

Effective Telephone Conference Calls

► When to choose a telephone conference call:

- If more than two people need to talk together; an ideal maximum is 7-9 people, though more is possible
- Meeting time is less than 1 hour and the call will save travel time and expenses for the participants

► How it works:

One person (the chair) arranges it with a provider (a simple web search will elicit a number of options). The call date and time is booked and the organiser will receive a number to call as well as any other codes that need to be entered by the participants. The organiser lets the participants know the details of how to make the call. Participants do not need access to a computer or the web—it is all done via a regular land-line or mobile phone.

► What to do if invited to join a conference call:

- Keep the call details safe (write them in your diary); dial the number and follow instructions of the operator by entering any pin numbers or codes. If asked for your name, give it clearly; this is used to announce you when you join the conference.
- Approach the call as you would any other meeting; do the prework, prepare yourself, gather all relevant notes, get your cup of coffee, sit down and then dial in.
- Ensure you are making the call from somewhere quiet as everyone will hear your background noise and this may disturb the meeting.. Trains and noisy offices are best avoided.
- Join the call at the agreed time.
- Give the call your full attention; avoid typing on your computer, printing out documents or holding conversations with colleagues not on the call.
- When you speak, it helps to identify yourself, like saying your name.

TIPS FOR CHAIRING CONFERENCE CALLS

Send out call details, the agenda and relevant papers well in advance

Prepare yourself thoroughly

Be the 1st person to dial in (2-3 minutes early)

Note who is on the call and introduce new participants

Allow a few minutes for social chat

Provide structure, signposting and stick to the agenda and timings

Be quite directive and remember that participants don't have body language cues

Ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate; use names when inviting others to speak

Be pragmatic and realistic about what can be achieved

Recognise when a separate, perhaps face-to-face meeting may be more appropriate

Circulate action notes after the call