. You can enrich your registrant data later during the post-webinar survey or conversion processes. Minimize steps and make the call-to-action button clear.

Include elements like customer testimonials and speaker bios to build credibility. Use relevant imagery and even a short video to make an emotional connection. Optimizing page speed is also important—a slow-loading page will cause drop-offs.

Track registrations and conversion rates over time. Experiment with different headlines, descriptions, and layouts. Pay attention to drop-off points and make adjustments. A well-designed registration page will maximize sign-ups and ensure your webinar reaches the right audience.

Chapter 4: Hosts and Guests

Like me, I'm sure you've attended many memorable webinars where the host and guests made all the difference, for good...and bad. The host sets the tone for the entire attendee experience and acts as the master of ceremonies, guiding the agenda, keeping things moving and on schedule, and interacting with guests, panelists, and, most importantly, the attendees. The right host can uplift the content and engage the audience, while the wrong one can produce yawns.

Ideally, the host should be someone from your organization who prospects already recognize and associate with your brand—likely an executive, partner leader, or sales leader. They need to project energy and enthusiasm, have a deep understanding of your partner recruitment strategy, and be able to transition between sections effectively.

Alternatively, your host can be someone like me—a highly engaging outside expert or thought leader whose reputation adds value to your webinars by lending authority to your message and fostering trust in your brand. The right host can also positively influence registration, especially if they have a large following and can help promote your webinar to it. I've helped vendors break prior registration records many times by marketing to MSP Mastered's partner list.

Choosing the right guest speakers and panelists is also crucial. Some of your subject matter experts may have tremendous technical acumen but lack the presentation skills to captivate an audience. In these situations, you'll either need to "coach them up" or stick to speakers who are already experienced presenters at partner-focused conferences and events.

Choosing partners with quantifiable real-world success stories to tell is another wise way to reinforce your messaging. I like to include a short panel segment featuring a couple of partners in my webinars for this reason. It's no secret that MSPs trust other IT providers above anyone else. Also, keep in mind that the diversity of your presenters in terms of gender, culture, and organizational roles brings a richness of perspectives that fosters deeper audience connections.

Chapter 5: Messaging

Crafting messages that resonate with your audience is critical for effective webinar registration and attendance. Focus on your prospects' key pain points and objectives to create content that speaks directly to their needs. Some best practices for messaging include:

- Highlight the concrete ways your solution uniquely solves their business challenges. Provide specific examples and case studies.
- Focus on the business benefits your channel partners will gain rather than just features. How will your product help increase their revenue and profitability?
- Use emotional hooks related to their goals like saving time and money, reducing risk, acquiring more customers, beating competitors etc.
- Emphasize the exclusivity of your offer and why it's urgent to engage now before they fall behind their competitors. FOMO is a very powerful incentive.
- Get input from your sales team on what messaging works to close deals and use similar language and ideas in your webinar. Understand the top objections they hear and address them in advance.
- Keep messages simple, memorable, and light on jargon. A bit of humor is surprisingly effective, but negative messages can be even more powerful. I regularly use messages such as "You're doing XYZ all wrong...and here's how to fix it."
- Make sure your messaging aligns with your landing pages and follow-up content offers for a consistent customer journey.
- Test different messages and track conversions to continuously optimize and improve.

The right messaging will inspire your prospects to heed your call to action, but it requires you to know your audience deeply and appeal to its core needs and motivations.

Chapter 6: Slide Deck

Less is more in webinar slide decks. The deck should complement your speaking points, not compete with them. The biggest mistakes I see are decks overloaded with too much text, complex charts, distracting animations, and slow or unnecessary transitions.

Put your audience first when building your deck, and build the content around them, not you. If the first section of your deck is all about your company, its locations, awards, and partner program, you'll lose your attendees quickly along with your recruitment opportunities.

Use the "rule of three" for your presentations by including three primary sections offering a clear beginning, middle, and end. I approach slide decks like three-act plays where the acts represent the sections in my presentation. The first section connects emotionally with the audience and builds tension, the second section provides alternatives to consider with supporting data, and the third section delivers a conclusion or solution to solve their pain.

Using that logic, the first section of my deck is where I call attention to the audience's pain or challenge by introducing the implications of not taking action to solve it. For example, my deck for a cybersecurity vendor may describe the serious consequences for an MSP and its customers of failing to deliver a complete cybersecurity portfolio. The second section may include various options to address this real challenge and build urgency, and the final section will feature the vendor's offering as the best solution to address the viewer's pains, followed by a strong call to action.

Your slides should:

- Have a clean, simple, and consistent design theme.
- Use bullet points instead of paragraphs.
- Include relevant images to reinforce key points.
- Limit text and animations.
- Guide the presentation without giving everything away.
- Have clear headlines/titles summarizing each slide.
- Use charts/graphs sparingly to illustrate data.
- Balance white space for visual relief.
- Have bumper slides for introducing hosts, guests, and panelists.
- Have a bumper slide introducing your short demo (which should truly be short).
- Close with a CTA slide, not a Q&A slide. Conduct Q&A while your CTA slide is being shared.

The slide deck keeps the audience focused on your verbal delivery. Understated professional design, clean typography, and ample white space help maintain attention on you and keep attendees from being easily distracted by their other screens.

Chapter 7: Polls

Polls are a great way to add interactivity to your webinar. You can use them several ways:

- At the beginning, to gauge attendees' current awareness, challenges, and goals related to your solution. This helps you adjust the rest of your presentation to align with your audience's feedback.
- Throughout, to break up lengthy presentations and re-engage the audience. Well-placed polls act as thought breaks and keep attendees alert.
- Near the end, to assess whether you accomplished your presentation objectives. If polling reveals gaps, you can circle back before closing.
- After key points, to check understanding. Polls let you clarify anything confusing before moving on.
- To uncover customer stories and use cases you can leverage in future marketing.
- To test potential messaging, titles, or designs when planning future partner recruitment campaigns.
- To segment the audience for more targeted Q&A. Poll first, then target follow-up questions toward each segment's needs.
- To identify and prioritize sales leads for follow-up by asking for contact information from attendees interested in priority offerings or content.

Keep polls concise, ideally with 3-5 options to choose from. Allow sufficient time for participants to respond, but not so long that it bogs down your presentation flow.

Most importantly, share the live results after each poll with your attendees. This brings them into the moment and makes them feel heard. The one exception, which is always my final poll and which I don't share, asks attendees how they want to engage, with four options that do not include "don't contact me." This poll helps prioritize follow-up by the sponsoring vendor's sales team and may receive more completions than a survey delivered after the conclusion of the webinar.

Chapter 8: Leveraging Chat for Engagement

The chat function during a webinar allows attendees to ask questions and engage with the presenters in real time, and is one of my favorite activities to conduct during webinars. In fact, I use more chat and hand-raising questions than polls in my webinars as a rule, as they are livelier and more spontaneous and really keep the audience interested and attentive.

I consistently engage in, encourage, and moderate the chat to keep conversations productive and relevant. This is a skill that isn't recommended for an inexperienced host, however. It's hard enough spinning all the plates a truly engaging webinar requires without adding nonstop chat management and making it all seem effortless to the audience.

When used effectively, chat can:

- Warm up the audience before the webinar kicks off. I find it's a great icebreaker to get early attendees to share where they're connecting from, or get them to respond to a fun, nerdy question like "In chat, hit me with an "E" if your favorite starship is the USS Enterprise or an "M" if it's the Millennium Falcon."
- Allow attendees to ask clarifying questions during the webinar about the presented content. The host can monitor the chat and address relevant questions during the Q&A portions.
- Let the presenters gauge the audience's understanding of the topics covered. They can adjust the pace or depth accordingly.
- Build a sense of community and dialogue among attendees by allowing them to connect with each other.
- Generate excitement and buzz during key reveals or announcements. Attendees can react and discuss major points.
- Provide a venue for attendees to network. Presenters can encourage participants to connect via chat for post-webinar discussions.
- Help quantify engagement by tracking the number and quality of chat interactions.
- Offer an alternative way to participate for those unwilling or unable to speak up during live Q&A.

In my experience, chat interaction trumps Q&A by many multiples.

Chapter 9: Surveys

Surveys are a critical component of a successful partner recruitment webinar that capture key information while perceptions are fresh. Surveys help you:

- Get feedback on the content to improve future webinars.
- Understand which messages and value propositions resonated most with the audience.
- Identify potential objections to address through follow-up content.
- Capture attendee details to support lead nurturing.
- Allow attendees to ask unanswered questions and request more information.
- Gauge interest levels in your solution and quantify and prioritize the number of sales-ready prospects for follow-up.

Effective webinar surveys are focused and carefully crafted to extract insights related to attendees' roles, needs, interests, and timelines without being too intrusive. Keep the surveys brief, with 5-10 questions at most. Use multiple choice and rating scale questions whenever possible, as open-text questions are difficult to analyze at scale.

A lesson I learned early in using surveys is to make certain to end the webinar on time or better yet a few minutes early since the survey launches only after the webinar ends. If you end late, chances are that your attendees have another call or meeting to get to, lessening the chances that they will complete your survey.

Follow-up promptly on survey leads while interest is high. Set goals for sales follow-up based on lead quality and prioritize contacting attendees who expressed interest in a one-on-one demo or discovery call. Continue nurturing other leads through your ongoing content programs.

Analyze survey results over time to optimize your webinar program and identify the most effective topics, presenters, messaging, and offers. Refine your audience targeting based on role and interests. Surveys provide the metrics to continually improve marketing performance, prove your program's ROI, and maximize pipeline contribution.

Chapter 10: Follow Up

Following up after a webinar is critical for driving conversions and ROI. It is so important, in fact, that I won't conduct a webinar for a client until I am satisfied that they have an effective follow-up strategy and the capacity to conduct it quickly after the webinar. At the end of the day, the most important metric you will measure from your webinars is their conversion rate. Here are some best practices:

- Send a thank you email to all registrants within 24 hours, even if they didn't attend, summarizing the key takeaways.
- Segment your audience based on who attended live versus only registered. Tailor follow-up messaging and calls accordingly.
- Schedule 1:1 calls with the most promising attendees within three days to discuss needs and next steps. Sooner is even better. Strike while interest is peaked.
- Send the recording, slides, and other collateral as downloadable assets in your follow-up emails. Many will consume after the live event.
- Promote the on-demand recording via social media and your website to generate more views. Consider repurposing content into blog posts, whitepapers, and video clips for social media marketing.
- Measure and track registrations, attendance, and sales opportunities generated to determine ROI. Compare to your goals.
- Send a survey to garner feedback and improve future webinars. Ask what additional information attendees need to progress in the partnering journey.
- Follow up persistently but not overly aggressively. Use a nurturing sequence with 4-6 meaningful touchpoints over 2-3 months.
- Utilize marketing automation to schedule and track follow-up activities and communicate seamlessly between sales and marketing.
- Close the loop. Notify registrants of success stories and business won by attendees of the webinar. Social proof is very powerful.

With strategic and persistent follow-up, you can maximize conversions and continuously improve the impact of your webinars. The work doesn't end when the live event does.

Conclusion

Running effective webinars that consistently fill the top of your sales funnel can be a challenge. The MSP Mastered® team and I pioneered the Managed Services business model. Whether you're new to Managed Services, or are a growing or mature MSP, our experience in consulting directly with hundreds of ITSPs and training thousands more will help you improve your practice, supercharge your MSP business performance and grow more MRR consistently.

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Erick Simpson

MSP Expert | Influencer | Thought Leader

A pioneer and leader in the managed services industry, Erick Simpson is internationally recognized as the #1 source MSPs seek for advice on running their businesses in North America. He built and sold one of the first MSPs in the industry and grew and coached thousands of IT Solution Providers through their MSP transformation with his MSP Mastered® Methodology for managed services business performance improvement.

Erick is an MSP business & channel growth expert, influencer, thought leader, speaker, and author of four best-selling books and over 50 white papers. His strategies and programs help MSPs overcome business challenges to realize consistent, profitable, managed services recurring revenue growth. His M&A expertise has helped dozens of MSPs sell their businesses at the highest valuation or expand through acquisition. He delivers strategic market analysis services, builds and improves channel programs for IT vendors and distributors, and helps recruit and enable their channel partners through his thought leadership podcasts, webinars, workshops, and event keynotes and breakouts.

Erick's industry recognition includes Channel Futures' 7 Thought Leaders Defining the MSP Market, Jay McBain's 100 Most Visible Channel Leaders, 2 Time ChannelPro 20/20 Visionaries, 2 Time MSP Mentor 250 and SMB Nation's SMB 150 award recipient.