

Virtual communications



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Elliot Jordan, winner of the best virtual conferencing award at the IR Magazine UK Awards, offers recommendations on webcasting

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Q: *How can I ensure shareholders are kept informed?*

A: One of the crucial areas of investor relations is to ensure the timely and accurate dissemination of information to shareholders, and all IR practitioners should be aware of the need for fair and timely disclosure. One of the best ways this can be achieved is through the use of webcasting.

Sainsbury's webcasting program usually consists of three video webcasts and seven audio webcasts every year. This is an excellent way of ensuring that investors have live access to trading statement conference

calls and results presentations.

The live video feed for our results presentations is shown in a virtual environment along with the slides used in the actual presentation. The Q&As following the presentation are also broadcast so stakeholders do not miss out on any information by not being there in person. Our policy at Sainsbury's has always been that we would prefer our shareholders to hear our messages 'straight from the horse's mouth' rather than via a third party, so we try to offer the widest possible access to key events for all stakeholders.

Over the last few years we have seen the number of web participants rapidly increase. For conference calls, we find that webcasting is as popular as dialing in, especially for the buy side.

Providing an archive on your website so your audience can look back at previous webcasts is also good practice. We keep audio and video archives for easy access by all investors.

In order to keep up with the new generation, we have made our archive available in MP3 format so you can download our presentations and listen to them on your iPod on the train on the way to work, should the urge take you.

Besides the webcasting archives, we also keep a soft copy of all printed investor material and transcripts of our presentations on our website for anyone to access wherever they are in the world.

Remember, your website is a key mechanism for communicating with shareholders and it is crucial that it is well maintained and up to date. It is often the first thing a potential investor uses to gather information, so treat it as an ambassador for your company.