

# Webcasting vs. Web Conferencing



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## Enterprise Video Solutions

### Video for the Enterprise

MediaPlatform is an enterprise video platform for both on-demand and live streaming from the cloud or on-premises. Enterprise video made easy.

WATCH

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All Employees



Communications & Marketing



Training & Development



Live & Upcoming

## Introduction

Aside from simple conference calling, most companies face a choice between Web conferencing and webcasting. These two technologies seem fundamentally similar, but they actually serve quite different needs. For example, Web conferencing uses software that enables groups of people to meet online in a collaborative setting, whereas webcasting is meant for rich media presentation to an online audience. Essentially, Web conferencing is for meetings while webcasting tools are for events. The marketplace and the general audience, however, have a hard time differentiating between these two forms of communication. This paper will examine the inherent differences between Web conferencing and webcasting in the context of corporate communications needs.

## High Level Comparison

Although Web Conferencing and webcasting may possess superficial similarities, there are obvious differences between the two with neither of them being inherently superior to the other. Web conferencing products are ideal for smaller group meetings (i.e. fewer than 50 attendees) where there is a need for interaction and collaboration amongst all the attendees (i.e. "few to few"). Webcasting, on the other hand, is better suited for presentations that involve a small number of presenters and a large number of viewers (i.e. "one or few to many"). With webcast presentations, the experience can be fully customized and branded while the audience's participation is designed to be limited to participating in surveys or posing questions in a moderated fashion. Reference Figure 1, which compares the two technologies.

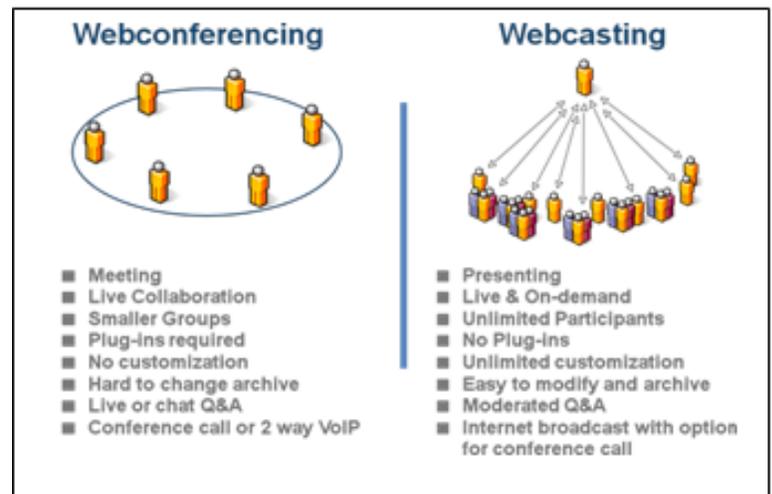


Figure 1 – High level comparison between web conferencing and webcasting.

User Examples	Web conferencing	Webcasting
10 viewers, live discussion	Yes	No
100+ viewers, video with archiving	Difficult	Yes
150 viewers, audio only, no archiving	Yes	Yes
150 viewers, audio only, archive with ability to edit	Difficult	Yes
300 viewers, global, multiple presenters, video	Difficult	Yes
5,000 viewers, high quality video, external event	No	Yes
Live, large-scale event with online viewing component	Difficult	Yes
On-demand training with tracking and certification	No	Yes

Table 1 – Uses of webcasting and Web conferencing, compared.

Based on the information presented in Figure 1, it's evident that if you're trying to facilitate collaboration amongst a group of distributed people, then a Web conferencing tool is your best choice. However, if you want to have your CEO on a live video presentation streamed to thousands of global employees, then you're going to need a powerful webcasting platform. Using a Web conference solution for that kind of large-scale virtual meeting will not satisfy your business objectives. Table 1 summarizes the different uses for Web conferencing and webcasting, respectively.

In addition, there are a host of subtle, internal differences between the two technologies. These are highlighted in Table 2, which is based on a generalized assessment of popular Web conferencing and webcasting tools. Web conferencing and webcasting products differ in regard to audience experience, presenter features, event management, invitation and registration, audience access, archiving, enterprise connectivity, and media management, some of which will be explored more in depth below.

### Audience Experience

Regarding audience experience, notable differences between webcasting and Web conferencing involve the look and feel of the player, video quality, streaming and synchronization. Web conferencing solutions typically offer limited customization of the player and the Web event experience, while webcasting software can provide quite extensive branding and manipulation of the player template. Web conferencing generally has fewer video quality options, and is usually restricted to webcam input. In contrast, webcasting software usually provides variable streaming rates and formats, as well as control over the content distribution network (CDN) used to get the signal to the end viewer.

Web meetings rarely involve video and if they do it tends to be through a webcam at a relatively small resolution and low frame rate. Web meeting users generally have few options as to how they consume the video. Webcasts, on the other hand, are produced as presentations and tend to involve higher grade video cameras. These cameras are capable of much higher image quality and resolution. End viewers would not only see a nicer video but they would have the option to watch the presentation at a larger size or, perhaps, view it full screen.

However, higher video quality is not necessarily better. The significance of video quality depends on the purpose of the event. In a presentation delivered via webcast where audience impact is critical, the quality of viewers' video experience is integral to the overall success of the event. In a more collaborative scenario, such as a group coming together to review a document through a Web conference, the video exists to augment the experience, not define it. Lower quality video will not diminish the collaborative effect of the meeting during a Web conference. For a smaller scale collaborative corporate meeting, a webcasting solution would not only be feature incomplete but also overkill in terms of video streaming quality.

### Event Production

Webcasting solutions are designed with sophisticated functionality for presenters and event managers. To give the audience the best viewing experience, webcasting solutions enable event managers to coordinate the preparation, rehearsal, production and archiving of the presentation. Some solutions, such as MediaPlatform's [WebCaster](#) offering, provide the ability to split production tasks between different team members. One person might be assigned the role of managing video inputs, while another manages question and answer, and so forth.

Web conferencing solutions generally do not offer this level of production control functionality, and indeed, they were never designed for this type of use in the first place. Web conferencing tools

are valued for their ability to get a group of people online in a shared meeting space quickly and easily. The feature rich production management interfaces of a webcasting system would be a hindrance for this type of corporate function.

## Event Archiving

Event archiving is another point of differentiation between Web conferencing and webcasting solutions. Webcasting tools allow the producer the ability to create an archived version of the presentation in a form that matches the exact specifications of the presenter, after the event. The on-demand version of a Webcast event can be different from the initial live presentation. By archiving, the producer can substitute slides, change their order, delete audio or video clips, and so on, to create a perfect final product. In contrast, most Web conferencing tools do not offer this degree of control over archiving and on-demand version control.

## Enterprise Connectivity

Enterprise connectivity also separates the world of webcasting from that of Web conferencing. Webcasting solutions, such as WebCaster, can be adapted to become part of a bigger enterprise stack while Web conferencing solutions are typically standalone tools. WebCaster offers Web services Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and a software development kit (SDK) to enable integration with enterprise application. For example, an enterprise may wish to integrate the webcasting solution with HR applications, learning management systems, content management systems, and more. The webcasting system is just one piece of the broader enterprise solution set.

## Which One is Right for Your Needs?

Which is better for your specific business needs, webcasting or Web conferencing? It depends on what you are trying to achieve. As they say in the racing business, "There's horses for courses." What's right for you may not necessarily be right for another business. If your goal is to enable small groups of people to collaborate in a virtual work setting, then a Web conferencing solution will do the job well, and a webcasting solution will be both ineffective and excessive. If you are trying to connect with larger audiences with a reliable, interactive, rich media experience, then you are going to be better off with a webcasting solution.

		<b>Web conferencing: Collaboration</b>	<b>webcasting: Presenting</b>
<b>Uses</b>		Meetings	Broadcasts, presentations, training
<b>Audience Experience</b>	Look and Feel/	Standardized	Customized; ability to take out vendor branding
	Branding of	Limited/nonexistent	Extensive
	Video	Mediocre quality; Webcam or video camera; limited video size window; With low bandwidth, video can drop. Pixels size up to 1080p but gets fuzzy if made bigger on end user screen	High quality video; video camera or Webcam; ability to set different bandwidth delivery option depending on viewer. Consistent bandwidth feed. Pixels size up to 1080p (HD)
	Video	Voice (sent via phone)/ video can go out of synch	Voice/video are synchronized in single feed
		online (no Content Distribution Network)	
	Audio	Conference call or 2-way VOIP	Internet audio broadcast with option to have

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			conference call dial-in as separate experience
	Streaming	Streaming rates generally fixed; no flexibility for network	Variable, Producer controls streaming rates. Multiple rates and formats. Streaming over CDN or internal networks
	Interaction	Free flow Q&A, basic Polls; Social Media via	Moderated, controlled Q&A (and answers to all), Surveys, Polls, Social Media embedded

		<b>Web conferencing: Collaboration</b>	<b>Webcasting: Presenting</b>
	Prerecorded video	Possible but limited in size (below 15MB)	Unlimited size
	Hearing	NA	Open or closed captioning
<b>Audience Size</b>	Size	Small to medium (up to 1250 attendees)	Small, Medium or massive
<b>Presenters</b>		Many remote	Multiple remote, easy to configure remote configuration, pick different codec for remote presenters to get better performance at lower bit rates, for example H.264 (with Flash Media Encoder Live)
		Carefully scripted to work within limitation of technology	Driven by producer, flexibility for presenters Sophisticated Q&A workflow screen
<b>Event Management</b>	Feed Management	No Preview of stream	Preview of stream before live
	Authoring Tool	Same interface	Event console not viewable by audience allowing optimized separate view for producer (identify technical problems, private Q&A, etc)
<b>Audience Inviting</b>	Email	Automated. Limited branding without customized service	Automated HTML emails that can be fully customized self- service.
	Registration system	Custom service	Customizable registration and tracking
<b>Audience Access</b>	Software	Plug-in	No plug-in; Flash player needed
	Global	Different dial-in with conference calling	One link
	Different viewing options	Windows Media	Windows Media, Flash, Real, QuickTime
<b>Archiving</b>	Archive creation	Difficult to edit recording, low-quality raw recording. To create custom replay file, producer needs to rebuild presentation from video tape, obtain presentation material from conferencing solution and high-quality audio from the conference calling company - No option to expand video window - No branding	Easy high-quality recording and editing for archiving. One file with option to easily export AV file to standard editing systems and re-import. Ability to change template/experience/branding/timing with slides in archive
	Search	Typically not searchable	Indexed and Searchable.
<b>Reporting</b>	Basic Reporting	Custom reporting available	In-depth and customizable – length of viewing, answers to surveys, polls by viewer, browser used, registration information (attendees vs. non-attendees), world map, etc. Integrate with Crystal reporting
	Distribution	Download and distribute	Email links to reports; download and distribute; private logins. to access reports

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<b>Continuing Education</b>		N.A.	In-depth reporting and certification
<b>Reliability</b>		Good reliability. Dependent on provider's network	Good reliability; redundancy in the cloud, No propriety software or plug-ins, which lets any windows machine become a potential instant "Presenter /Admin". Easy to ensure no single point of failure
<b>Media Management</b>		N.A.	Includes document library system or integration with video portal / media management system
<b>Cost</b>		Less costly, but phone charges can be high.	Cost savings due to economies of scale

Table 2 – Functional comparison between Web conferencing and webcasting solutions

## MediaPlatform Webcasting Solutions

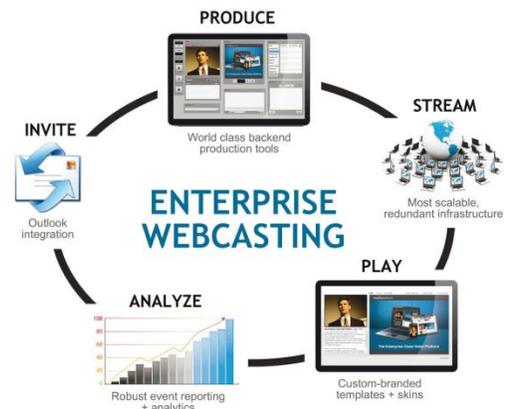
MediaPlatform webcasting solutions are considered best-in-class. They power high-impact presentations for lead generation, corporate communications and training. The company offers organizations the ability to take advantage of scalable cloud-based computing, as well as on-premises deployment, to present and manage rich media. With media management tools built on its platform, the company helps clients derive long term archive value from their investment in media content.

MediaPlatform is known for excellence in engineering, with a host of superlatives and "firsts" accompanying our product offerings, including:

- Most scalable webcasting solution, reliably used to stream live video to simultaneous audiences in the tens of thousands.
- Most customizable viewer experience, enabling completely custom branding of the media player and alignment with corporate branding standards.
- Most dynamic and professional-class back-end production management system, with the ability to manage complex live events with multiple live presenters and a large production team assigned separate roles.
- Highest level of potential application integration, realized through a 100% Web services (SOA) approach to solution architecture.
- First pure software-as-a-service enterprise webcasting solution.

## Enterprise Webcasting

MediaPlatform's solutions drive performance webcasting, linking phases of the complete Webcast production process through a series of best-in-class offerings. We call this "performance webcasting." WebCaster manages the Webcast guest invitation and registration processes with rich customization characteristics. The back-end production control



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interface allows producers to manage a live or on- demand event with a full complement of professional options, including dynamic survey, poll, and Q&A functionality. The signal streams from the most scalable, redundant infrastructure available on the market today. End users see the presentation on a custom-branded player that can be designed to match corporate branding specifications.

Post-event, powerful analytics and reporting tools enable event owners and business stakeholders to gain insight into the success of the event and the return on investment for the production process.

### **About MediaPlatform**

MediaPlatform, Inc. is the leading enterprise webcasting solution and video portal for corporate communications, training and collaboration. MediaPlatform provides a robust video content management portal that can be deployed from the cloud or on-premises to help organizations make their business more social and improve employee engagement. MediaPlatform customers include Adobe, Ericsson, Ernst & Young Facebook and General Motors.

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