

HIDEF CONFERENCING

Musings From The Tech Guy

Don't just sit there: Take control of your conference (part 2 of 2)

Last time I talked about inviting callers to your conference and free-for-all conferences vs lecture conferences. In this article I'll give you some tips on conquering the bane of all conferences, noise.

Sound quality problems

Sometimes a conference can echo or sound noisy or even distorted. All of these symptoms have similar causes, the environment of one or more callers.

- Echoes are caused by one caller being near another caller. The microphone on one PC or telephone picks up the sound from another participant's telephone or PC.
- Noise in the background is usually caused by one or more callers being in a noisy environment (calling from an airport is a typical situation) or having less than good equipment (cell phones are often a culprit (particularly when used in airports, a double whammy)). Another common cause of noise is an unmuted speakerphone. Speakerphones are very good at picking up all of the sounds in a room but they can and will send all of this to the conference, even unwanted background sounds.
- Distortion is usually caused by low quality telephones or PC microphones or by poor internet connections.

If any sound quality problem arises, your mission as a moderator (should you choose to accept it) is to minimize it as quickly as possible. The tools to do this are your ears and a web browser connected to the internet.

Pull up the conference controls display and set the refresh rate to 20. Now take the first caller and change their pulldown to MUTED. If the sound does not improve almost instantly then change their pulldown back to ACTIVE. Move on to the next caller.

You should be able to find the caller(s) causing the problem very quickly and, if you are nimble with the web controls, the callers may never know that they were muted for a second or two.

Once identified, the question becomes what to do. In a large conference you probably want to leave the caller muted so that the experience for the majority of callers remains good. If it's a very small conference of three or four then you could consider talking to that user through the conference or via a back-channel such as Skype instant messages. However, do not let this debugging seriously affect the conference for the other users. Suggest a private conference later to work out the problems and/or ask for help from the support team at HiDef Conferencing (send an email to support@hidefconferencing.com initially and take it from there).

With really big conferences with hundreds of participants it may be necessary to enlist some help. Divide up the work, one of you looking after the general management and hand-raising and another person scouring the conference for anyone bringing noise or echoes with them

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You can keep the noise down and have a quiet and orderly conference but you must take charge of your conference and deal with each problem as it arises.

Cheers,
The Tech Guy

These musings from the Technical Corner are geared to users of the new HiDef Conferencing service (the orange one). Users of the older +Plus or Premium HighSpeed Conferencing service (the blue web pages) or of the ConFreeCall service or of another Vapps' service may find this helpful but the exact web page navigation, command sequences or capabilities may be different.

As always, if you have questions, comments or ideas for a new musing do let me know. I will not have time to answer all of your questions but I will answer as many as I can. I can be reached by email at: TechGuy@hidefconferencing.com

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