



**BIOSE**

— LIFE SCIENCE

# Organizing Webinars: A trigger to an improved speaker management process

A BASE life science whitepaper  
Published October 2020

---

BASE life science

[www.baselifescience.com](http://www.baselifescience.com)

© 2020 BASE life science. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system.

## A different way of life

Being forced to stay home has made a lot of pharmaceutical companies realise how webinars could be utilised for educational purposes and knowledge sharing about diseases and related therapeutics available on the market. As many of the HCPs are either working from their office with limited visitors allowed or are held up fighting as the first line of defence in hospitals, the medical and commercial teams have been forced to rely on remote channels to continue the interaction with the physicians.

Webinars have naturally emerged as a possible solution. The agility of the IT teams has surprised most of the business stakeholders with available technology from day 1. Technology may not have been perfectly suitable for this new need. However, the major challenge in organising webinars did not reside in the technical challenge but more in the business processes around the organisation of such events. To emerge from the crowd, companies need

to schedule and arrange events that are standing out. In the pharmaceutical world, this equals to having leading experts and the best speakers attending the events, which is only achievable with an extremely well-functioning speaker management process. The crisis has truly shed light on the existing business gap within the current webinar end-to-end process.

Firstly, this whitepaper addresses the issue of how to efficiently strategise a speaker management process that can facilitate the conduction of webinars. Secondly, this whitepaper responds to some of the more technical questions that may arise when leveraging technology to support the process. The truth is that global KOLs can be considered as the most important stakeholders of a pharmaceutical company, wherewith they need to be explicitly targeted. Getting them on board to start advocating for your therapeutic solutions will potentially transform a failure into a success, benefitting the patients.

**01**

**Set up an  
efficient strategy  
for your speaker  
management  
process**

**02**

**Utilize  
technology wisely  
to enhance the  
overall outcome**

## Speaker management

On the one hand, speaker management has the advantage of being one of the most tangible processes within the orchestration of events. It is also one of the most usual tasks of any event organizer. Therefore, it can be considered a logical place to start, when striving towards an improved overall end-to-end process of a webinar journey.

On the other hand, it is a process that involves multiple functions, both locally, regionally, and even globally. The frontier of the process of managing speakers and key opinion leaders or medical experts are blurry, resulting in an unclear distribution of responsibility and ownership. This lack of transparency between the functions leads to sub-optimal processes and a lack of vision for the activity of engaging the respective HCPs. Potentially, this can result in a lower engagement level and a decrease in available data when trying to select the appropriate physicians to attend or host a webinar.

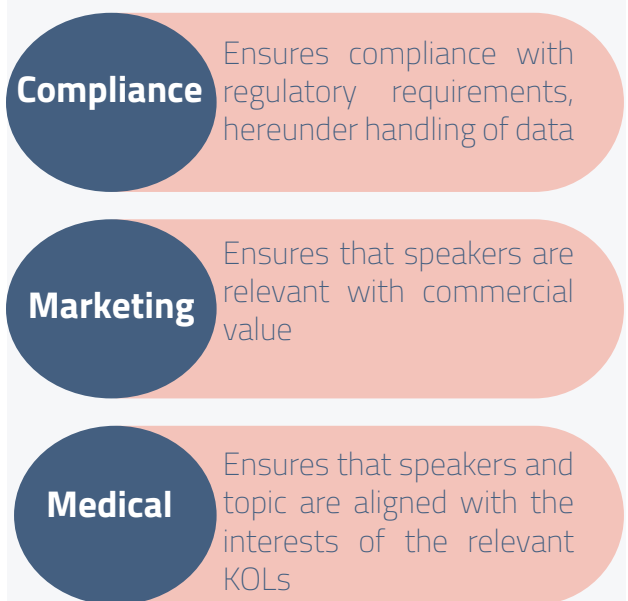
The additional compliance aspect of the speaker management process is equally important, as a potential transfer of values needs to happen in full compliance with regulatory requirements.

**“The lack of transparency between the functions leads to sub-optimal processes and a lack of vision for the activity of engaging the respective HCPs.”**

Having a great variety of speakers is preferred from a compliance team’s perspective, while the marketing team usually prefer to rely on 1 or 2 global experts, with high commercial value. Additionally, the medical team’s inputs are essential to ensure success. They often have unique insights into the relevant KOLs, crucial

for establishing the relevance of potential speakers. In contrast, marketing specialists understand the commercial value of a speaker and can help drive the branding process, ensuring increased reach. Nevertheless, they may not fully comprehend who the most advanced medical expert is, as such insights go beyond the marketing practice area. Therefore, the medical team must oversee the process to ensure that the chosen speakers are relevant and substantial enough to ignite curiosity in the targeted KOLs.

### Team functions



**Figure 1.**  
*Multiple functions contribute to speaker management*

Essentially, speaker management requires keeping track of the list of speakers. Without diving too deep into the technology aspect, efficient event orchestration requires a speaker record and a systematic approval process. Any CRM system can be leveraged to manage this part. Where the complexity truly lies is within the business considerations.

## The process

The process starts with a selection of relevant profiles who could potentially be a fit for the existing medical and marketing strategy. In particular, alignment with the medical strategy is of uttermost importance. The message delivered at the event must be consistent with the results of the clinical trial and with the long-term company objective from a medical standpoint. Such alignment requires a review, both at the global and regional level. The global involvement of a local/regional KOL must be validated by the medical team in the country to ensure that the context is correctly understood. A company should not contact a key medical expert without knowing the local context. Conducting this task requires a profile database containing speakers' records. Crucial differentiators include the level of expertise, qualification, and with globalization in mind, language competence. Ensuring that an HCP is fluent in English is of significance when conducting webinars as the participants might have various origins depending on the event. However, a barrier to tracking language competence is somewhat tricky as the data protection laws may force you to disclose all the data at hand. The language criteria should not infuriate any of the relevant speakers. Therefore, the option of ranking a speaker on a scale based on their level of English proficiency, might cause reluctance and trigger further questioning, wherewith you should be as factual and straight to the point as possible. Perhaps, applying a field to state whether the HCP is comfortable with speaking at webinars in English can be considered as one of the best options.

The next level is to align the initiatives at all the different levels and to ensure compliance and business approval. One of the essential questions is to determine what a suitable fit of type of event and speaker should be. For webinars, typically, a local speaker may be able to provide a better overall experience by

speaking in the native language of the audience. However, there may be an additional need for global webinars, where a pragmatic approach targeting countries in specific time zones, and thus allowing for a series of events hosted in various languages tailored for the particular regions. Combined with the expertise from the marketing team, the medical team's inputs are crucial for this step of the process, seeking to ensure optimal output and to optimize the time management related to each of the speakers.

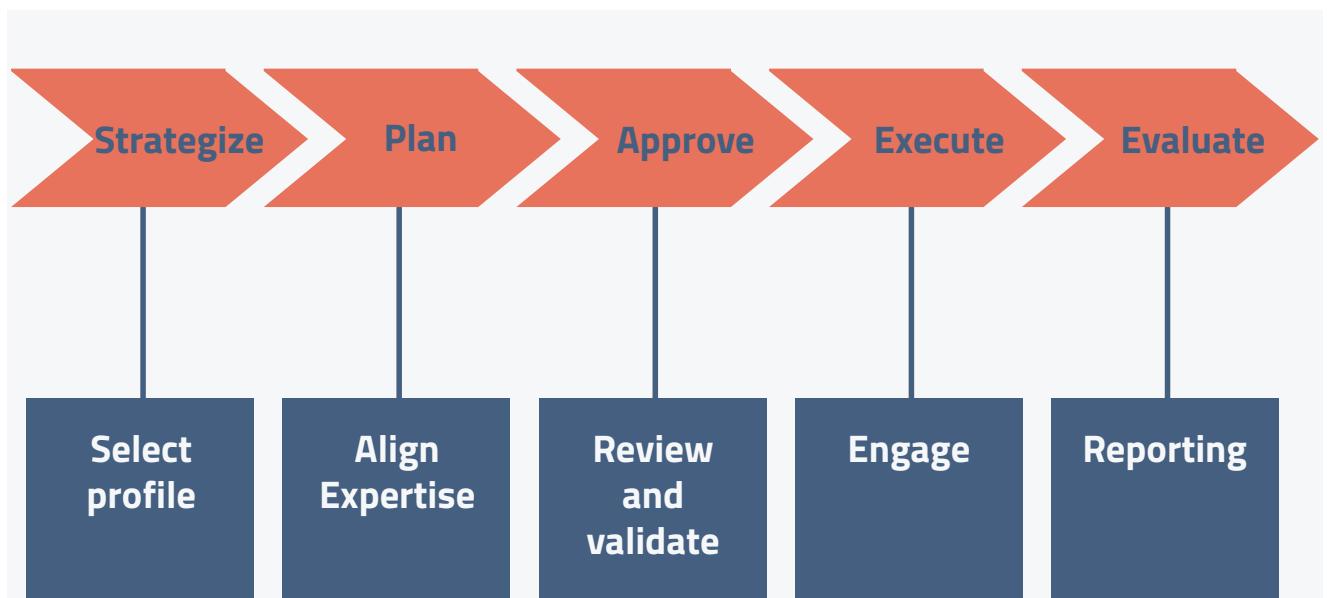
**“A speaker's language competence has become increasingly important.”**

This step requires transparency of engagement levels and requirements, which should typically be reviewed annually. Additionally, it involves collecting data to provide an overview of the speakers' qualifications. Based on regional differences, an estimation of fair market value should be calculated in accordance with the speakers' experience and competencies. Outlining a qualification process that suites every stakeholder is a challenge but can be achieved by emphasising specific criteria to the CV, leveraging external data sources, or outsourced entirely to a 3rd party. The outcome of the previous engagement should not be neglected, nor should the dynamic aspect of the data itself. Physicians are continually improving and accumulating new knowledge, which is a consideration that the qualification process should support. Therefore, one could argue that an annual reassessment of each profile is necessary. As the process gets defined, the ownership of the speakers becomes increasingly essential. It should be clear who oversees the data both from a quality standpoint but also from a business perspective. Medical affair is an obvious choice, but the clinical team may be more suitable if the company is in the development phase and have not yet reached the commercial stage.

The last two steps cover the execution and evaluation steps of the speaker management and should be defined with stringent guidelines for the tactical aspects of the engagement. The medical team must verify and ensure that a proper message is provided within each tactic. Usually, country-specific procedures are required to ensure comprehensive compliance with national law.

The actual event execution goes beyond speaker management and does not fit the objective of this paper, wherewith it will not be further elaborated. However, the evaluation step is crucial for any speaker management process as it is this step of the process that follows up on the event and cover data

collection related to the outcome and the performance of the speakers that can be leveraged for future purposes. Ideally, as the process matures by being repeated, the data quality improves, and the company will start leveraging the speakers that fit the best the engagement types required. This iteration approach must be considered within the technology as well as new data points will be required as the needs occur. The initial stage will focus on the language and the experience of the HCPs. The next iteration may be focused on the specific topics of expertise of the HCPs. The technology needs to be adaptable. An integrated suite with your CRM would fit very well as the data would be immediately feeding the entire customer-facing organisation.



**Figure 2.**  
*The Speaker Management Process illustrated in steps*



## Technology

Assuming the process and the data for your speakers reside in a well-defined database, let us tackle the actual webinar requirements. As mentioned earlier, most of the companies had a technology that could be utilized for conducting webinars. Conceptually, virtual townhalls are webinars, and companies have been running those for years.

Current technology may not be the perfect fit, but it can allow companies to run sessions during this ongoing crisis. Traditional webinars require a webcasting technology that enables the presenter to share content with audio, which is considered as an essential feature.

However, there exists an additional need for technology that supports interaction with and between the participants, potentially by integrating a 3rd party tool and linking directly to the CRM system. The user would like to be able to simulate a real life interaction by acquiring features to create a real communication link with the participants. A "raise your hand" type of functionality combined with a chat function is expected in any webinars nowadays and has almost become a standard. Additional features such as applying limitations to the chat function or the people viewing the camera are other data capabilities of value for the host.

Having the capacity to perform quick polls is another functionality that is commonly cited. The integration with 3rd party tools which are increasing the quality of the user experience is closely related to the capability. Functionality that allows polling the results of the question directly on a slide is exciting for the audience as it creates a more lifelike type of engagement. Such requirements are limited to the leading providers of software tailored for webinars.

Another often-cited type of supporting app is linked to translation. Whether it is the capabilities to provide subtitles to the speaker in the desired language or having one translator as part of the audience, this can significantly improve the user experience in a multi-language setting.

**"The user would like to be able to simulate a real life interaction by acquiring features to create a real communication link with the participants."**

The integration with CRM is the logical next step. Companies would initially like to ensure that the content displayed within the webinar is similar to CLM content, and thus approved. It should essentially be the same material that a representative can show an HCP, but the settings are slightly different. Similarly, approved email marketing should be leveraged to reach out to the follower base and invite them to the session. In an ideal world, the behaviour and the interest from all HCPs are directly captured within the CRM. If a participant asks a question on a specific key message discussed by the reps, he should have the knowledge and expertise to support an adequate answer.

The border between CRM and marketing automation tools is becoming blurry with time as well, so we can treat them as one. Essentially, it should be possible to include a webinar as part of a marketing journey and to keep monitoring the dropouts as well as the behaviour over time.

## Take Away

In all, event management relies on the capabilities of the speaker to stand out. While carefully selecting speakers and managing them along the event process, you can significantly improve the quality of your webinars.

Small hints can be captured from the technology around us. Typically, finding a way to script the webinar in collaboration with the respective speaker, or at least providing the flexibility for the speaker to script their speech themselves, is an effective strategy that can increase the quality of the outcome. Additionally, proper preparation combined with the allocation of necessary resources and time is key to success as it allows time for the speakers to familiarize themselves with the

chosen technology before going live. It may be worthwhile paying a speaker for an additional 60 minutes to ensure they are ready and comfortable to interact with the technology they will have at hand.

A rehearsal of the webinar is critical to the output as the speaker cannot judge the audience as easily as they could have in a face to face interaction, wherewith they need to rely on instinct and feedback from the other involved parties. Technology is not the most challenging part of the speaker management process. However, one must ensure to utilize it correctly and efficiently, whether this entails collecting data input to your CRM or improving the video or audio quality.



BASE stock photo, 2020.



## About the Authors



### Luca Morreale, Head of Operations, Switzerland

Highly motivated consultant focused on solving commercial and pricing challenges for Life Sciences companies through advisory, assessment or implementation services. Luca is pragmatic & result-driven with a strong ability to lead a team in a complex environment to achieve project goals. Additionally, he is capable of providing insights on both a strategic level as well as an operational level.

 (+41) 76 50 38 714  [lumo@baselifescience.com](mailto:lumo@baselifescience.com)



### Baptiste Mercier, Partner, Head of Customer Engagement, Denmark

As head of Customer Engagement, Baptiste is an expert at helping our customers create real business value from their commercial, medical, digital marketing and market access platforms and data. Baptiste has more than 15 years of experience with CRM in pharma and is PMP, ITIL, Salesforce, Veeva, and OCE certified.

 (+45) 60 53 66 53  [bmer@baselifescience.com](mailto:bmer@baselifescience.com)