

3b - Conference Call Options

Recommendation

Traditional conference call services (including UberConference for advanced features) are probably the best bet for most ALL-SIS users. These are free for the host, but the caller still needs to pay long-distance charges. In the rare instances where a toll free number is necessary, ALL-SIS could look into paying for a service like StartMeeting.

A summary of options is below.

Free for Host, not for Callers

<p>Traditional conference call services These services provide a website where a host schedules a conference call. Participants then receive (usually by email) a call-in number and PIN they can use to connect to the call. There is typically no charge for the host to create a conference call, but the telephone number is not toll-free and participants will have to pay normal long-distance rates to make the call.</p> <p>Well-known and reliable services include FreeConferenceCall.com and Rondee, though there are numerous such services to choose from. Most also offer a toll-free option that charges the cost of the call back to the host (see above).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Free ● Easy to use ● Supports voice numbers ● Many offer call recording option ● Extremely high caller limit (e.g. FreeConferenceCall.com allows up to 96 callers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Callers must pay normal long distance rates ● Typically voice only (no video, no screen sharing)
<p>UberConference UberConference somewhat fits into the category of traditional conference call services except that it provides a host with more sophisticated admin controls via the web during a call. These features include call recording, ability to mute specific callers at any time, ability to "earmuff" (effectively put them on hold) specific callers at anytime. The web controls also indicate to host who is speaking at any given time. When the call is complete, a call summary is emailed to participants that includes call duration and statistics about who talked the most and who talked the least. The service is currently in closed beta, but invites are readily available on the web.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Free ● All the same functionality as traditional conference call services ● Web-based controls for host to control call ● Supports voice numbers ● Call recording 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Still in closed beta ● Audio and voice number-accessible only (no video, no screen sharing) ● Low caller limit for new accounts (5) but easily raisable to 17 callers
<p>CallVine iPhone app that provides ability to host and join a conference call. Host schedules a call, which sends the usual sort of invite with a call-in number and PIN. The host and any caller with the CallVine app will be able to connect within the app using wifi or cellular data and use high definition audio quality. Non-app users will connect over a normal phone connection, using standard definition audio. During the call, the host will have admin control of the call within the app to do things such as record the call, add additional callers, mute callers, place callers on hold, disconnect callers, or make another caller the host. The app is free, as is the hosting service, however callers do not receive a toll-free call in number and are subject to normal long distance rates. Once a user has the app installed, they are provided access to a web-based</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Free ● Admin controls for host ● Call recording ● HD audio (for app users) ● Supports voice numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host must have app installed ● App only currently available for iPhone (i.e., no Android) ● Limited to 10 callers in conference ● Host is limited to only four hours of conference calls per month

dashboard with all the same admin controls and scheduling functionality as found in the app.

Free for Callers, not for Host

<p>Skype VOIP client software that supports voice and video conferencing. Conferences must be initiated from a user with a Skype subscription that includes video conferencing. (Subscriptions start at \$4.49/month.) A business manager is available that allows an organization to create member accounts and assign specific features to specific users. However, in the case of video conferencing, a subscription must be purchased by the organization for each user it wants to have this functionality, at a price of at least \$7/user. Could limit this to a single subscription if one person hosts all SIS conference calls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Screen sharing ● Can add voice numbers to call (via Skype Premium subscription or credits) ● video quality is superior to that of Google+ Hangouts and Meetings.io 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call host must have Skype Premium subscription or video conference subscription purchased by business account ● Business account cannot assign video conference privileges from one subscription to multiple users (i.e., must buy separate subscription for every user who will host a call).
<p>WebEx Cisco's enterprise solution for web meetings. High end features (VOIP, video conferencing, voice number accessible, screen sharing, document sharing, whiteboard, etc.) but high end prices. Free plan offers only 3 users (w/only 1 host license) and limited features. \$24/month for 8 users/1 host. \$49/month for 25 users/3 hosts. (Call for larger group pricing.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Almost every feature you'd want with professional/enterprise-level quality ● Free for participants with VOIP/computer microphone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Too expensive for realistic SIS use ● Users calling into conference from voice number must pay long distance ● Toll-free call-in still costs extra (pay by minute), even with premium plan
<p>GoTo Meeting Citrix's enterprise solution, a high end competitor to WebEx. Same high end features. Same premium pricing. Starts at \$49/month for 25 users. Priced per host (so no multi-host plans like WebEx).</p>	<p>Same high end features as WebEx</p>	<p>Same cons as WebEx, making it largely unfeasible for SIS use.</p>
<p>Various toll-free conference call services Most phone-based, traditional conference call services (see below) offer a toll-free option. In this scenario, the host schedules a call on the website and participants are provided the toll-free call in number and PIN. The host is then charged for the call at a set rate (usually a few cents) per minute per caller. (I believe this is the type of service AALL provides for SISes and committees, and those per minute per user charges are charged back to the SIS or committee.) The cheapest such service I've found is StartMeeting, which charges 3.9 cents per minute per caller.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Free for callers ● Supports voice numbers ● Often provides call recording option ● Some (e.g. StartMeeting) include a meeting "wall" online w/screen sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charges can be hard to predict unless duration and number of callers are set ● This option already available via AALL ● Supports only voice numbers

Free for Everyone

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<p>Google+ Hangouts Web-based audio/video conferencing tool integrated with Google's social networking site. Extremely easy to use. All participants' video displays in small windows at the bottom of the screen while video of person speaking displays in larger main window (switches automatically). Audio and video quality were as good or better than other services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Screen sharing ● Works with smartphones and tablets (requires iPhone or Android app) ● Document sharing/collaboration (via Google Docs) ● Good video quality ● Can call and add voice numbers to Hangout (free feature at least through the end of the year). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited to 10 participants ● Requires every user to have their own Google+ account (unless added to Hangout via voice call) ● Voice numbers must be added by current participant (i.e., can't call in, must be called)
<p>Meetings.io Web-based audio/video conferencing tool similar to Google+ Hangouts. Doesn't require any participant to have an account, even the host. Provides URL the host can share with other participants which gives them instant access to the conference. Video quality was noticeably inferior to Google+. Displays all participants in same sized-windows.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Screen sharing ● Can add voice numbers to conference (feature not available to everyone; pricing not transparent...yet) ● Document sharing (via file upload/download). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited to 5 participants ● Inferior video quality ● Problems recognizing participant audio/video hardware ● Voice calling pricing not clear ● Voice numbers must be added by current participant
<p>CrowdCall Mobile app that allows host to add conference attendees from contact list. CrowdCall then calls all attendees. Free for calls with up to 20 participants (in selected countries). Host can host up to ten calls per day for free.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Calls participants rather than making them keep track of numbers and PINs ● Free ● Large participant limit ● Supports voice numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supports ONLY voice numbers (no web audio, no video, no screen sharing, etc.) ● Can't add callers after conference starts ● If participant doesn't answer initial call, can't join call later ● Host must have iPhone or Android app

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