

## Conference calling no longer the exclusive domain of big business

In the last decade, the conference calling landscape has significantly changed. It used to be the case that only larger sized businesses had access to multi party teleconferencing systems. Such systems were usually rather expensive and often featured live operator participation on every call.

Incumbent telecom companies priced conference calling services at costly rates (e.g. over twenty cents per user minute) and most businesses were willing to pay such charges to guarantee reliable and quality services. Now in recent years the teleconferencing market has been characterized by a high degree of competitive forces. Several factors have been responsible including telecom deregulation, dramatic improvements in web technology and demand for improved offerings.

The competitive landscape now includes dozens of providers in addition to the incumbent bell operating companies. Organizations and individuals that desire to use teleconferencing now have a far wider selection of choices. Within that spectrum of choices are [free conference calling](#) services such as Rondee that meld free conference calling with web based scheduling and other related features. These companies do not charge users because they utilize a toll number as opposed to a traditional toll-free dial-in. Thus, such free [conference call](#) services are not free in the same sense that oxygen is free. They do require minutes of phone usage.

Notwithstanding that, such services are increasingly being thought of by users as basically free because many telephone plans now offer flat rate "all you can dial" and typically cellular plans no longer have added charges for long distance calls. As a result of these factors, teleconferencing has become available to a far broader market of users as the following examples demonstrate.

Non profit entities have become voracious users of teleconferencing services. The ever escalating cost of travel combined with limited budgets of most non-profits, makes conferencing a good strategy for reducing cost and increasing productivity. Typically, non-profits rely on formal and informal approaches to networking. When these networks extend beyond geographical boundaries, conference calling becomes the most practical method of quality communication. A number of non-profits including those that address literacy, hunger, and environmental issues, have effectively utilized conference calling to mobilize participation and coordinate plans.

Labor unions have effectively used traditional conference calling systems and, increasingly, free conference calling services to allow disparately situated members to discuss strategies and arrange meetings. Unions have historically been cost conscious due to the fact that their budgets are limited to the extent of member contributions. So, as is typically the case with non-profits, unions frequently search for methods of making every dollar stretch further. In times of labor strikes or other situations of urgency, conferencing becomes a viable method of allowing the national leadership to communicate with chapter leaders.

Start-up companies have long felt the same need for conference calling as well established corporations. However, it was not until the advent of cheap conferencing and free conferencing alternatives such as Rondee, that early stage companies could avail themselves of the benefits. New companies might use these systems to coordinate work with remote developers in Eastern Europe or Russia, discuss design themes with graphic artist designers (in the case of Web 2.0 companies), or simply discuss work-plans with disparate members of the core team.

In sum, teleconferencing is no longer the exclusive domain of corporations. Other possible users have long felt the need but it has only been with the development of new business models that the availability of these offerings has become more ubiquitous.

## About the Author

Bob Letterman talks and writes often about communication related subjects. He consults to a variety of industries that use communication technologies around conference calling, as part of an integrated strategy to increase productivity. His clients include [free conference calling](#) services such as Rondee.

Source: <http://www.articletrader.com>