

You're the Host of Your Teleconference— So Act Like One!

*By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.*

Instead of face-to-face meetings, many of us facilitate teleconferences or meetings over the phone. Without seeing people's responses to our points, teleconferences can prove to be challenging. To be successful, one has to think of being the host of his or her own radio show and do what disc jockeys or newscasters do.

Think of the people that you tune into on your drive to work. Maybe it is Howard Stern, Rush Limbaugh or Casey Kasem or maybe it is Dick Biondi, Larry Lu-jack or a local disc jockey in your hometown. What makes these people have "staying power" is that they have a strong voice, good on-air personality and the ability to make people visualize the news. They also have strong opinions that they share freely.

Do you have to have a "God-like" voice to be effective in a teleconference? The answer is "no." However, a voice that is monotone will not hold people's interest. Listeners will tire quickly and change "channels" on you, even if they are forced to stay-tuned. Radio announcers with wonderful voices, people like Paul Harvey, Walter Winchell and Lowell Thomas, are still remembered because of the emphasis they gave to particular points. They knew the value of the "pause." With pausing, the richness and resonance of their voice came through loud and clear. The points they wanted to emphasize got punctuated. What often happens in a teleconference is the host reads from a script. Points become garbled and ideas are missed because the voice doesn't hold interest or the speaker is talking too quickly. In any one sentence, listeners should know what the key idea is. Thoughts should not blend together, and listeners should have enough time to digest them.

Good radio announcers have great personalities. People like Wofman Jack and Dan, the Man, Levitan, were easy to enjoy because they let their personality come through loud and clear. They joked and talked about themselves from time to time. They weaved in stories about their week-ends or vacations, their

wives or girlfriends. You should also let your true self shine and have some fun with your listeners. Your listeners want to know the kind of person you are. They will enjoy you more and remember what you said. You will also feel more relaxed.

Radio announcers, particularly news and sports commentators, make people visualize what is happening. They use verbs and nouns that conjure up an image. Ronald Reagan was a sports commentator in his early years for several baseball teams at one time. While being in Kansas, he simultaneously announced the ball game in Chicago just by reading what was happening from the wires. The fans tuning in were not aware that he wasn't in the broadcaster stand watching the game. He made the description of the strike or hit so visual that they assumed he was physically present. As you think about how you describe a process or feature in your next webinar or teleconference, choose your words very carefully. Use descriptive language. It is essential.

Finally, radio announcers with a huge fan base often are very opinionated. We know how Rush Limbaugh thinks. We know how Howard Stern feels. If you are the subject matter expert let your listeners know how you feel about the product, idea or service. If you think something is terrific or revolutionary, be sure to share your views. If you are someone people trust, your opinion will often be embraced.

Teleconferences are here to stay. More often than not, work teams are global and customers are scattered around the world. It is not practical or financially feasible to bring people together face-to-face. Thus, people will be using their phones or computers for updates or education. It is critical that you be a memorable host of your own radio show.

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