

# Managing Multipoints

There are two modes of operating a multipoint videoconference:

- voice-activated: the site that speaks is seen on screen
- continuous presence: several sites can be seen on screen at once

If a multipoint videoconference is to work effectively there are a number of protocols to be established from the beginning. Most importantly:

- **Know who is in charge.** Sometimes this might change during a session. Make sure everyone knows who is in charge. If you don't send out this information beforehand, then establish this as soon as the session begins.
- **Act like you're in charge.** Be organised, have an agenda, give clear concise instructions etc. Make sure everyone knows the 'rules' eg keep your microphone muted unless speaking.

## Opening a multipoint

- **Always be on time.** If you're unforeseeably detained, ring the conference organiser to notify them. If you haven't linked to the session, people assume there are technical problems.
- **Be first on the bridge if you are the Chair.** It is a good idea to show a graphic that announces the name of the session and asks all participants to activate their mute button.

## Seeing and hearing

- **Use 'mute'.** Always activate your mute button before calling into a multipoint. If you don't, your site may appear on screen for all to see and hear! Keep the mute button activated unless directed otherwise by the Chair. This prevents distracting sound being transmitted to all sites.
- **Don't say anything you don't want heard.** As an extra measure, always assume that microphones are 'live' and be careful of what you say in any videoconference.
- **Have the camera aimed at who or what you want seen.** In voice-activated mode, when the picture switches to show your site, it will show whatever you have lined up - it doesn't automatically switch to the person who speaks unless you have a camera that follows voice.

## Human issues

- **Don't ignore any site/s.** In voice-activated mode, it's very easy to become involved in a discussion with the site that is currently on your screen. In continuous presence, people may appear as very small images on the screen and you may ignore them in favour of your own site. Remember that there are several other sites in the session and you should call on every site regularly to contribute. In particular, NEVER get into a personal conversation with one site - this is very excluding for all others.
- **Direct questions.** If you ask an open question eg "How many clients did you see this week?" people will be confused about who you want to answer. As you are looking directly at each of them (through the screen) they will either all answer at once, or not answer at all because they are confused. Direct your question to a particular person or site.
- **Seeing the site to which you are talking.** In voice-activated mode, it is sometimes awkward to initiate a conversation with site C if site B is still on your screen. For example, you might wish to observe the participants' reactions as you ask a particular question. It's a good idea to ask the site to which you wish to direct the question, to speak to you first. This is not a technique that needs to be used every time you pose a question, but in some situations will be of benefit.