



What is teleconferencing? Why do we have it?

Distance doesn't matter that much anymore! We now have quality teleconferencing equipment available so that we can conduct live voice and video calls to others. Two groups can now hold simultaneous meetings while still at different locations. Teleconferencing is a great tool – and easy to use.

What teleconference equipment do we have?

The VTEL tele-conferencing unit consists of a personal computer, large TV monitor, and a remote-controlled video camera. As currently set up this VTEL unit uses an ISDN telephone line to make calls. Either direct calls, or if needed, multi-user (or group) calls can be made. These calls allow live voice and video transmission between the sites, as well as document sharing. Please note that calls are limited to others with compatible conference equipment and ISDN lines.

How does it work?

It is quite simple to use this equipment – very similar to placing an ordinary telephone call. To make a direct call to another site you must know their ISDN telephone number. To actually place the calls requires several steps: 1) turn on the computer, monitor and camera (instruction on this process with photos is attached). 2) Using the remote control press the red “call/hang up” button. 3) At this point you will be prompted to type in the ISDN number of the site you want to call, and then press again the “call/hang up” button on the remote. At this point you should see the called person on the monitor and may start speaking. To answer an incoming call is easy – it's automatic (as long as the equipment listed in step 1 is turned on)!

To make a multiple site conference call is slightly different. This type of call must be started by the unit in Rutledge from their computer because it is the Multi-point unit (MCU) controller. Arrangements for call time must be coordinated with the Rutledge office well ahead of the intended conference date in order to insure the MCU is available.

Does the computer with this system work on the Internet?

The personal computer is capable of connecting to the Internet, though at this time none are set up to do so. Plans are being developed to connect these to the Internet in the future.

Can I share a document on my computer with the person I am calling?

Yes, with this system you can do document sharing. We will be showing how to do this, and there are step-by-step instructions included on our training handout packet.

What other tools do I have to work with?

Glad you asked. In addition to the teleconferencing equipment itself you have an LCD projector and an Elmo document camera. The Elmo document camera allows you to make paper documents viewable through the VTEL unit during a call. The LCD projector can be connected to the back of the document camera in order to project the documents from the Elmo to a screen.

In most cases, the Elmo should be set up already. To use it, turn on the power via a switch on the left side of the machine and turn on the lights by pressing the button on the front of the machine. To access the Elmo image, click menu on the V-Touch remote. Then, select video to access the video control screen. Click on Pick Camera to bring up a selection of camera sources, and choose the camera with the projector image. This should allow you to display the document on the screen.

To use the LCD projector, contact Chris Osborn at the number below.

How do I arrange for a teleconference with other Tele-democracy sites?

At this point in time, the way to schedule a conference is to call Chris Osborn, the Tele-democracy coordinator by phone at (865) 828-5927, by email at chris@clinchpowell.org, or by fax at (865) 828-5212. Chris will then contact all the sites that you need to use and schedule with the site coordinators so that the room will be available. Chris will be at one of the locations during the meeting to make sure all the equipment is functioning correctly.

How do I arrange a teleconference with other non-Tele-democracy sites?

The first point to consider is the other person's access to compatible equipment. Our VTEL uses ISDN BRI/128 kb/sec telephone line. Additionally, the other sites equipment must be H.320 compatible. Please note that it does NOT have to be VTEL equipment – just compatible. A point-to-point call can be made or received directly just as described above (direct dial of the ISDN telephone number).

A multi-point call must also be on compatible equipment. And arrangements must be made well in advance with the Rutledge Tele-democracy site.

If teleconferencing equipment is not available, you may consider contacting a local Kinko's copy center and inquire about their current rates for rental of their teleconferencing room. All Tele-Democracy sites will be registered as “

What do I do if I am experiencing a problem?

At this point in time, if there is a problem, contact Chris immediately. In the future, there may be a troubleshooting manual at each site, designed to help you solve simple problems with easy solutions. Please do not change any hardware or software configurations without contacting Chris first. This equipment is very expensive and should only be worked on by qualified technical engineers from Sprint.