

Suggested Guidelines for Teleconferences



Here are some simple guidelines that we have found really help a teleconference be more interactive and effective.



- **Identify yourself** - On the first few calls we start by asking each person to identify him or herself by saying their name and position. Please say your name very slowly it is amazingly hard to catch people's names over the phone and we all have a tendency to say our names way too quickly. Since we can't see each other the sound of your voice is critical to others as their way of identifying you.
- **Write down others' names** - When you have the names of the people on the call in front of you, then you can use their names to respond to a question or to ask one of your own.
- **Many small meetings rather than one large** - We keep teleconferences small, no more than 15 (smaller is even better) people on line at a time so we can have interact. If more people need to be involved we hold several small discussions.
- **Picture who is on the call** - Arrange ahead of time to have pictures of the people on the call so that you can have them in front of you as we talk - it really makes a difference to "see" the people you are talking with.
- **Check in and check out** - after the initial call we like to start subsequent calls by taking the first 10 minutes to do a check in - asking each person to say what has been going on since the last teleconference or what is happening right now in their lives. Then again at the end we ask each person to make a brief comment. Check in is much like the brief time we have at face-to-face meetings where people catch up before the meeting starts and the check out is like the good-byes we say to each other as we leave the room.
- **Say your name before speaking** - one of the most useful guidelines, although one that is very hard to remember, is to say your name before you speak, "This is Nancy....." It will seem unnatural at first, but it really helps all of us to know who's talking.
- **Take formal leave** - If you need to leave the call early or step away for a period of time let those on-line know you are going to leave, "This is Bob, I have to leave now." It is very discouraging to address someone only to find they left 10 minutes ago.
- **No lurkers on the call** - Because we cannot "see" who is "in the room" it is important to have a guideline that no one listens in on the call unless they have identified themselves. That means that if someone comes in late they need to break in and let others know they are on line, "This is Sue, I've just joined the call."
- **Direct your questions** - When you ask a question direct it to a person by saying their name first, "Marge, I want to ask you.....". In face-to-face meetings we know to whom the question is addressed because we look at them, on-line we have to signal them by speaking their name at the beginning.

