

Teleclasses:
What They Are and How They Can Work For You

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About the Author



Hi. My name is Soni Pitts.

I am a writer, speaker and coach whose mission is to help individuals learn how to put their spiritual learning, values and beliefs into practical use in all areas of their lives, and in turn pass that ability on to others around them.

I am the author of "50 Ways To Reach Your Goals," a free ebook available for download at my site, in addition to over a hundred of articles, white papers, worksheets and other learning products designed to help people quit living life as seen on TV and start living a life of richness, meaning and spiritual involvement. I also provide coaching, speaking and teleclass services to individuals and organizations on the same and related topics.

Feel free to stop by my site to check out these and other products, services and resources. Let me know how I can help *you* start living the life you were meant to live, today.

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Introduction

Whether we're talking about new Internet conferencing software that allows people on different coasts to view the same flash movies and slide show visuals, or multipurpose "smart phones" that are capable of practically running our lives without us, changing technology and the creative ways that people come up with to make use of it are deeply altering the way we connect to and interact with friends, colleagues, business partners and the world.

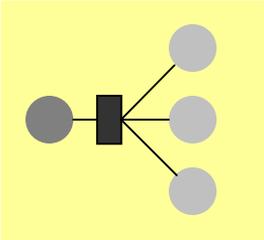
One of these innovative changes is the teleclass. Capable of connecting a group of people anywhere in size from a small handful to a hundred or more, teleclass or teleforum technology is changing the way we do business, conduct meetings, give and receive training, facilitate planning – there are many uses for this amazing concept as there are needs and creative minds to fill them.

This white paper is aimed at answering your questions about teleclasses – what they are, how they work and how you can use this time and energy-saving technology to meet your personal, organization and business needs. If you take some time to fully explore this fast-growing technology, I'm sure you'll quickly realize the benefits it can provide to you and to those you need to communicate with, wherever they may be.

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What is a teleclass?

Simplified bridge line diagram



Simply put, a teleclass is an organized and facilitated conference call. Using special multi-caller capable phone lines called *bridge lines*, the participants of the call (up to a hundred, or more, depending on the carrier) call into a single phone line, sometimes using a special participant or access code in addition to the phone number. Although it acts like a simple phone call to the participant, everyone can hear everyone else on the call and interact just as if they were in the same room.

The call organizer or instructor directs the call – creating order out of the otherwise chaotic potential by leading the conversation, structuring the agenda and directing the participation of the others on the call. Although most bridge lines offer organizer tools such as participant muting to help manage the call, it takes practice and preferably some specialized training to conduct a smoothly run teleclass or telemeeting. A good teleclass leader makes it look easy.

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How does it work?

Functionally, a bridge line call works like a regular classroom period or meeting, with the exception being that you can only hear and not see the other participants. Technologically, it works like a standard conference call, only bigger. But just how big should be a matter of careful thought and planning.

There are always trade-offs between class size, line quality and participant interaction. Too many people on the call can degrade the audio quality as every caller increases the chance of picking up an echo, bringing in static or magnifying background noise and quieter participants can get left out of the discussion. However, too few people can limit interaction and make it hard to get a group momentum going.

A happy medium for a class or other open-participant type of call is between 12 and 35, depending on the material covered and the amount of individual participation required. Of course, with call such as a meeting or planning session, the size of the call will be determined by the project team or the meeting participants and interactivity due to low call size is less of a concern, but the upper participant limit must still be taken into consideration when determining if a telemeeting is appropriate in this situation.

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Why use a teleclass-style call?

A teleclass or telemeeting is the ideal solution anytime a group of people need to participate in a collaborative and interactive manner but can't manage or don't want the hassle of bringing everyone together in the same physical location. And teleclasses were literally designed for the convenient training and education of large groups of far-flung individuals, and for making seminars, workshops and classes available to those who cannot be physically present at the live event or class.

Participants can call in from anywhere there's a phone, allowing the call organizer to set up meetings or training with people who may be stuck at home, across the country, on vacation or even on the road. And, with call recording, the entire meeting or class can be made available as a downloadable or streaming file to participants who couldn't make the call – no one gets left out of the loop!

A telemeeting\teleclass is ideal for:

- Coordinating employees or independent contractors who work from home
- Businesses and organizations with several distant branches that require some "face-to-face" interaction between staff members
- Project planning, meetings or coordination between hard-to-pin-down team members
- Distance learning, group coaching and group training
- Creating passive income from selling audio downloads of events and classes

Using the teleclass format, classes or discussions can be scheduled at times that are convenient for everyone – during regular business hours, at lunch, even at night – without worrying with the logistics of travel, accommodations or finding or renting a space. Organizers can bring in guest speakers to enlighten and engage clients and contacts, email learning guides or class work to participants before the call and even use web conferencing technology to share visual aids with those who can access the Internet while they are on the phone.

Of course, businesses and training organizations aren't the only ones who can make great use of bridge line technology. Using this format can open up a world of alternatives to traditionally frustrating and time-constrained event planning. More ideas include:

- Planning family reunions and vacations
- Organizing large-scale, multi-project events such as weddings and anniversary parties
- Collaborating on projects with friends

Even just keeping in touch with large groups of family or friends for the holidays can be as easy as making a single phone call, rather than spending a weekend calling everyone individually – plus everyone gets to catch up and share with everyone else at the same time.

The uses for bridge line technology are as varied and as innovative as needs and imagination provide.

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How much does all of this cost?

In terms of the technology itself, the format is fairly inexpensive. In fact, some bridge line service providers offer free access to their lines, albeit with some trade-offs in exclusivity, such as not being assured of the same number over a series of multiple calls. As an alternative to using a service, exclusive bridge lines can be rented or leased to individuals or businesses from local telephone service providers for a reasonable fee.

Additionally, most bridge line service providers offer several add-on options to optimize the service, such as high-quality recording and audio file format conversion and storage services, as well as toll-free lines that allow participants

to avoid paying for the cost of the call by charging the call organizer a small fee per caller. Costs associated with these options vary, but are generally quite inexpensive and can be very cost effective in terms of return on investment.

Individually, the cost to the participant is a factor of the call itself. Many bridge line service providers are centralized in large metropolitan areas, so participants may pay long distance fees for the call itself, in addition to any costs associated with the actual training or class. These costs can run from free or a few dollars for a publicly available introductory class to thousands of dollars for a full-length series of intensive training calls. It all depends on the trainer and the training involved.

For those considering participating in this style of learning, teleclasses and teleseminars are far cheaper than their live counterparts, as there are almost no overhead and logistical concerns. Also, since many people can take the same training at once, group rates can further limit cost outlay.



For prospective trainers and class leaders, the profit margin for providing teleclasses can be quite high for the same reasons. That, plus the very flexibility of the teleclass format, makes them popular with professionals who have very busy or non-traditional schedules, because they allow the call organizer to lead calls, meetings or classes from wherever they need to be – or choose to be – at any given time. In fact, [Coachville's](#) teleclass training program uses the slogan “Teach from the beach” – with good reason.

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How can I integrate this technology into my personal, business or organizational life?

Whether you are interested in taking teleclasses or seminars to further your own education, training or personal interests, or in learning to become a provider of these services, there are many sources available to meet your needs:

If you are interested in participating in teleclasses:

- Contact your or your organization's preferred trainer, coach or other instructional provider to see if they offer or would consider offering teleclass format events.
- Check out the teleclass listings at [Teleclass.com](#) – in addition to providing teleclass training and bridge line rental services, this site offers

a wealth of interesting and unique teleclass offerings of both the free and fee variety.

- Go surfing! Check out your favorite web sites, businesses and personalities to see if they provide teleseminars, guest speaker calls or other teleclass format offerings. If not, ask them to do so. Businesses in nearly every field are discovering the benefits this new technology, so the selection and availability are growing every day!

If you are interested in becoming a teleclass provider:

- Several telephone bridge rental services, such as Teleclass.com, offer training and certification courses for individuals who wish to add teleclass leadership to their portfolio of skills. Additionally, teleclass leader certification often entitles you to list your teleclass on the training site's high-traffic listings pages.
- Some professional teleclass leaders provide teleclass leader training as part of their business offerings. Ask your trainer or instructor if they offer or would consider offering teleclass leader training.
- If you do not need special listing privileges, or wish to use the technology in a more informal manner or for personal use, you can always just rent a bridge line from any provider service and go from there. I do recommend, however, that you first attend several professionally led teleclasses or telemeetings so that you can get the feel for how the process works, and how it doesn't. Like most professional activities, good teleclass leading appears quite a bit easier than it really is.
- **NOTE** – If you are considering learning to lead teleclasses or telemeetings for business purposes, your employer may pay for instructional courses and training. If you work for yourself, it's probably tax deductible. It never hurts to ask!



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Teleclass Tips and Etiquette

Creating a quality teleclass experience for a multitude of individuals at once can be a daunting task, but a few simple considerations from participants can make it much easier from the outset. Here are some tips and rules of thumb for ensuring

that your teleclass or telemeeting experience is as pleasant as possible, both for you and for the teleclass organizer:

- Always call in on a corded landline whenever possible. Cell phones and cordless phones are more commonly prone to bringing static or an echo to the call. If you have no alternative, make sure you have a strong battery and stay close to the base without walking around, in the case of cordless phones, or find a stationary spot with solid reception and no background noise in the case of cell phones. If you suspect that you have brought an echo or noise onto the call, hang up and call back in from a landline.
- Whenever possible, mute your phone when you are not actively participating. Muting reduces the line noise on a call and keeps background noise from interfering with others' ability to hear and participate. Some lines have built-in muting capabilities that can be activated either by the call leader or by the participant via the touchtone keypad on the phone itself. If this is the case, your call leader should let you know how to use these functions.
- It is not advisable to call into a bridge line with web-based telephony (phone service through the computer), as the bridge line in use may not be able to adequately handle this type of input. Calling in on a web phone line can cause echoes, static or even shut down the bridge line entirely, resulting in call failure and costly equipment downtime during resetting.
- Promptness when calling into a teleclass or teleseminar is appreciated. Most bridge lines "chime," ring or otherwise audibly signal when someone calls in, and late callers may interrupt the flow of the call. Likewise, unless absolutely necessary don't hang up before the end of the call, for the same reason
- Although announcing yourself when you call in is encouraged, if you dial in more than a few minutes into the call time, please remain quiet until you can hear what's going on, so that you don't inadvertently interrupt the call in progress.
- Be sure to deactivate call waiting *before* calling in. Others will be able to hear the tones or signals when another call comes through, and answering them can close down the call.
- Once on the call, do not press your touch-tone buttons unless specifically asked to do so. Most call recordings and other bridge line options are touch-tone activated and hitting your buttons could interfere with their functioning.

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Conclusion

The teleclass or telemeeting format is a convenient, cost effective and high return-on-investment way to learn, network, communicate and grow as a person or as a business. It allows you to:

- Teach or be taught by others that you would have never otherwise been able to interact with
- Work and learn with a community of people who are unable to physically meet – including the physically handicapped, the geographically separated and those who are constrained by political or cultural boundaries
- Create, plan, collaborate on and complete projects with participants chosen for their ability and enthusiasm – rather than their proximity to “the home office”
- Handle in a few hours projects, meetings or events that would have previously taken days or weeks to arrange
- Create an environment of effectiveness, community interaction and immediacy with everyone from family to international business partners – from the comfort of your own home or office
- And much, much more...

This fast-growing technology opens its users up to the world in much the same dramatic way the Internet did, by giving them nearly unlimited access to a nearly unlimited number of people – anywhere, anytime. Taking advantage of this highly effective new tool is a smart and easy way to increase your visibility, profitability and success – immediately, and in the long term.

For More Information

Please contact the author (see footer or title page for contact information) or secondary provider of this white paper for more information on how you can begin using teleclasses to improve the quality of your business, organizational or personal life – today!

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Resources

Bridge Rental Companies:

[Free Conference.com](http://FreeConference.com)

BridgeRentals.com

Teleclass Listing and Training Sites:

Teleclass.com

Coachville

Teleclass International