

Tuesday TechTip:

Etiquette in today's digital workplace:

As we start another semester at Columbia College, our calendars quickly fill with meetings, deadlines, appointments, and multiple tasks. Despite a busy schedule, it is important to keep in mind simple etiquette guidelines for participating in the various types of communication media we routinely use to conduct daily business. Today's tip will start you on the right track with guidelines for participating in an ever more common meeting- the conference call.

Conference Call tips and etiquette:

While not all inclusive, the following tips can help make your next conference call more pleasant, run more smoothly, and help avoid potential embarrassment for you and your team.

1. Find a quiet area for the call. Keep in mind that background noise can be very distracting for participants of the conference.
2. Beware the hold button. Ever been subjected to a heavy dose of hold music when calling a business? Imagine subjecting your fellow participants to 5 minutes or more of hold tunes while you have to step out of the room. Use the mute button if you need to make a comment to a colleague or step out.
3. Speaking of the mute button. *Be aware of whether or not your phone is on mute.* Nearly anyone who has been participated in a conference call can recall an occasion when another person forgot their phone was off mute and made a comment not intended for the rest of the audience. This can be a potentially embarrassing, even damaging, episode for you and your fellow team members. In fact, the best practice is to engage your mute button when joining a meeting in progress or if you are not currently speaking.
4. Mute or turn off your mobile devices like cell phones, PDAs, or laptops. This should be second nature no matter the type of meeting in which you are involved.
5. Be on time for the call. Getting to a call late requires others to wait and catch you up on information, thereby taking up more

- time and resources of the group. Remember, everyone's time is valuable.
6. Avoid side conversations. If you are whispering with a colleague, remember that other participants can possibly hear you. Ditto for typing, shuffling papers, eating, or tapping a tune out on the table. These sounds tend to seem amplified during a conference call and can be very distracting.
 7. Wait your turn to speak on a conference call. Talking while another "has the floor" can be particularly disconcerting and confusing for other members of a call.
 8. When it is time to speak, clearly identify yourself- i.e. "This is Ken Akers from the Main Campus"- so that participants are clear about who is speaking. An absence of visual cues makes it very difficult to identify the speaker. Do not assume members will know your voice.
 9. Finally, resist the urge to multitask during a conference call. A conference call deserves your undivided attention and your respect for the other participants. If you are shuffling papers, or typing, or distracted by doing other things, other people on the line can hear it and from your responses tell you are not paying full attention.

Etiquette makes good business sense.

Engaging in practices that promote consideration for others during conference calls can only enhance your professional image to colleagues and external partners. As an extra bonus, if participants of the call follow these simple guidelines, your team can save time and resources as well as enjoying a useful and productive meeting.

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