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What is the difference between a webinar and a virtual class?

The terminology in e-learning is fundamental. Let's clarify some of the most used terms in the online course glossary starting with the webinar and virtual classroom.

If there are two terms in eLearning that are often superimposed, they are webinar and virtual class. The analogies are easy to find they are two tools used for online training in live mode, ie live, and involve the participation of a group of people. However, the differences are even more important, because they involve a different approach to online training. Knowing how to distinguish between a webinar and a virtual classroom does not only have a linguistic value but is fundamental for choosing the most suitable tool for a group of students. By answering a few simple questions, it will be easier to understand which is the best choice.

Questions and answers on webinars

The term is a neologism in the English language and comes from the union of web and seminar. The answer to the question "what is a webinar?" it is therefore simple: it is an online seminar, but not only.

What are webinars?

They are meetings, training sessions, conferences that do not take place in a meeting room, but in a network thanks and through software for online meetings. The webinar is not just for training, but for any type of business meeting.

What are the features of a webinar?

- It takes place live using a special software or integrated in an LMS, learning management system
- Allows the use and sharing of audio, video and power point files
- Many people can be connected at the same time (from ten to thousands, depending on the program used).

How do students participate in a webinar?

The participants interact only with the trainer or the person who holds the webinar through the surveys, through the live chat and the Q&A session, ie questions and answers provided at the end of the session. Discover in this article how to make your webinars more interactive.

Questions and answers on the virtual class

The virtual class is an online "place" where a group of people meet to enjoy educational content.

What is a virtual class?

It is a class in the classic sense of the term with the difference that one meets online to follow a live lesson, access the training material and compare notes with other students.

What are the characteristics of a virtual class?

- It takes place online via an LMS or app
- Allows the use and sharing of power points, audio and video files

- Only a few people in the class can be connected (20 on average)

How do the participants of a virtual class interact?

Also in this case the participants are active through chat and webcam: the difference lies in the fact that they do not speak only with the trainer, but also between them. They can, in fact, work in small groups, contribute to the board, share documents and participate in discussions in audio mode.

When to choose a webinar and when to choose a virtual class?

As evidenced by the answers to the questions, the main differences between the webinar and the virtual class are in the use and functionality related to student participation and their number. The webinar not only has a training function but can also be used for meetings and other types of meetings. The virtual class has an exclusively didactic function. With a webinar you are potentially addressing a large number of participants who only interact with the trainer at set times, usually at the end when the speaker opens to questions and answers. The virtual class has a reduced number of participants who can interact with more freedom not only with the trainer but also with each other, practicing in small groups.

Function, group size and degree of student participation are all elements to consider when choosing between a webinar and a virtual class. But the real question that makes the difference is: do you want students to interact only with the trainer or even with one another?