Integrate live video into your communications strategy
The demand for online video has changed
Do you want to get more from online video? Perhaps you want a higher level of engagement, more customers—or the increased ability to integrate socially and go viral. If so, live streaming video may be the answer. Already, live streaming has become popular with executives, who are the largest fans and were the earliest adopters of this technology.

In fact, C-level executives are using online video at more than triple the adoption rate of associate-level employees, according to a report published by Wainhouse Research. The report surveyed 1,007 U.S. executives and found that a staggering 78 percent of executives find online video to be effective for business communications.

But even more interesting, the report found that live video is preferred across all industries, with 72 percent of respondents favoring live video versus on-demand video. Although research shows that streaming a live event is the clear favorite, does this really benefit your business?

Solving communication challenges
You need an effective way to connect with your audience, even when you can’t physically be in front of them. This is increasingly important as companies attempt to reach their audiences on a larger scale without sacrificing engagement. Live streaming is used in a variety of situations, including:

- **Live video adds to the excitement of a product launch**
  A company is launching a new product; however, the product has many nuances. As a result, a longer time than usual is needed to successfully explain the various features and capabilities of the product. Engagement is key to avoid losing the audience in all the important details.

- **Branded event**
  The company needs to release a branded message, and holding the event in a single location will limit attendance. You need to reach a large group that spans the country or even the world.

Internal employee communications
A new strategy or exciting news is on the horizon. Employees are in multiple locations, and you need a simple and effective way to communicate your message, engage the audience and answer live questions. Before live streaming, you might have used webinars or similar technology to address these situations. But like all solutions, webinars have drawbacks that can adversely affect engagement.

Webinars don’t work anymore
For many years, webinar solutions such as WebEx and Adobe Connect have been used to communicate with audiences. However, traditional webinars aren’t working as well as they once did. Sign-up rates and attendance have slowly eroded, according to the Content Marketing Institute. And for companies that want to reach their audience more effectively, this presents a problem.

Without a live streaming experience, it’s too easy for people to “tune out” during an online video. They aren’t actively engaged, and once you lose the audience, it’s difficult to recover. For example, most webinar tools that combine slide with audio show engagement levels of your audience by whether they’ve placed a browser over the webinar window. If you view this engagement level, you will learn that at the highest peak of audience attendance, only 30 to 50 percent of that audience is actually watching your webinar.

For the company attempting to explain a new product, deliver a branded message or communicate with employees, capturing and keeping attention is critical.

Engaging scalable solutions
Many executives have started gravitating to live video because it looks better and is naturally more engaging. Audience members don’t turn away and multitask during an in-person live event, and they mimic this behavior during a live streaming event.

In addition, live streaming solutions, such as the options offered by IBM Watson Media, provide something that webinars can’t match – scalability. There is no limit to how many people can attend your live event, whether it gets a modest 20 viewers or goes viral and captures 20 million viewers.

The ability to pair scalability with social integration is a powerful tool. Viewers can tweet directly from the view page and share with other viewers in social chat or feed streams. The audience grows quickly through viral sharing, and user-friendly technology allows the tech-savvy and the less experienced user to deliver a flawless live streaming event with ease. Live video also produces a recorded asset that is easier to reuse than a webinar.
10 tips for successful streaming:
Launching a live streaming event is exciting, as viewers get engaged and share the event socially—and the outcome exceeds your expectations. However, to get the most from your live streaming event, it helps to have a few tips to ensure that it’s flawless—from start to finish.

1. Test early and test often
Use the actual equipment from the actual location with the actual subject matter. When this isn’t possible, work with whatever combinations you can until you arrive on-site—and then do additional testing.

2. Know your upload bandwidth
Ensure that you have enough bandwidth to create high-quality live streaming video for your event. This usually means ensuring you are on a wired connection that is not shared with many other users.

3. Know your equipment
Avoid purchasing brand-new video equipment that you don’t have a chance to use until the day of the event. Practice with equipment you already own, and give yourself enough time to get comfortable with the technology before it’s time for the event.

4. Have great lighting
Without good lighting, your camera can introduce noise—which will result in a low-quality, blocky or pixelated image. Bring in some lighting, or use a bright room and have on-camera subjects face towards the light source to avoid unflattering shadows.

5. Have great audio
Without intelligible audio, your live streaming event will be unwatchable. Avoid challenges by placing your own microphone on or near the presenter. (e.g. lavalier) If the location has an in-house mixing board connected to a PA system, you can also ask for a direct line output via an xlr cable into your own audio mixer. Your camera’s onboard mic often won’t pick up a good enough signal.

6. Get backups for your backups
Record a local copy of your broadcast using Telestream Wirecast software; also record the output from each camera if possible. Have extra mics, extra batteries, extra cables, and ideally, a secondary audio system, spare camera, and backup encoding setup.

7. Promote your event
Promote your event at least three different times in three different ways. Send reminders one week, one day, one hour and five minutes before the live event. Use email, social media and pre-registration forms, or even call attendees directly. Ask high-profile participants to tweet about the event from their personal accounts.

8. Interactive chat boosts viewer engagement
Make the event more engaging by holding behind-the-scenes, interactive chats and Q&A with real-time questions from the audience. If possible, have someone on camera who is monitoring in-coming questions and call out specific questions that are interesting: “Joe in Montreal wants to know….!” This can really boost interactivity and engagement. Stream the event for as long as possible before and after the main action: longer streams gain higher attendance and generate more social media buzz.

9. Go live early
Start your stream 15 to 60 minutes early to ensure that everything is working correctly from end to end. Viewers who show up early will start spreading the word about your live streaming and many may submit questions before the events starts, giving your interactivity a jump start!

10. Keep on streaming
Re-stream your event ‘as live’ just as TV broadcasters often do. Make the recording available as video-on-demand as quickly as possible. The best window of time to maximize your audience is immediately after the live event ends. Keep the player on the same web page and available via the same URL as your original live stream.

Do you want to extend your reach?
The popularity of live streaming video is growing quickly because it’s highly engaging, effective and scalable. If you’re interested in leveraging live, online video to extend the reach of your communications, we can help. For more information visit www.ibm.com/watson/media. New to streaming? See how See how others are achieving success with video in these customer stories.
About IBM Watson Media
Created in January 2016, IBM Watson Media brings together innovations from IBM’s R&D labs with the cloud video platform capabilities of Clearleap and Ustream. Through the unit, IBM delivers a powerful portfolio of video services that spans open API development, digital and visual analytics, simplified management and consistent delivery across global industries. IBM Watson Media supports top media and enterprise companies with reliable video on-demand and streaming services.

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