Tech Tips: Making conference calls with conference speakerphones

How many meetings have you arrived at just to sit and watch someone struggle with connecting 2 or 3 people to a conference phone? Most likely, too many.

To use the conference speaker phones:

1. Dial the first person's number (remember to dial 9 - 1 first if it is an off campus number. And, if it is long distance, once you finish dialing you will hear the beep prompting you to enter your long distance access code).

2. WAIT until the person answers.

3. Press the "Flash" button (this may say Flash or it may have a lightning bolt symbol on it).

4. WAIT for a dial tone (this may take a few seconds)

5. Dial the next person's number. When that person answers, press FLASH - wait 2 seconds - then press "1" - then WAIT (5-10 seconds typically) for a tone. ONLY when you hear the tone will all parties be connected.

6. If you want to add another person, repeat steps 3-5.

7. Help! I got voicemail! What do I do? If your call goes to voice mail when trying to connect to a second or third person, END THE CALL BY pressing * # * (this works on Octel voicemail systems; unfortunately, other systems may use different keystrokes), then you can dial the next number or use FLASH 1 to connect back to the rest of the group already on the line.

8. Caution: we recommend no more than 4 lines be connected at the same time. As you add lines beyond that, the sound quality will drop.

9. For large meetings, you are better off using an external teleconferencing service - a number that everyone dials into. The downside of these services is the cost: typically $0.30/minute per person, so a 10-line conference call costs $3.00/minute or $180/hr. If you have a justifiable need for such calling, you may contact the Helpdesk - and provide a budget code to which the calls can be charged. We will provide an account for your use.
Teleconferencing Etiquette: Making a teleconference a success is more than just technology

1. Everyone involved connects from a quiet location. The phones pick up environmental noise that masks speech very easily.

2. Everyone is connected BEFORE the official start time of the meeting. This means that whoever is setting up the call should start dialing people 10 minutes before the start time and the people who are being "conferenced in" are at their desks to receive the call 10 minutes before the start of the meeting.

3. When you are expecting to be "conferenced in", you stay off the phone - if a call comes in, you answer it and quickly inform the caller that you are expecting a conference call and will call them back.

4. During teleconferencing, you use the MUTE or MICROPHONE button on your phone to avoid transmitting distracting noises. You unmute your phone when you want to speak.

5. Anytime your phone is unmuted, you do not type, shuffle papers, or carry on private conversations with others at your location. You close your office door to minimize noise from the hallway. If someone enters your office, you do not engage in conversation unless you mute the phone.