



# tipsheet

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## Presenting and Meeting at a Distance

In *The World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman describes a world that is increasingly interconnected. With supply chains spanning the globe and customers living in numerous countries, our business processes must adapt quickly to keep pace. The likelihood is high that you will work on a team separated by location and language, and your ability to effectively communicate in this difficult environment could impact your career. Learning conference call and web-based presentation etiquette is an excellent place to begin.

1. **Test all equipment before use.** Getting a large group of people on the same call at the same time is tough. If your equipment doesn't work, you've wasted a golden opportunity.
2. **Introduce all the parties on your call.** Chances are the call participants have never met each other. You can increase both their comfort and engagement in the call by getting them to talk a bit.
3. **Ask everyone to say his or her name before making a comment.** Even if the participants have met each other, the speaker is unlikely to be recognizable by voice alone. This identification helps mimic the flow of a face-to-face meeting by providing a cue that a speaker is about to talk. This approach also keeps listeners focused on the speaker's comments rather than trying to figure out who's speaking!
4. **Do not put your call on hold.** Many phone systems play elevator music when a phone is on hold. Don't risk exposing your audience to *Unchained Melody* while you grab a snack.
5. **Find a quiet room and land-based line.** Cell phones create a lot of static on a conference call -- so do speakerphones and loud rooms. If you must use a speakerphone, make sure the room is quiet and try not to shuffle papers.
6. **Learn to use the mute button effectively.** Office commotion won't stop just because you host a conference call from your desk. If you don't have a door that will shut, use the mute button when you're not talking. Just don't forget to turn it back off when you are about to make a comment!
7. **Prepare, prepare, prepare.** Planning and preparing is particularly important in a virtual meeting. Show and demand respect by starting the meeting on time. Plan an agenda and stick to it closely. Send conversations offline when they threaten to derail the meeting. Set goals for the meeting and end it with actionable next steps.
8. **Orient your audience to slide usage.** If you use a web-based presentation, verify that your participants are seeing the same slide you are. Clear each slide by stating the main point and explaining any graphs or figures. If participants are following along with their own version of the presentation, be sure to state the number of the slide at every change.
9. **Keep participants on their toes.** If you have ever led a meeting where half the attendees were typing on their Blackberrys, you know how difficult it is to keep audience attention. When your attendees are sitting at their own desks with the distractions of email and Internet, your task becomes that much harder. Use names of people on the call often, particularly to ask questions to specific attendees.
10. **Break for questions.** You can keep a meeting on track but still participative by designating question time. Every fifteen minutes is usually a good time frame for this activity. Each speaker should ask to be recognized before commenting to prevent people from speaking over each other.

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