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TL V65N3: MAKING THE BEST OF MEETINGS

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Everyone Has a Place at the Table: Now What? Making the Best of the Meetings You Lead and Attend

by

Bess Robinson, Perveen Rustomfram, and Steven A. Knowlton

This article is based on a presentation at the Tennessee Library Association Annual Conference (Memphis, TN) in April 2015.

Conference Program Abstract

You know how you feel after a really good meeting...ignited, excited, empowered...part of something larger than yourself?! Meetings can inspire community, spark ideas, and advance progress toward establishing and achieving goals. Meetings can also be enervating—a frustrating waste of time for everyone involved. Panelists from will share ideas for how to prepare for and facilitate good meetings—in-person and online.

Setting the Foundation for Good Meetings (Steven A. Knowlton)

We all have to attend meetings; it's an inescapable fact of working life, and always has been. The first recorded committee meeting appears in the book of Genesis, when Joseph's brothers debated whether to kill him or sell him into slavery. But experiences of meetings vary. We've all had meeting from which we emerged drained and demoralized, chagrined that we spent a precious hour of our lives in that room. But sometimes we leave a meeting energized and enthusiastic, ready to take on any challenge. What's the difference between those two meetings?

You might think a good meeting is one where your view prevails. But if you've won the argument only by forcing others into reluctant agreement, what sort of execution of the plan can you expect? Figure 1 demonstrates a parodic example of such meetings. Instead, consider that a good meeting is one where the *process* of the meeting makes participants glad they came, regardless of the *outcome*. The key to a good meeting process is respect. Participants who feel that their *voice*, and particularly their *time*, has been respected will have a good feeling about the meeting and emerge ready to engage with the decisions made in the meeting.

There are four key ways to respect the people you have asked to attend your meeting. First, start and finish on time. Second, publish the agenda with times, discussion leaders, and purposes. Third, fix responsibility to carry out decisions that are made. And finally, consider laying the groundwork for complex or controversial discussions before the meeting.

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Figure 1. What you're trying to avoid at meetings. From Dr. Boli's Celebrated Magazine, http://drboli.com/2015/03/30/advertisement-921/. Reproduced with permission.

One thing to keep in mind for your meetings is that you have asked your attendees to give you some of their time. Time is a precious commodity, and most people feel satisfied spending their time on activities that are either productive or pleasurable. I love my job, not because it's always "fun," but because it is satisfying to accomplish work that makes a contribution to the university. Sitting in a conference room waiting for a meeting to start is neither productive nor pleasurable. Starting your meetings late sends the message that you don't respect the time of the people who have agreed to give it to you. And it sets a bad precedent. If you start five minutes late because you were waiting for a latecomer, then those who arrived on time will come five minutes late next time. And the latecomer will come five minutes after that. Pretty soon a 9:00 meeting is starting at noon.

So, how do you start meetings on time? Simply, start meetings on time. If you're the organizer, be there a few minutes early to make sure everything is working. And, at the appointed hour, begin the meeting. Those who are on time will be grateful. Those who come in late will learn that your meetings start on time. There's one final advantage--if you're thinking you should wait for that one person who always disagrees with you, you can win the vote just by being there when he or she isn't!

Starting on time is only half the battle--the meeting must end as scheduled as well. Using the agenda to control the meeting will help you achieve conclusion of meetings on time.

Make the Agenda Work for You

A meeting's agenda is more than just a list of discussion topics. It is a tool to allow participants to prepare for the meeting and regulate themselves, and to allow the moderator to maintain control of the discussion.

Figure 2. Unhelpful meeting agenda

Figure 2 shows a meeting agenda that is not helpful to keeping the meeting on time. A person coming to this meeting doesn't know much. Who's leading the discussion of each topic? Why is it being discussed? How long are we going to talk about it? What do we hope to achieve? No one (except the meeting organizer) knows.

Library Meeting Agenda
December 32, 2014

Time	Item	Presenter
10:00	Greetings	S. Smith
10:05	Minutes of Last Meeting—approval required	K. Cole
10:06	Budget Update—informational discussion	R. Johnson
10:15	Website Redesign—seeking feedback for future plans	T. McNab
10:30	Proposed Revision to Fines Policy—second reading, discussion, final vote	A. Doyle
10:45	Upcoming Events—information discussion	B. Hayes

Figure 3. A helpful meeting agenda

Figure 3 illustrates a much more helpful agenda. If there's a topic in which an attendee has a special interest, he or she can speak to the presenter ahead of time to make sure all the important aspects will be covered. If an item needs pre-meeting preparation, the attendees are warned. For example, attendees should know to review the minutes of last meeting ahead of time--so the meeting doesn't grind to a halt while everyone reads the minutes. Similarly, attendees will know to review the website and come prepared with suggestions, and to have given some thought to the proposed fines policy. Also, knowing the point of the discussion helps attendees focus their comments. Informational discussions allow for more free-wheeling banter, but debates leading to a vote will hopefully be focused on the direct question of how to vote.

The most useful aspect of this agenda may be the times. If attendees knows that an item will be discussed for ten minutes, it gives them the tools to regulate themselves in the length of their comments. It also gives the moderator a tool to restrain discussion. It will come as no surprise at 10:29 to tell a participant he or she has one more minute before discussion ends.

Occasionally, a topic turns out to require more time than planned. In these cases, the moderator must exercise judgment. It is never correct to unilaterally extend the length of the meeting; remember, your attendees have already given up some of their time, and you must respect that. However, the moderator may push less-urgent items off the agenda, in which case, attendees must be told the amount of extra time added for discussion, to continue to keep the discussion within time. Or else the moderator may table the discussion for a later meeting.

Fix Responsibility

One aspect of respecting your attendee's time and voice is to turn their decisions into action. Participants in a meeting may devote considerable thought and time to making the right decision about the questions before them. But a decision that never gets acted upon is really just an opinion. To make that thought and time into reality, someone must be assigned to implement the decision.

In addition to fixing responsibility for taking action, there must also be a mechanism for accountability. Distribute meeting notes so that all attendees know who will be taking care of each item. On the agenda for the next meeting, ask for a follow-up report from the assignee.

Talk about Matter before the Meeting

Meetings are a vital way to share information and come to decisions. But some matters may be too weighty or emotionally tense to be raised for the first time in a group. Consider a discussion about a 20-page draft of a request for proposals. If such a document is distributed for the first time at a meeting, most of the meeting time will be spent waiting for attendees to page through it. Distribute it ahead of time so participants can read it and understand it.

Other matters may be easy to understand but hard to face in public. Proposals to change a long-standing practice are often like this. For example, you may want to disband the reference desk and adopt a roving reference model. If you spring this upon a colleague who has served on the reference desk since 1989, the shock may be enough to derail the discussion. Regardless of the merits of the proposal, some may start out defending the old way simply as a matter of pride. And then, even if they are intellectually persuaded, the question of saving face may make them stick to their initial stance.

Before the meeting, casually visit your colleagues in their offices. Let them know what you're thinking of--they can be shocked, blow off steam, and air their reservations in private. You might find that they can be brought around in private with a friendly chat where the very same arguments presented in a meeting would fail to

persuade. Even if you can't change their minds, you'll at least be prepared by knowing what the objections are. And you'll have respected your colleagues by allowing them to be emotionally prepared for a possibly shocking proposal. They'll be in a better position to articulate their points and keep the meeting moving. And, sometimes, you might even be able to achieve consensus before the official meeting is held.

There is one caveat to this advise: In certain governmental bodies, meetings are subject to the Tennessee Open Meeting Law or federal Sunshine Act. In those circumstances, it may be impermissible to discuss matters in private. Check with a knowledgeable authority if you are unsure.

In these ways--by starting on time, distributing an effective agenda, assigning responsibility and preparing attendees for complex or controversial discussions–you'll stand a much better chance of having a meeting where everyone feels like their time and their voice was respected. And happy attendees make for a happy meeting. Don't let the long talkers win by default!

Meetings via Conference Calls (Bess Robinson)

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1993), the first reference to conference calling was made in 1934. The concept "[pertains] to or [designates] a service or facility which enables three or more persons on separate lines to hold a joint conversation or conference by telephone."

Innumerable articles have been written about conference calls. A 2014 survey of 500 full-time workers by InterCall, a large conference and collaborations service provider (Collins, 2014), revealed that—surprisingly— the top 10 things that people do during conference calls have nothing at all to do with the business of the call!

Table 1

Top 10 Things People Do While on a Conference Call

65% do other work	43% check social media
63% send emails	25% play video games
55% eat or make food	21% shop online
47% go to the restroom	9% exercise
44% text	6% take other calls

The survey also found that:

- 39% admitted to dropping off a call without saying so, so they could pretend to have participated the whole time;
- 27% reported falling asleep during a conference call; and
- 5% said that they'd had a friend take a work conference call in their place! (Collins, 2014)

Advantages and Disadvantages of Conference Calls

Benefits of conference calls include the fact that they save the time and expense of travel—which is also easier on the environment—and are often shorter than face-to-face meetings. And participants can multi-task!

The main disadvantage—and difference between face-to-face meetings and conference calls—is that you can't see other participants—and missing all non-verbal cues, such as facial expression and body language, can really be problematic. Another disadvantage is . . . participants can multi-task, which can also be an impediment to the progress and success of a meeting.

Here are some tips and tricks to facilitate conference calls and help avoid obstacles that can arise from having no visual clues whatsoever during a meeting.

Before a Conference Call

These tips may seem obvious, but ignoring any one of them could spell disaster.

- Know what time the call starts in your time zone.
- Secure a meeting location that's comfortable, accommodates all participants, and is free of background noise. Judy I. Veazie's (2013) suggestion that having "participants at the same site gather in a conference room. . . . will lessen the isolation and assure better outcomes" (p. 9) makes sense: Being together could help everyone more focused than if they were in their own individual spaces.

- Be sure all equipment works. Test your connections. Land lines often have better, more reliable reception than cell or cordless phones. If you're using a speakerphone, consider putting it in the middle of a round table, so everyone is equidistant from it.

Having a computer at the meeting will facilitate sharing relevant documents and taking notes.

Every meeting conducted by conference call should have a leader (or facilitator or moderator). If you're in this position, your responsibilities include emailing these items well in advance:

- a document with both the dial-in numbers and codes AND the agenda,
- all presentation materials, and
- all relevant documents/information/reports, etc.

In addition, you should:

- establish ground rules,
- direct and manage the conversation,
- keep participants focused on the agenda,
- engage attendees (include everyone in the conversation; don't let a single person dominate),
- keep an eye on the time,
- arrange for someone to take notes,
- assign action items, and
- close the meeting.

As a Participant

If you're not the leader of the conference call, you may still influence the efficiency of the experience.

- Don't talk while driving—even if you have Bluetooth. This could be dangerous (or illegal!) and you risk bad reception and dropped calls.
- Consider using a good-quality headset.
- Turn off call waiting.
- Complete all action items ahead of time.
- Jot down notes or ideas or questions relevant to agenda items, and a list of what you need from other participants.
- Have all relevant materials organized so you may access quickly what you need.
- Call in a couple of minutes early.
- Imagine that everyone can see you: Sit up straight.
- Use the Mute, rather than the Hold, button to eliminate noises that you don't want others to hear (including those made when you shift position on a leather chair!). Pressing Hold risks subjecting colleagues to update beeps, messages, or Muzak. Don't forget to unmute when you have something to say.
- Announce your presence (even if you're not going to say anything), and when you leave or return.
- Because no one can see any visual clues or feedback that could help interpret what you are saying, be especially aware of your voice. In "How to Steer a Conference Call Like a Champ," Ross McCammon (2015) writes, "What is underrated but necessary here is the importance of your voice: its quality, clarity, volume, and authority. Speak with a slightly intense disposition. Let your voice guide the meeting as much as the content of your statements. Make up for the intensity you can't convey visually with an intensity you can convey verbally." Enunciate and project—especially if you're far from the phone. Vary your tone. Speak slowly.
- Similarly, be aware of your words. Be careful about humor or sarcasm. Veazie (2013) cautions against saying anything that could damage or detract from your professional image. Because you don't know who may overhear you and calls may be recorded, be "careful to avoid saying anything derogatory" (p. 11).
- Finally—and very importantly—keep focused. While there are innumerable possible distractions, you don't want to be caught unable to respond when someone calls on you, or ask about something that was just said.

During the Conference Call

Ideally, the meeting starts when everyone's online. People who drift in after the meeting starts interrupt the speaker and the momentum. Having a special speaker say a few words at the beginning of the call could motivate participants to join in early. Richie Frieman (2013) suggests adding to the invitation something like,

"We hope you can join the call promptly at 2:00 p.m., but if you are running late, please wait to come on the line in five-minute increments, so as not to interrupt the speaker."

In addition:

- Break the call into segments according to the agenda items. Announce each, ask for questions and comments, then move to the next segment.
- Remember that there's often a delay between the time someone actually stops speaking and when everyone hears what was said. This can be problematic—not only if someone's trying to be funny, but even if she or he is simply trying to contribute. Pause for a couple of seconds before jumping in.
- Open your remarks with a little greeting ("Good morning!") and *briefly* state your name and role before speaking to give context to who you are. In "The 7 Rules of Conference Call Etiquette," Bo Barron (2012) notes that when people introduce themselves, "it almost entirely eliminates interruptions." If someone has a question, they'll know it's you who could answer it, and whoever is taking minutes will thank you!
- Give others the chance to speak—or answer, if you've asked a question. When you find yourself speaking at the same time as someone else, Ross McCammon (2015) suggests that you "determine quickly if you are going to power through or concede. If you're going to power through, then POWER THROUGH AND TAKE THEM DOWN!"
- Address people by their names during the call.

Finally—just like in a face-to-face meeting, the call is over when

- the agenda has been completed,
- the meeting is recapped,
- questions have been asked and answered,
- actionable tasks are assigned (and a due date is set), and
- everyone is thanked for participating.

Online Meetings (Perveen Rustomfram)

Online meetings, also referred to as e-meetings, electronic meetings, and virtual meetings, have become exceedingly popular in the workplace. Investopedia defines an e-meeting as one "that takes place over an electronic medium rather than in the traditional face-to-face fashion." Videoconferencing is the most advanced technology with which these long distance meetings are conducted (Julsrud, Hjorthol, & Denstadli, 2012). It involves two or more participants at multiple locations communicating simultaneously through the use of video technology and sound, with the capability of uploading and sharing documents, videos, and live screens. With the increasing availability of high speed broadband technology at reasonable prices and advances in computing technologies, internet-based systems have taken wide precedence over room-based systems.

This technology has been successfully utilized for one-on-one meetings, board meetings, multi-site meetings, training at a distance, library instruction, reference consultations, book and author talks, and interviews. Outside the library field, it has been used in telemedicine to provide healthcare to people in remote areas and in the criminal justice system to take depositions from prisoners from secure jail cells.

Online meetings are not simply a combination of talking over the phone and meeting in person. They provide opportunities for conducting business in a uniquely enhanced environment. We need to learn how to prepare for, manage, and conduct them.

Planning and Preparation

The process of planning a virtual meeting is the same as that of planning a face-to-face meeting with a few additional considerations.

- Technical aspects—Since e-meetings take place in a technologically enriched environment, an investment in equipment and perhaps a videoconferencing program is inevitable. You will need a computer, laptop, or mobile device; a webcam or a built-in camera; a videoconferencing program such as WebEx, BlueJeans, or Google+ Hangouts; an Internet connection; adequate bandwidth; and a headset with a microphone.
- Set up the meeting–The organizer of the meeting will need to create a meeting and give it a name, a date, and a time with the time zone specified—if you miss this little detail, you may not get full participation. Then, send out meeting invitations with the URL to the participants well in advance. Include any information about the equipment needed and directions for entering the meeting. Participants need as much lead time as possible to be able to have all the necessary components and software in place.

- Send out the agenda and upload documents—It is a good idea to ask for input on the agenda via email and pare it down. Upload the agenda and any other documents that you may want participants to be familiar with ahead of time so they have plenty of time to look at them.
- How do the tools work?—It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the meeting software support tools so you can use them to the fullest (Heinrich, 2005, p. 14).
    - Check out the capability for uploading documents in advance and gain familiarity with using the function. PowerPoint presentations, videos, graphics, and Word documents are some of the types of files that will hold the attention of the participants. For example, you could use one slide for the agenda and then have each point on a separate slide. Avoid using too much text and prefer bulleted items, charts, and visuals where appropriate (Heinrich, 2005, p. 14).
    - Whiteboard—If there is a whiteboard application, have someone jot down points during brainstorming and discussions so participants may follow the discussion on the screen (Heinrich, 2005, p. 14).
    - Polling—If possible, ask for a virtual show of hands to speed up consensus. This is also less intimidating because it is anonymous (Heinrich, 2005, p. 14).
    - Chat—Assign someone to keep an eye on chat and to relay chat comments and questions to the group
- Trial-run, anyone?—Offering to do a trial-run with participants ahead of time can help reduce anxiety and assure timely participation on the day of the meeting.
- Camera placement —Think about where the camera will be placed. If you are in a room with multiple participants, angle it so most people are visible. If by yourself, see that the camera is on you and not on your ear as happened to one of our instruction librarians when she was teaching a class. It is easier these days to ensure that the camera is on you because a lot of the programs have an inset with your image in it.
- Lighting—Make sure that there is enough lighting on the participants, especially if there are quite a few around the table, so no one is in the shadows. If there is a window in the room, make sure that participants sit facing the window to avoid being backlit.
- Headsets—Headsets with a microphone are recommended to reduce the problem of an echo feedback. Noise canceling headphones have the further advantage of eliminating outside noises and make for a better listening experience. If you are using a laptop or external microphone, make sure that it is placed at least a foot away from the speakers so it does not carry the sound from the speakers back to the audience.
- What to wear—The experts advise participants to stay away from wearing stripes, herringbone patterns, plaids and Hawaiian-style floral designs (Barlow, Barlow, & Peter, 2002) because they create a "'strobing' effect" (McCammon, 2011, p. 20) for the persons on the other end. Wearing very bright colors is not recommended either—for instance, Barlow, Barlow, and Smith (2002) warn that "you may look great in bright yellow, but do not wear it on camera because you will look like a giant canary or a banana" (p. 92). Neutral solid clothing and pastels are recommended since they do not detract attention from your message to your appearance. If you like flashy jewelry, you may want to take it off during the online meeting because it may reflect light and will be hard on the eyes of participants.
- Your environment—Pay attention to the area within the field of view of the camera. If you are at home you may want to remove unfolded laundry, or tidy up a bit, and put away drinks or snacks. Some experts suggest setting the stage and placing objects that may be symbolic of the values you may want to project. However, take care not to place glass art objects which may reflect glare.
- Recording—If you are going to record a meeting, let people know in advance so no one is surprised.
- Join early—Join the meeting at least 15 minutes early so that you can take care of any glitches that occur —if browsers are not up to date or plug-ins need to be downloaded, you can take care of those details. Ideally, you would have checked on this a day or two before as well.

During the Meeting

Some processes, procedures, and behaviors are ideally suited to online meetings:

- Moderator for monitoring the meeting—a moderator, preferably not the organizer of the group, can inform participants of the ground rules such as the length of time each person is allowed to speak, the use of mute buttons, the length of breaks, and how people will be recognized to speak. If some participants are more talkative, the moderator may also explicitly ask others to voice their opinions. A moderator can play an important role in ensuring the smooth running of the meeting.
- How to behave—Even if you are not speaking, remember that the other people in the videoconference are still able to see you.

- Sit up straight –McCammon (2011) suggests sitting up straight and trying to look like a news anchor, so others can see you clearly. Reclining, slouching positions are not ideal for clear viewing of participants (p. 20).
- No multitasking—People can tell when you are multitasking because they can see that your eyes are roving the screen. The tap-tap of the keyboard and the click of the mouse can give you away by showing that you are not paying attention to the proceedings. Be considerate, and don't tap your fingers, shuffle papers, or carry on side conversations when the camera at your site is live. In fact, you have to make more of an effort to listen and stay on task because the action is happening elsewhere.
- Of course, all the desirable behaviors of face-to-face meetings apply, so dozing, putting your head in your hands, eating, and chewing gum are all to be avoided.
- How to speak/listen—McCammon (2011) outlines the prescribed manner in which participants should speak and listen. When talking to someone face-to-face, we look directly at the person. If you do the same in a videoconference, "this makes you look squirrelly" (p. 22). It is best to look at the camera when you are talking so people feel that you are looking straight at them and not avoiding their gaze. When you are listening, the best practice is to look at the screen. In addition, if you are in a meeting where people are not familiar with who you may be, always identify yourself before you speak.

- The lag—Be mindful that there may be a little lag in the relay of the sound, so wait a couple of seconds before speaking. This allows the other speaker to be completely done before you start.
- Audio Interference—To avoid audio interference, microphones at all sites should be muted except for the site where someone is speaking.
- Ask questions—Ideally, the leader or moderator of the meeting should watch for silent spaces and invite more participation by asking questions.
- Be concise/don't ramble on—Be concise while weighing in on a discussion; remember that "normal speaking time is about two words per second. So a focused 50-word, five-sentence contribution should take less than 30 seconds" (Heinrich, 2005 p. 14).

Finish the meeting on time and assign responsibility before signing off.

Advantages of Online Meetings

The numerous advantages of online meetings have made them exceedingly popular.

- Tremendously cost effective—Having virtual meetings can save thousands of dollars in travel expenses. The cost of an initial investment for the purchase of equipment and software can be easily offset by the savings incurred. The repeated costs of all participants traveling to a meeting, hotel reservations for overnight stays, and per diem expenses are going to be much more in comparison. During these times of lean travel budgets, online may often be the only possible way to meet.
- Very time efficient—Online meetings are extremely time efficient and can save an organization hundreds of hours (which translate into dollars) in travel time, as well as time away from the office. The possibility of having short frequent meetings is an added benefit.
- Record meetings—The ability to record meetings is a definite advantage. Distributing the recording to those unable to attend is a great way to help them catch up on the proceedings. If there is a dispute or doubt about how a particular discussion turned out or who said a particular piece, participants can revisit the recording and verify the content in question. The recording can also be a useful guide for typing up the notes of the meeting.
- Uploading and sharing documents, videos, and charts—It's often difficult to send lengthy documents, videos, PowerPoint presentations, and other large files via email. All of these can be easily made available to participants by uploading them to the meeting site. In addition, sharing them during the course of the meeting helps everyone stay on the same page.
- Saves the environment—When people travel less, fewer natural resources are expended and our carbon footprint is reduced.

Disadvantages of Online Meetings

There are some disadvantages associated with online meetings.

- It's not the real thing—The synergy of a face-to-face meeting is difficult to achieve in an online meeting. Facial gestures, hand-shakes, and other subtleties that can be so meaningful in person-to-person communication are lost. Although online meetings do not replace the effectiveness of face-to-face meetings, they do get the job done.

- Murphy's Law—Technology is a wonderful thing when it works, but so problematic when it hiccups and fails. A number of technology related glitches can occur--
  - Audio delay—Mentioned earlier, an audio delay can interrupt the smooth flow of the meeting.
  - Video delay—Coupled with the audio delay, there can also be a video delay which may create some choppiness in the video or may cause asynchronous audio and video relay.
  - Browser plug-ins—I have often been late getting into an online meeting because the browser plug-ins are out of date and the latest plug-in needs to be downloaded. This seems to be a problem especially with networked computers where the responsibility of updating the plug-ins is not your own. I have had this happen even when I have downloaded the appropriate plug-ins the day before when everything worked fine. But between the time of the last update and the time of the meeting, another update may have occurred.
  - Freezing, low bandwidth, or gremlins?—And then there is the situation when, for no apparent reason, everything freezes! This may occur more frequently with the free programs such as Skype and Google+ Hangouts. Some attribute it to low bandwidth at the provider's end. Others think that it could be a result of heavy traffic on the Internet at the user's end. Or it could be some inexplicable hitch. Another problem that occurs is that the audio may fail for some unknown reason. It was fine when you tested it 15 minutes before the meeting, but just as you go on, you can't get it to work. Have a contingency plan for when Murphy's Law is in operation—perhaps you can decide to turn off the video or just have a conference call instead.
- Less intimacy—If there are a larger number of people in the room, there can be less intimacy because the camera needs to be pulled back to accommodate everyone, and this can result in smaller, rather unclear images of the people.
- Camera shyness—most people are a little intimidated during the first few minutes of the meeting. They are self-conscious about being visible to all the other participants and may not know how to act. In the programs that make a self-image available in an inset, people are often not used to looking at themselves, and that can be a little disconcerting.

Table 2

Selected Name Brands of Videoconferencing Services

For-Fee Services	Free Services
Adobe Connect Meetings	Google+ Hangouts
BlueJeans	Skype
GoToMeeting	Facetime
iCohere	
WebEx	

Table 2 shows selected brands of some common free and for-fee services. Most of the for-fee services offer subscriptions on a sliding scale depending on the number of participants at each meeting. Our own Tennessee Library Association uses GoToMeeting for its board meetings.

Of the free services, Google+ Hangouts can accommodate ten people. However, if you want to use it for meetings with all the features, you will need to pay a monthly fee. Skype's one-on-one meeting application is free, but for multiple people to meet, you will need to pay a monthly fee. Facetime is restricted to Apple products and may be used for one-on-one meetings only.

We hope this article has given you a helpful overview of how to conduct meetings, either in-person, via conference call, or online. With the plethora of technologies available today, it is possible to find the tools that best suit your unique needs.

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Bess Robinson, Head, Research and Instruction Services at University of Memphis, can be reached at merobnsn@memphis.edu.

Perveen Rustomfram, Government Publications Librarian at University of Memphis, can be reached at prstmfrm@memphis.edu.

Steve Knowlton, Collection Development Librarian at University of Memphis, can be reached at sknwlton@memphis.edu.

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