

Best Practice Guide to launch your own research webinar series

1) Focus on the content

- **Know your public:** Who do you want to reach with what kind of content? Typically your own research community but also further if you want to aim for interdisciplinary interactions?
- **Think about your speakers:** Who would you invite to a session of a conference? Who reads your articles? Who would bring in viewers (well known scientists / scientists active on social media)? How much room do you want to make for diversity (origin, gender but also experience – early career scientists)?
- **Define the scope of your webinars:** How would you describe it in a session abstract for a conference? Don't go too broad (!) to keep it interesting enough for people to listen although they are busy, oversaturated with seminars and conferences. Find your niche.

2) Get support

- **Build your team:** Reach out to a handful of colleagues before you start and ask them for support. Depending on your public, you might need representation from different fields or different time zones etc. 4 people is a very good start.
- **Engage with your team:** You need real commitments (e.g. get people to sign in for at least one year). Define the different tasks and distribute the responsibilities amongst your team (moderation, scheduling of speakers/talks, reminder emails, twitter / ResearchGate updates, website management ...)
- **Find funding for the tools you will use:** You might need some pro versions of software. Ask everyone from your team what licenses their institutions have and make sure to make the most of it.

3) What format?

- **Interacting with your audience:** streaming “live” is more effort but way more exciting as it allows interaction. Get your audience to ask questions during/after the webinar through the comments sections or using sli.do. Make sure to have low-bandwidth solutions to engage with everyone even in poorly connected areas.
- **Play with webinar formats:** It all depends on the objectives of each webinar. Here are some ideas: You might want to have short (max. 20 min) presentations to allow for long Q&As, panels and questions asked/voted for on twitter before the event, presentation duets to underline 2 aspects of a same scientific question, face-to-face interview videos where you have prepared questions like a journalist etc.
- **Offer informal networking:** Experiment with informal networking i.e. invite the audience to join a more private discussion with speaker after the main Q&A.
- **Take over the world:** Adapt timing to make sure you engage with various regions of the world. This is where choosing well team members is key! Promoting recorded webinars is important but also creates the risk that people won't join the live events.

4) Which tools?

- **Get your team settled:** Create one email address for your project. All team members will use it when contacting / dealing with presenters etc. You can also set up a collaboration environment such as slack, google drive and/or SharePoint to reduce emails and facilitate communication.
- **Have your logistics running:** Find a webinar provider (such as i.e. eyeson or Zoom + Youtube streaming) which serves your needs, there are many webinar software available with different pricing, service etc ... Invest some time into proper research for the right tools and make some tests. Check what licenses your team members institution can provide.
- **Train all team members:** make sure your team and the speakers are well trained in the software and know how to behave when problems occur. Create a list of details speakers should know before giving their talk (when/how to connect, if/where their face thumbnail will appear, the format of webinars, the expected audience etc)
- **Keep your community informed:** make a simple (!) webpage, ensure it is not much work to keep it up to date, less is more. Decide whether using Twitter, Facebook etc is relevant for your community. Scientists use a lot ResearchGate and it takes little time to create a group there.
- **Get direct access to your viewers:** Create a mailing list with listeners, don't spam them with mails (!), just announce the talks a few days (one week) before and 1-2 h before it starts. Use the

webinars, social media, or your website for other announcements. Most importantly, you want people to join your mailing list so you have direct and effective communication.

- **Never stop promoting:** Make sure in all communications you remind your community the coming webinar schedule, how to subscribe to the mailing list, link to past webinars videos

5) Make just one real test and launch!

- **Jump in!** Just start, put all your effort into interesting content (speakers), this has top priority! Try to create the atmosphere so that people of your research field want to be part of your events.
- **Make a punchy start!** Choose wisely your first speaker (high-profile speakers attract more viewers) and the rest will come from its own, use your own network to tell people about your new tool, write personal and not mass emails, explain why you do this.
- **Take a head-start by creating content!** Let one of your team members give a real webinar, record it, if it works well keep the video and you already have a webinar to advertise / show to potential speakers. You can alternatively make a presentation video of our webinar series, that you share on social media.

This short best practice guide is based on experiences of the EBUS Webinars and the Ocean Plastic Webinars teams. Please let us know whether this guide is helpful. We are happy to answer more questions (ebus_webinars@posteo.org or oceanplasticwebinars@gmail.com) and to learn from your experiences.

Soeren Thomsen for EBUS Webinars
Audrey Hasson for Ocean Plastic Webinars