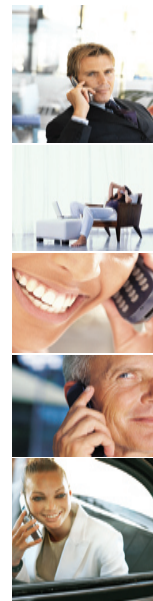


# The Real Truth Behind Audio Conferencing



 [FreeConferenceCall.com](http://FreeConferenceCall.com)

**Simple**TollFree™ \_\_\_\_\_

**Simple**FlatRate™ \_\_\_\_\_

**Simple**VoiceBox™ \_\_\_\_\_

**Simple**VoiceCenter™ \_\_\_\_\_

**Simple**Event™ \_\_\_\_\_

**Simple**Blast™ \_\_\_\_\_

# The Real Truth Behind Audio Conferencing

The telephone and fax have long been the communications tools integral to business. But in recent years, an array of converged solutions including the Internet, e-mail, text messaging, and interactive chat have changed the communications landscape. These vital business tools continue to make the world an even smaller place, and provide a platform for companies of all sizes to tap into a truly global marketplace. Even with the various choices to communicate across the street or around the globe, the culture of business still requires the “human” element to add value in the seemingly virtual world.

While the ability to communicate through different channels has reduced the need to travel, new telephone- and web-based technologies have emerged offering small businesses with cost-effective (some even FREE) solutions to administer meetings, conferences and training sessions, and even record them for future reference and collaboration. Users can even download these discussions to their PC or a portable device such as an iPod, or send them to others via email attachments and Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds.

Among these powerful business tools, teleconferencing continues to be one of the most widely used solutions among employees, partners, customers and prospects. Offering a virtual forum to connect people across time zones and geography, teleconferencing is a vital tool for business. According to Wainhouse Research, LLC, the teleconferencing market grew to more than 29 billion minutes worldwide in 2005 – a 16% increase over the 2004 number of 25 billion minutes.

In the 24/7 world we live in, you would be hard pressed to find a small business owner, attorney or other professional who has not been on a conference call throughout the course of their day. Teleconferencing is part of the fabric of every business, and is used by companies of all sizes. As a result this widespread use has spawned many different types of services including free conferencing.



FreeConferenceCall.com



Small businesses such as CiBan, a technology solutions provider located in Marlboro, NJ are gaining competitive advantages and realizing cost efficiencies by utilizing free conferencing services.

According to Paul Banco, President at CiBan, he holds between five to 10 conference calls per week. From the sales perspective, he needed a conference system that would allow multiple parties to join from various locations at any given time. From the support side of his business, he wanted to deliver the highest levels of customer service to handle their tech issues.

Banco's existing phone system lacked the capability to handle a conference bridge at the capacity he needed. In researching other alternatives, he found that several products charged a premium for their service with no features other than recording. After an exhaustive search, he found one provider with the ability to have up to 96 participants on one call – for free.



There are some interesting misnomers, however, about teleconferencing services, primarily related to connection fees, which can quickly add up. The good news is there are many alternatives, and some are free. Free conference calls may at first sound as if there is some type of "catch" or hidden charge, but in reality the focus of this emerging market lies in the optimized use of the public switched telephone network (PSTN).

Banco quickly discovered that his selected provider was truly a free service – he only had to pay the long distance fees. There were no extra connection charges that some of the paid conferencing providers required. In today's telecom age where calling plans offer unlimited local and long distance for around 2-3 cents a minute, these nominal fees are a pittance compared to the connection charges for conferencing. With his free conferencing service, Banco is saving nearly \$9,000 per year.



Traditional teleconferencing services are built around hardware, such as conferencing bridges and switches. The capacity and design of the system prompts call providers to ask for reservations. This allows the provider to secure a notch for the conference call on their bridging equipment. When callers fail to attend a call, this can impact paid conference providers as it hits their pockets, and eventually yours since some of them will charge you.

Certain situations may require making reservations in advance and paying the entire conference call regardless of attendance – a sales meeting or shareholder call involving thousands of participants demand special care. But, there are other alternatives to conduct teleconferences of this magnitude – FREE audio conferencing.

The primary difference with a free conference call is the phone number. While traditional conference calls may use a toll-free 800 number, a free conference call uses a regular long distance phone number. The “free” component of these services resides in the connection to the “meeting room.” All callers pay for their portion of the call through the long distance charges. As an analogy, a restaurant may offer a free lunch but you need to pay for the taxi or cost of gas to get there. This holds true with free conferencing providers that offer a slot on their equipment, free of charge, to the conference group. How do they benefit from this practice? Without going into the details of the telecom industry, it comes down to keeping the PSTN utilized. Higher conference call volume equates to more money to be made by these smaller phone companies. In essence, these smaller carriers will pay for traffic. Since conference calls drive considerable traffic, smaller carriers are willing to acquiesce to this model enabling free conferencing providers to capitalize.

Though margins are lower for free conference call providers than their paid service counterparts, so is their overhead – this sets the stage for a David and Goliath scenario. Of course, these two main types of teleconferencing services vary in form and function. However, if SOHOs and SMBs need to do more with less and appear larger than they are, free conferencing affords them “big business” tools while saving them money – a win-win for all parties involved.

