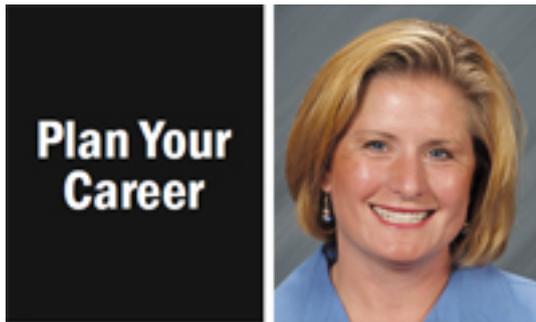


## Practical advice for conference callers

Written by Julie Desmond  
Friday, 02 September 2011 10:13

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**By Julie Desmond**  
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The great thing about a conference call over an in-person meeting is that it provides the opportunity to do other things, right?

You can log into a conference call a minute or two late and still be present because those first few minutes are just small talk, anyway, right? Wrong. Small talk before any meeting, live or online, is critical warm-up time. This is your chance to measure the mood of your co-workers and to nurture your professional network. Use small-talk-time to learn something new about one person on the call. For example, I learned on my call today that one of my co-workers is relocating. You just never know what might come up.

Once the meeting is called to order, use your mute button so you can get a few things done while listening to the call. Not. Just as you would in a live meeting, it is imperative that you stay focused throughout the meeting. First, somebody felt it mattered to have you on the call; second, you might get called on for a fact or opinion.

On a lengthy call recently, only one person was on the phone, while the rest of us talked around the telephone on the table. Honestly, I kind of forgot she was on the line. When someone called her by name to ask a question, I panicked slightly – was she still there? Was she paying attention? Would she know someone needed an answer from her now? Of course to all of the above. Her response was quick and calm, as if she'd been right there all along, which of course she had been.

Staying tuned in on a conference call requires some extra effort. Use the spreadsheets or agenda provided to keep track of the conversation, especially if some of your co-workers tend to digress. The agonizing question, Where were we? can be avoided if people are paying attention. I use a highlighter on my computer to note our place in a conversation, even if it doesn't pertain to me. I also take notes, even on items that, again, may not pertain to me.

Many jobs required attending standing meetings over the phone or in person. Keeping a file containing your notes from one meeting to the next will help you maintain the habit of note-taking.

Don't dismiss a meeting as less important simply because no one knows what you're wearing. Be good to your co-workers, yourself and your career by being there, 100 percent, for every

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