Updated!

"How to Set up a Teleseminar"

By Dr. R.J. Peters

Introduction

As this marketing technique and strategy gains popularity, more books and courses are being produced. And most of those I have seen are excellent, since they were written by some very well known and professional experts.

However, there is one aspect of the subject that I have not seen covered as much as it could be. Most of them discuss how to organize a call and run it. But there isn't very much out there to teach us how to set things up… the mechanics…or the "nuts and bolts."

Of course, it's not difficult, so it has probably fallen into the category of "everyone knows how to do THAT."

But I was on a conference call last year where it seemed that 90 percent of the callers didn't know what "Star Six" was. And someone shouted above the din, "Someone needs to write an ebook about this!" So, I hope this helps.

But who am I to write anything on teleconferencing? I'm an unknown online marketer who has not "made it" yet. I'm still a "newbie" here, like many of you. However, I do have a lot of experience. I've attended *hundreds* of these telecalls, also called teleseminars, teleconferences, and teleclasses, depending more or less on the purpose of the "event."

I've even conducted a few. It was a snap - although I have encountered a few glitches. Nothing insurmountable, however, and you won't have any real trouble either, as you will see.

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1. Organize Your Call

First things first, of course. You will want to be totally prepared to conduct your seminar or conference, so you won't have any embarrassing silences, or stuttering and blubbering as you try to ad lib when you run out of things to say, if you get nervous… or if someone asks you a question you can't answer. You also won't want to deal with any hecklers. But that's quite easy to prevent, for the most part, and I will explain that in Section Three.

Getting prepared for the meat of your call is the hardest part of the whole process, though it doesn't have to be. Get hold of one of the ebooks or courses available and get "trained up" to run your own event.

You can even write everything down and then just read it on the call. I suggest you practice this, however, so you can time it to fit into your time slot, and perfect your delivery to make it sound natural.

Learn basic teleseminar techniques from an expert! Visit this site:
http://www.positive-profits.com/recommends/tsb.html

2. Find a Conferencing Service

There are quite a few conferencing services available, ranging from completely free to somewhat costly. If you are a beginner, free is a good place to start. Just remember, you get what you pay for. Not that the free services are bad. It's just that those services may be minimal, or limited in what they can offer you.

For example, many of the free services provide anywhere from only 25 up to 100 lines, total. And you will take up one of the lines yourself. Counting you and any guest speakers, you reduce the number of participants allowed on the call. But if you're just starting out, your list probably isn't that large yet anyway.

A list of conference services can be found at the end of this ebook. Check them out by visiting their web sites. Compare what they offer and decide which one fits your needs.

Register with them by opening an account. Print off your account details, along with the instructions they provide on how to use their services, and keep these pages in a notebook. Highlight specific items to help you later - for example, if you need to look something up quickly, especially if you are doing a call and have forgotten a tiny detail, it's much faster to have these pages available on your desk so you can spot the answer quickly and react as needed.

With the free services, you are on your own if you need to figure something out or troubleshoot a problem during the call. The paid services usually have a technician or operator available to help you if you get in a jam. Many of them also have operators available 24 hours a day to assist you in conducting your conference. They may do the

introductions, monitor the callers' questions, and perform other services during the call.

Once you have registered an account and received your calling instructions, you will be given a list of codes you can use to manipulate certain features of the call. As the Host, you will have access to these codes, but your callers will not. As for the ''Star Six" code, it is not available to the host! You will not be able to mute out individual callers (even if you would like to).

The various codes generally include two or three categories of keys to press, divided into caller (participant) controls, and host controls. The well-known Star Six (*6) allows a caller to mute only himself or herself and seems to be standard among most of the services. However, be sure you know what the code is, as some services use only the 6 (or M, for "mute") and others use the number 4. Be sure to announce this feature to your callers and encourage them to use it.

There are also a number of other features, such as volume control, a features menu, security codes that lock and unlock the call, entry and exit tone controls, recording start/stop, a caller count, a "roll call" of participants, etc. These are available only to the host.

As a rule, you will be assigned two call-in numbers - one for you as the Host (also called Moderator), and one for your callers. Typically, but not always, this number will be followed by a "Pass Code," Access Code, or "PIN code." It is usually a 3, 4, 5 or 6 digit number, followed by the POUND sign, or, # key. Or it may simply be a number with no special characters. As this marketing strategy grows in popularity and the number of companies offering it also increases, the PIN codes have become rather long lately. I've seen some that were 8 or 9 digits long!

If you are interviewing a guest, you may want to give them the host number to call in. Otherwise, when you do a mass mute-out, called "presentation mode" or "lecture mode," where you silence everyone but yourself, you will lose your guest as well. However, if you prefer to keep the call open to everyone for total interaction, it doesn't really matter. If you are simply conducting a weekly or monthly meeting of your downline or sales group, an open line is usually preferred, as you may only have 10-12 participants at a time. If someone gets noisy, you can ask them to mute out by pressing *6, or whatever code your service uses.

This is desirable during the initial call-in period, for example, as people call in and introduce themselves, as well as during an open call. It silences their line so you don't have to listen to their televisions in the background, or the kids arguing, or the dog barking, etc. It's also considered one of the "common courtesies" for callers to use so they don't bother everyone else.

As host, if you plan to "silence the crowd" during your conference, you will be able to quiet everyone when you get started. However, if you plan to keep the call open for participants to ask questions, you must explain to everyone how to mute themselves out so they don't distract others with their background noises. You only have the power to mute everyone at once, which you may need to do if someone doesn't comply, such as a heckler, or someone who doesn't "get it." And sometimes, computers act up and you could have static on the line, which you may be able to silence with the "lecture mode."

Don't forget to control your OWN background for noise, too. Use a quiet room in your home, for example, or send the kids out to a movie, and put the dog in the garage. If you have an office, close the door and put a Do Not Disturb sign on the outside.

After your call is over, many services make your recording available (if you made one) after a certain length of time. Some free, some for a fee, you may download your recorded call at that time, and make it available for your callers. Either upload it to your website and give out an online address for them to go download it, or, burn to a CD and sell or give it away. That part is up to you. The various conferencing services may or may not provide recording capabilities, and if they do, the formats may vary. Be sure to check with each company so you get the type of service you need. For example, one of the free services that provides recording, only allows people to call in again later to listen. Others usually charge a small fee to allow you to download the call in different formats. For a little more money, other places let you choose what format you want, and may even mail you a CD or audio tape with your call on it, as well as a transcript.

 Be sure to find out how many lines you are allowed and what the costs are. It varies quite a lot. One service has a "bucket of minutes" for which you pay month by month. Others charge only for the minutes used – anywhere from 2.7 cents per minute to 12 cents. ***Note:*** The per-minute charges also apply to each line, or, per caller. So, if you have 100 lines in use, at 2.7 cents each, that means your cost is $2.70 for every minute of your conference call. Many of these companies will give you a quote, a cost analysis, or an estimate of expected costs based on your needs.

Some other services include toll-free lines, no signup fees, no contracts, unlimited calls, no reservations, the same (or different) call-in numbers for each conference you do, and some are completely or partly web-based.

When they are web-based, they are usually called Webinars or Webcasts. Some of them provide audio along with the screen shots, but many combine technologies by providing the screen shots online and the audio by telephone.

Most of the companies also provide a free trial period so you can test them out to see if they are a good fit for you. One gives a 100-minute trial. Others simply have a free level of service, from which you may want to upgrade to a paid subscription to take advantage of the premium services as you grow.

3. Test

Bottom line - print off the instructions your service gives you, and make a few calls with friends to practice using the features. You will want to be familiar with the controls during the "real call." Don't waste valuable minutes by using the call to discover all your features. It is not only annoying, but places you in a less than professional light.

That said, of course, everyone who uses a computer does understand that glitches happen and are quite patient as you work them out… to a point… for a while. Best bet: Be Prepared.

4. Notify your callers

If you have a list, simply broadcast an email message to everyone, announcing your teleseminar or conference. Give them at least a 3 day lead time so they can plan for the call. It's also useful to send a reminder on the same day as the call.

If your list is a standard, "snail mail" list, send out post cards, timed so they arrive several days before your call, at the minimum.

In any case, be courteous and observe all mailing rules to prevent being accused of spamming.

Some of the services with a premium level plan will send out your notifications for you.

5. Confirm registrations

As the registrations come in, be sure to have this set up on your autoresponder so everyone gets instructions right away, preferably instantly.

The confirmation message should include, at the minimum:

the number to call
the pass code
the date and time of the call
how long you expect the call to run
name of your guest, if you have one, or announce as a mystery guest
subject of the conference
and, very importantly, HOW TO DO THINGS on the call, like Star Six!

You can also give them a downloadable, full page of instructions for your call, if you like, and teach them about caller courtesy, how to take notes, how to contact you later if needed, and to be sure to write down their questions to either ask during the call, or to submit now, so you can be prepared with answers. Heck, give a bonus for sending in a question, if you like.

If you have any bonuses to give out, mention them, too. You can say what they are, but also insist that callers must listen to the call to find out how to get them.

This is a good time to give a website address where they can download an agenda, or a "cheat sheet," so they can follow along on the call. Cheat sheets also provide a curiosity factor that makes people want to know more. If you say, for example, "The ONLY way to get rich is to _____, _____, and _____," who is going to give up a chance to find that out?

6. The Cheat Sheet

This page can be anything you want it to be. It can be a one-page list of the questions you plan to answer, a simple list of the subjects you plan to describe, or it can be a 10-12 page document with fill-in-the-blank sentences. Listening carefully will allow callers to fill in the missing words. Later, after the call, you may want to include as a bonus the filled-in version of the cheat sheet! I advise against taking the time during the call to help slow pokes fill in the words they didn't get. It takes valuable time away from your call, can send you over your time limit, and annoys the other callers who are by now tapping their fingers.

Just type up your outline in Word, then make it into a pdf and tell callers where to get it.

7. Bonuses

Everyone loves the free gifts. Be generous with bonuses and gifts. By now, you should have a ton of ebooks on all subjects, collected as bonuses from other calls and promotions. Pick one or two (or ten? it's up to you) that fit your subject, upload them to your website, give callers the download link during your call, and they will be very happy they came to your conference! Be sure it is a valuable bonus and is relevant to your topic. People can tell when they are getting fluff. And don't think that since you have a ton of ebooks that everyone else does, too. There most likely is one, or several, that your callers would love to get their hands on.

8. Jumping through hoops

If you want to extract a certain "performance" from your callers, tell them what they have to do to get your bonuses. You might want them to send in their opinions on something. You could ask them to read your new ebook and then send you a testimonial. Then you can send them the download link as your thanks for their help.
Or, you might ask them to bring a friend to the next call, or seminar, (already scheduled, of course) and they will both get the gift, or the discount.

9. Delivering your product

If you are having the call in order to sell something, or to get signups for a real-world event, then you must explain in great detail how to get the product or make the signup. Give a discount for callers, tonight only or this week only, for example. Give explicit instructions how to register for your big event - phone numbers, email address, web site, etc. Tell them exactly what they get for signing up right away, explain if there are deadlines and what happens, etc. if they miss the deadline. Don't shut them out, but let them know it will cost more, as a rule. However, if your space is limited, let your callers know they need to register quickly so they don't miss their chance to attend.

If your product is physical, tell them how to purchase it. For instance, should they go to a web site, call an 800 number, or send you an email? Give them a generous bonus for a

fast response.

Not all conference calls are about selling to the callers, however. A lot of MLM companies use conferencing to keep in touch with their downlines. In fact, that's how I got started. It's a convenient venue to have group meetings without having to actually be there - a real help if your downline consists of people from Maine to California, or even New Zealand.

Another use of conference calling is education. Some schools use the technology to conduct specific classes. And you can use it that way, too, if you like. If you simply want to teach something and there is no money involved, that's OK, too. No one said it has to be about money. In fact, this can even be a great way to hold a "virtual family reunion!"

10. Keep your call on time

Be sure to start and end your call at the times you announced.

I think everyone realizes that most of these calls are not totally free, when you consider there may be long distance charges. The conference lines are not toll-free lines, as a rule. It's possible to obtain them, but you will pay extra for that service. Don't worry too much about it, though. Most people understand this and simply call with the expectation that the number and charges will show up on their own monthly bill.

But they get edgy when you start late or go over too long. The comments made on the calls I've attended where that happened were not very polite. Just realize that people making long distance calls don't enjoy paying for "dead air time" while waiting for you to get things rolling. However, if things are going well, or you have a famous guest, people won't mind staying late.

11. Follow Up

When the call is over, be sure you contact all participants to thank them for attending, and by the way, "here are your download links for the bonuses," if you didn't already give out that information during the call, or if you just want to remind them.

As with all good autoresponder lists, stay in touch with your subscribers so you can tell them of future events and products.

12. Ship products

If your product is physical, such as a CD or a real book, be sure to send it out when you said you would. Or announce that your drop-shipper or fulfillment crew has done so.

13. Now, a word about troubleshooting.

As luck would have it, not everything happens in a perfect world. And teleconferencing gets struck with the glitch-gremlins, too. When you consider that computers, no matter

how wonderful and feature-packed they become, still break down or freeze up, it can affect your call, too.

Even those teleconferencing companies that say no computer is needed have troubles now and then. Today's telephone lines depend on computers, after all.

On one call I did, the service I registered with had a server meltdown the night of MY CALL. How dare they do that to me! Ha. I spent 10 minutes trying to get the recording button to work, and lost a number of callers when they realized there was trouble in the background.

People will bail out on you faster than a drop of water bouncing out of a hot frying pan when they feel the heat. And there is nothing you can do about it. You are not in charge of the computers or the phone lines at the conferencing service. The free services typically do not provide customer support during a call. The paid ones usually do, so it's useful to get the premium plan if your call is crucial.

Without support, all you can do is make the best of it. Go on with the call, but schedule a repeat of it to get it right the second time. Or, as I did, I simply activated my own tape recorder, which I happened to have plugged in, just in case there was a problem. Perhaps my basic distrust of technology gives me an edge on being prepared with contingency plans. (When they invented the calculator, I still used my slide rule, because I didn't really trust the new-fangled gadget. Guess that dates me, huh?)

14. Finding a Service

Here is a list of conferencing services to check out. This is only a small sample of what's out there. If you run a search on Google for "conference call services," you will get 13 million results.

The following is a small sampling of services I've either heard of or have used. All of them are usable 24 hours a day, but some restrict the number of calls, the number of minutes, or the number of lines. And rate plans vary widely.

AITelephone.com   800-600-6151 (in California)

AllConferencing.com   866-562-6506

BasicConferenceCalling.com

Brainwave Communications –   www.bwccom.com
800-600-7285   San Diego, Calif.

BudgetConferencing.com
866-983-0700 (Boston), or 514-905-0700 (Montreal, Quebec)

ConferenceCallBusiness.com
This one is for large companies with "power" requirements, such as 25,000 lines or more.

Conference-Calling-Advice.com
This appears to be a portal page to other conferencing services, giving you a wide array of choices.

Conference-Solutions.biz   1-800-747-6676

ConferenceUp.com

Confreecall.com

ConferenceCaller.com

EasyCall.net/conference.shtml   1-800-730-0626

FreeConference.com

FreeConferenceCall.com
877-482-5838
562-437-1411 (international lines)

FreeAudioConferencing.com

MeetingBridge.com   877-471-5476

Voicetext.com
800-326-3020 (Austin, Texas)
Provides very comprehensive services

Vsmsmail.com   (Canada)

Webex.com   Includes Webinar / Webcast features.

Things to look for as you check each one out:

Affiliate programs
Free trials
Promo codes on their web sites
Signup bonuses
Customer support
Terms and conditions
Recording availability
Payment and rate plans
Number of lines
Minimums or maximums required
Customer support

15. Disclaimer:

Please note that this information is current as of early November, 2007. I do not claim accuracy or completeness. Things change, sometimes daily. This is only a guide to help you figure out which kind of service you might need. For exact information, check with each service and ask questions before you sign up. Get recommendations from others who have used any services you are considering. To learn how to do the actual teleseminar, find a mentor, instructor or course on the subject.

I recommend this one, by Dr. Jeanette Cates:

http://www.positive-profits.com/recommends/tsb.html

16. About the author:

Dr. R. J. Peters has extensive experience as a health professional, freelance writer, animal care specialist, and is a certified computer technical consultant.

Web sites include:

www.theproblemcat.com   www.positive-profits.com

www.onlineprofithunter.com   www.7stepsto9lives.com

www.how2liveon24hoursaday.com   www.thebestcatfurniture.com

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