



PORTFOLIO

Ellerbe Becket impresses clients with web-based presentations

Read how one architecture and engineering firm uses new technology to show off its expertise.

While seminars can be effective marketing tools for your firm, attendance can be limited by the size of the room or the availability of your audience at the time you've scheduled. **Ellerbe Becket** (Minneapolis, MN), a 340-person architecture and engineering firm, has found an effective way to reach its target audience without even having to leave the office.

The firm recently began using new technology to share its expertise with others by broadcasting presentations on health care-related issues via the Internet. "It's a great way to help our clients better understand changes in the industry and also allows us to get in front of new clients," says Mike Hnastchenko, the firm's director of technology.

Clients and potential clients can view these "webinars" for free, and topics range from the integration of architecture and technology to aid in the healing process to the design implications of positron emission technology. "John Rode, vice president of business development at Ellerbe Becket, has done an outstanding job getting the health care group to embrace new ways of reaching clients," Hnastchenko says.

Health care professionals are often very busy, so a lot of potential attendees aren't available at a scheduled date and

the details

Firm size: 340

Type of marketing piece: Web-based presentations on health care-related issues

Number: Five presentations since October 2003

Distribution: Hospital CEOs and directors of facilities.

Results: The firm has received a lot of positive e-mails from people who have viewed the presentations and was put on the RFP list of a potential client that had watched a presentation.

time, Rode says. That's why the firm has developed a way for them to view presentations any time they want. The presentations help the firm establish a knowledge base in the industry, he says. And they give staff at Ellerbe Becket a chance to brush up on their public speaking skills.

Getting the word out

Ellerbe Becket used web communication services provider **WebEx Communications, Inc.** (San Jose, CA) for firm meetings for several years, Rode says. "It was a great way to communicate to staff." But Rode and others realized that it could also be used to communicate with clients. "We thought it would be a great idea to find a way to use it to get our expertise out in the marketplace," he says.

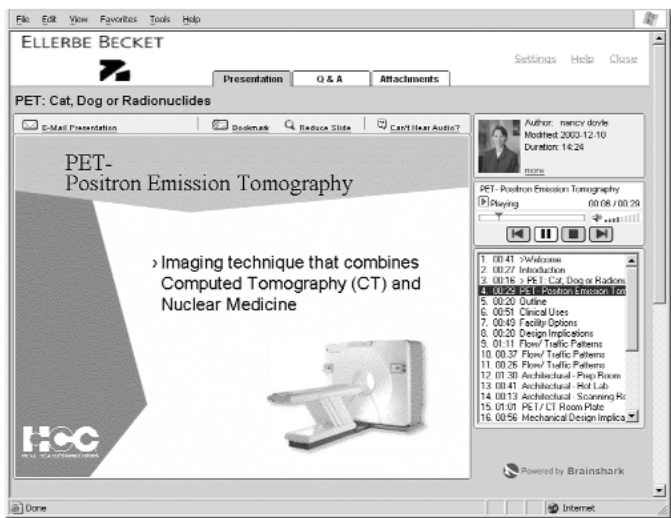
The firm has broadcast five presentations since October 2003 and continues to see growing interest. "We had 10 viewers for our first WebEx presentation," Rode says. "But we were up to 20 viewers by the fourth one."

Presentations last approximately 15 minutes and are scheduled on the third Tuesday of each month at 11:30 Central time. "It's a good time to have it because some people might watch the presentation during their lunch," he says.

Through its contract with WebEx, the firm has a limit of 50 viewers per presentation, but can pay more if more people participate, Rode says. Overall, the cost for the web-based service is relatively low per person, and it is very easy to use, he says.

More time and money go into preparing and marketing the presentations. Speakers meet two weeks before each presentation to put it together, Rode says. "Then, they meet the Thursday before to go over it, the Monday before to rehearse again, and 30 minutes before the presentation to go over any last-minute details."

The firm mails postcards announcing the WebEx presentations several weeks, or even months, before their →



Existing and potential clients can view these Ellerbe Becket "webinars" for free. Topics range from the integration of architecture and technology to aid in the healing process to the design implications of positron emission technology.



Ellerbe Becket sends out postcards like this one to promote its web-based presentations. To cut costs, three presentations are featured on each postcard.

scheduled dates. To cut costs, three presentations are featured on each postcard, which are 5 inches by 11 inches and cost about \$2 each to produce. The postcards are sent to a list of existing and potential health care clients in the five areas in which the firm has offices— Minneapolis, Minnesota; Greenville, South Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; Washington D.C.; and San Francisco, California.

Along with the firm’s existing clients, Rode builds mailing lists from membership lists from various organizations he belongs to and adds people as he meets them. “We target health care professionals— hospital CEOs and facility managers,” he says. The firm also mails to health systems and developers and architects that work with them, Rode says.

Making learning convenient

Ellerbe Becket also uses a service of media software company **Brainshark, Inc.** (Burlington, MA) to record and post presentations for clients to view at their convenience. Unlike the WebEx broadcasts, this allows existing and potential clients to view presentations when and where they want.

Brainshark is a method for recording *PowerPoint* presentations, Rode explains, but the recorded presentations don’t just include the *PowerPoint* slides. Viewers can listen to presentations as they look at the slides and can submit questions online for presenters to answer.

Ellerbe Becket started using *Brainshark* in December 2003, Rode says. “I think WebEx and *Brainshark* are a good one-two punch,” he says. “I came upon the idea after hearing about it from someone who was using it in the finance industry and having great success,” Hnastchenko says. “And

since *Brainshark* is an application service provider model, implementation costs were low. And the ability to get it online quickly was very easy. I think we had our site set up in under a week.”

The cost for *Brainshark* is based on a per-view basis, he says. You pay for a number of viewings, along with a certain number of hours of presentations stored on the *Brainshark* servers. “We purchased a very entry-level plan that includes three hours of presentation and 5,000 *Brainshark* viewings.”

The *Brainshark* technology also requires participants to provide their names and e-mail addresses before viewing the presentations, so the firm can track viewing information, as well as receive new contact information for potential clients.

Marketing for the *Brainshark* presentations is strictly done through e-mail, Rode says. “We send out an e-mail announcing that the presentations have been posted, and we’re continually adding to that e-mail list.”

People view presentations months after they’re posted, he says. “We are averaging about 120 viewings per presentation, which we feel is pretty good,” Hnastchenko adds. “That’s from about 200 to 400 e-mails.”

The key to success is a willingness to push the envelope in terms of finding new ways to communicate with clients and to tie everything together with a complete marketing campaign, Hnastchenko says.

After watching a *Brainshark* presentation, a potential client put Ellerbe Becket on its RFP list, Rode says. But the important thing is that the firm is getting its name out there and establishing itself as an expert in the industry, Rode says. “We’re looking for long-term results.”—

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Learn from **Ellerbe Becket**

Find practical ways to use new technology. Ellerbe Becket was able to reach a large group of people without even having to leave the office by using the Internet.

Show off your expertise. The firm recently began broadcasting presentations on health care-related issues. The presentations help Ellerbe Becket clients understand industry changes and allow the firm to get in front of new clients.

Work around people’s busy schedules. The web-based format gives health care professionals the ability to view the presentations when it’s most convenient for them. Giving your potential and existing clients what they want can go a long way toward keeping them in the fold.