

Webinar Task Force

Members Present: Gary Acuff (Chair), Bob Gravani, Kali Kniel, Doug Marshall, Manpreet Singh and P.C. Vasavada.

Meeting Called to Order: 10:00 a.m., Sunday, August 3, 2014.

Recording Secretary of Minutes: Gary Acuff.

Old Business: Task Force members reviewed topics covered in previous meetings and discussed issues that might impact the successful offering of webinars by IAFP. Concern was expressed regarding the assurance of high quality webinars offered by IAFP. Developing webinars from rejected Annual Meeting symposium submissions was discussed earlier, but the Task Force is now of the impression that we should be quite selective in what topics are chosen, the choice of a speaker who will be received well in a webinar and should provide an emphasis on creating a loyal audience.

The possibility of adding an option to registration (like signing up for journals) for an unlimited webinar participation fee was discussed. The Task Force is unclear whether this endeavor is being considered for “break even” or as a revenue stream. Industry sponsors for webinars were also suggested as an idea for reducing cost.

New Business: Moving forward, the Task Force discussed the need to conduct a survey of our membership, exhibitors and affiliates (since some of them are not IAFP members) and get a better feel for the landscape. We need to know what kind of competition exists in terms of other food safety webinars and we need to know how many webinars our members participate in annually. We need to know how many webinars people would consider participating in and how much they would be willing to pay. Other issues could be addressed in a survey as well that would give us a better footing in terms of addressing real versus perceived needs.

Members discussed the possibility of utilizing the author of the *JFP* most-viewed article (published in *IAFP Report* each month) – contact the author and ask to give a short 10-15 minute webinar regarding usefulness of the research (specifically addressing the need for research, extension and industry communication).

Need to focus on quality rather than quantity. Our E-mail inboxes are flooded with webinar announcements. IAFP webinars need to be something special – fewer webinars, but something membership does not want to miss. We don't want to add to the saturation of substandard content.

Webinars might give us the opportunity to bring back our “Rapid Response” meetings. We introduced these several years ago, but planning a meeting meant the response was never that “rapid.” This could be a great branding opportunity as webinars could provide a truly rapid response.

Recommendations to the Executive Board:

1. Logistics need to be worked out for webinars. Recommend to the Board that a survey of membership, exhibitors, Affiliate members and others be conducted to determine need and niche for IAFP webinars.

2. Survey will indicate whether this effort should be a “member service” or a revenue stream, but the Task Force members strongly recommend to the Board that high quality webinars should be offered as a member service.
3. Not really a webinar, but the Task Force also recommends the Board consider offering short podcasts (interviews with authors of most downloaded or most viewed JFP articles; more of a chat with the author about the applicability and usefulness of results rather than a podcast seminar).
4. We need to make sure our webinars are not “just one more webinar advertisement in our E-mail inbox.” These need to be high quality and well planned. These could be huge branding opportunities and the Task Force recommends we take advantage of this aspect.
5. Once a survey has been conducted, if the Board wants to proceed with planning of webinars, all of the Task Force members are willing to serve on a committee to help administer.

Next Meeting Date: July 25, 2015.

Chairperson: Gary Acuff.