

AUDIO CONFERENCING TIPS AND TRICKS

On conference calls, we sometimes forget people can't see us! A sure clue is someone at the other end saying: "Who is this talking?" or "Is so-and-so still there?" Here are some tips:

1. Designate a person at each end as "moderator" for their end of the conversation. Have that person:
 - a. Identify themselves with their full name or nickname at the beginning of the conversation.
 - b. Then introduce each person on their side of the conversation, giving their name, or function in the conversation.
 - c. If there is more than one "Jim" on one end of the conversation, have them distinguish their name in some manner.
 - d. Ask each person, as introduced, to say their name and spell it slowly. The reason: We rely heavily on a person's voice to identify them. Hearing a person talk helps everyone recognize them when they speak again.
2. A conversation should go back and forth, if there is a lull or a question as to who should speak, the moderator on one end can say, "Go ahead (city name) and (first name), welcoming them to talk.
3. Moderators at each end should be "gatekeepers" as to who talks. Requesting permission to speak can be as simple as someone saying the moderator's first name as a request to talk.
4. The idea is to keep an even conversation flow without cutting anyone off.
5. If one person is speaking and there is a short gap, the moderator should pause a minute, then ask: "Did you have more to say?"
6. If tension builds during a conversation between parties, the appropriate moderator, based on his or her judgment, might inject a light remark, if appropriate.
7. The key to successful audio conferencing boils down to this: When several people are involved in an endeavor, there is apt to be some confusion, especially when they can't see one another. Be sensitive to this, and let your moderator control the traffic flow.
8. If someone at one end of the conversation has to leave the moderator should announce they are leaving. This is less embarrassing than having someone ask for that person, and then have to find out he or she are no longer there.
9. If someone is trying to enter the conference bridge, recognize him or her as soon as possible. Then advise them you will bring them into the conversation as soon as it is convenient to do so.