Title:
Conference Phones Bring People Together

Word Count:
508

Summary:
It is a little difficult for a group of people to hold a conversation over a
regular telephone handset. That's why conference phones exist. They enable
individuals or groups to interact with one another without needing them to be in
the same physical location. Conference phones are wonderful and innovative tools
that are quickly becoming indispensable in any type of large organization.
Understanding how they work will give you a better appreciation for this.

The Inner Work...

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The Inner Workings

Conference phones consist of microphone and speakers. These components relay
audio signals much like a speakerphone does. Conference phones are designed with
groups of people huddled around it in mind. This means they don't have to crowd
around a unidirectional audio apparatus, or worse yet, a small handset.
Conference phones are usually self-contained units that are placed at the center
of a meeting table. They connect to a regular phone wire. More advanced models
may have the option of adding more microphones to better capture all the sounds
in the entire room.

Most regular speakerphones operate in half-duplex mode. This means that the
speaker is muted whenever the microphone is activated. The reason for this is to
minimize feedback during a call. But this also creates problems. The natural

flow of a conversation is disturbed and it comes out sounding very unnatural. If anyone on the receiving end makes a sound that is picked up by their unit's microphone, the speaker's voice is cut off. If people are speaking simultaneously, the resulting audio becomes very choppy.

Conference phones on the other hand, operate in full-duplex mode. This allows all parties to speak at once without any adverse effect. It does this by using a digital signal processor which prevents feedback by eliminating speaker noise from being picked up by the microphones. This is also called echo cancellation. In effect, the digital signal processor detects the speaker signals and removes those sounds from whatever is entering the microphones. Thus, all parties can interact simultaneously without the choppiness of a typical speakerphone call.

Criteria For Judging

There are some things to look for when you are considering conference phones. The first is compatibility. You want something that is plug and play. However, this is only guaranteed with analog jacks. Several proprietary digital phone systems may hamper compatibility. The second is sound quality. You obviously want full-duplex capability. Some models have better sound quality than others so it is always a good idea to test some and compare.

Options and pricing are also major considerations when looking at conference phones. Expansion capabilities for the future might be something worth looking at. There are also units with remote controls and wireless microphones. In terms of pricing, there are several reputable manufacturers so finding a great deal will not be difficult. Finally You will want to see how well it will integrate into your office. Testing it live in your meeting room is often desirable before making a final purchase. If you cannot do a trial, try to rent the equipment first.