

WEB CONFERENCING:

Everything you always wanted to know but were too afraid to ask!



Carol Daunt

LearTel
EXCELLENCE IN TELETEACHING

Web Conferencing: Everything you always wanted to know..... is a free eBook

You may share it with others

You may distribute it by email

You may place it on your website

You may print it

You may mail it

You may fax it

You may quote from it - with acknowledgement please

You may distribute in any way
EXCEPT
sell it or change it

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... 1

WHAT IS WEB CONFERENCING?..... 1

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO I NEED? 1

 Computer..... 1

 Internet Connection 1

 Telephone 2

 Service Provider..... 2

ACCESS..... 2

COST..... 2

HOW DO I REGISTER & CONNECT?..... 2

WHAT WILL I SEE AND HEAR? 3

FEATURES..... 4

 Polling/Voting..... 4

 Whiteboard..... 5

 Chat 6

 Web Surfing..... 7

 Document Sharing..... 7

SAVING SESSIONS..... 7

HOW CAN YOU USE WEB CONFERENCING? 7

CONTACTING CAROL DAUNT..... 8

SERVICES..... 8

PROFILE OF CAROL DAUNT..... 8

INTRODUCTION

How do you work real-time with -
a team, clients or investors –
in different cities, states, countries –
sharing graphics, voice, video & files?

Increasingly, we need to communicate across geographic boundaries and time doesn't permit us to travel. Web conferencing is a wonderful tool for communicating real-time without the need for travel. This doesn't mean that travel will become unnecessary – there'll always be the need for people to get together face-to-face. What it means is that you can substitute some of your face-to-face contact with web conferencing.

This is a general overview of web conferencing. There are a variety of web conferencing products – all with similar features. In this eBook I've used WebEx screen shots as an example.

WHAT IS WEB CONFERENCING?

Web conferencing allows people in different locations to communicate real-time. It combines graphics (eg PowerPoint presentations) hosted on the internet, with voice and/or video. It also includes a range of interactive tools such as polling/voting, chat and a 'hand raising' feature to indicate that you have a question or comment. It may also include document sharing, a whiteboard and web surfing features. You'll see information on your computer screen and hear the presenter and other participants through your telephone or computer.

It differs from webcasting – a term usually used to describe a session that is recorded and streamed to participants at a time of their choosing ie web casting is not real-time.

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO I NEED?

No specialist equipment is needed for web conferencing The following is all that is required:

Computer

A standard computer with current web browser eg Explorer. Some web conferencing services don't work with Macintosh computers - check with your web conferencing supplier for compatibility.

Internet Connection

A broadband connection is preferable as slides download more quickly. However most web conferencing services operate over a 56K dial-up connection - you'll just notice that slides take a little longer to download.

Telephone

You need to join a telephone conference for the voice part of the session. If you are on a dial-up internet connection, you need a second line for the audio link. Voice over the internet (VoIP) is now available with varying degrees of success. This is rapidly changing and VoIP is the way of the future for the voice part of a web conference.

Service Provider

You need a service provider to host your web conference. There are a variety of providers that offer one-off pay per use plans or they can customise a solution for your organisation.

ACCESS

Access is literally from any computer, anywhere and at anytime. As long as you have an internet and a telephone connection. Those with wireless internet connections can move to any location.

Web conferencing allows presenters to extend their reach intrastate, nationally and internationally - time zones permitting. Some organisations have extensive security measures in place and these may cause problems accessing some web conferencing systems. Check with the service provider how their product handles firewalls and other security systems.

COST

It's impossible to put a cost in this book as costs vary so much from country to country and between providers. All I can say is that it will be cheaper to get people together for a web conference than it will to have them travel to some central location. Check current prices with service providers – or email me for an estimate. (cdaunt@learntel.com.au)

HOW DO I REGISTER & CONNECT?

You will receive an email inviting you to join a web conference and giving you instructions about how to register. This usually involves connecting to a website and typing your name & email address.

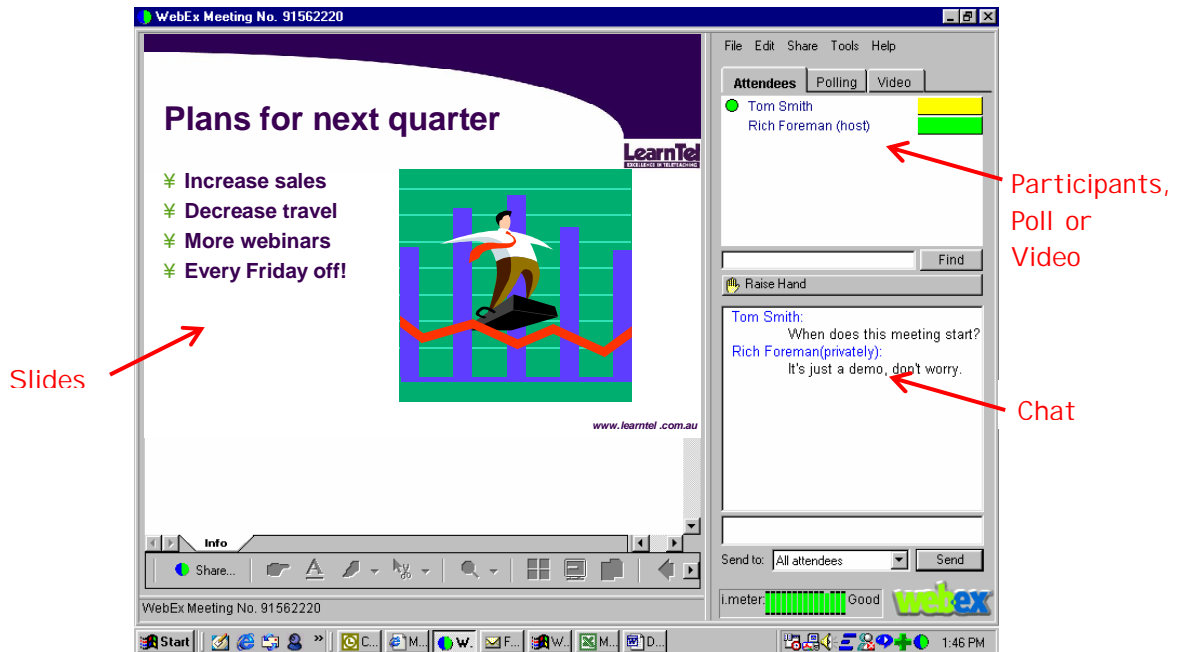
The session may be password protected so that unauthorised people cannot join the session. The person who has organised the session will inform you of any passwords you need for registration or on the day.

Several days before the session, you should test your system through the link that will be given to you in the email. This allows time to troubleshoot any problems you might have.

On the day, you should connect to the website and dial into the audioconference 5-10 minutes prior to the start time.

WHAT WILL I SEE AND HEAR?

As a participant, you'll hear the presenter and anyone else who speaks through your telephone. You'll see a variety of things on your computer screen – the diagram below is one example.



On the **left-hand side** of your screen you'll see the presenter's slides. The presenter sends these to you by clicking through on their computer as they would for a face-to-face presentation.

In the **lower right-hand** side of the screen you have an area for 'chat'. This can be among all participants or just between the presenter and participants. It can be disabled by the presenter.

In the **upper right-hand** side of the screen you'll see one of the following – depending on what the presenter is doing:

- A list of all participants
- A multiple choice question
- Live video of the presenter and/or participants

There are various other drawing tools and a 'Raise Hand' button that allows participants to indicate that they have a question or comment. Some systems include a range of emoticons so that participants can give the presenter feedback about the speed they are going or whether they are enjoying the session.

As a presenter you'll see a range of 'control' tools that aren't visible to participants.

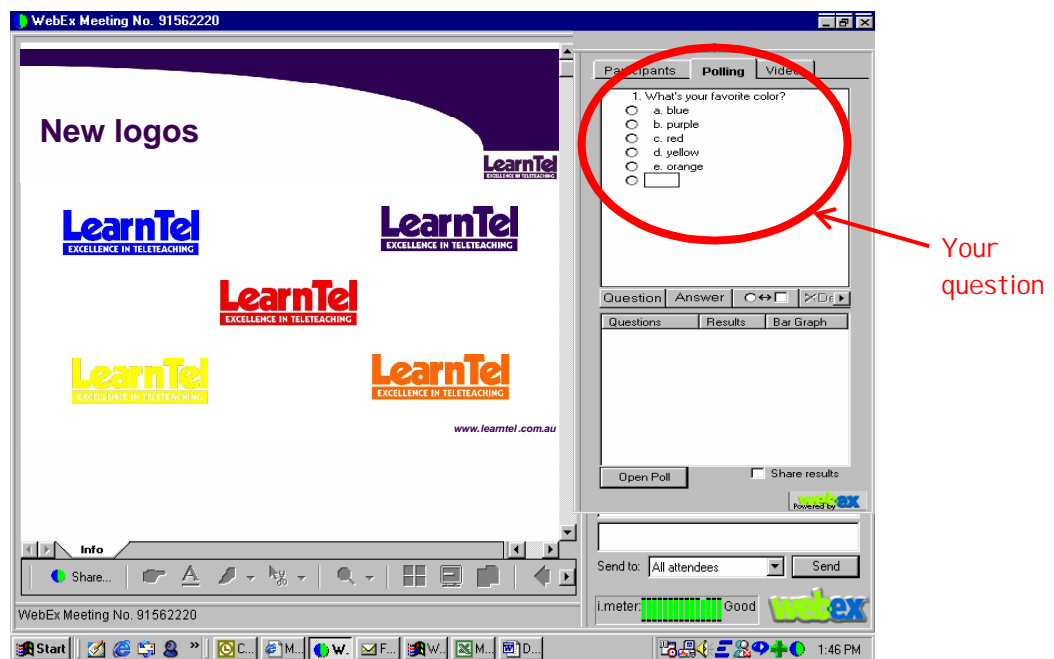
FEATURES

Basic web conferencing tools will allow you to transmit images in conjunction with your voice. As you move to the next slide on your computer, this is ‘pushed’ to all participants, so that everyone sees and hears the same message at the same time.

More sophisticated products have features such as ‘hand raising’, chat rooms and polling or voting systems that allow you to ask a multiple choice question and get an immediate response from all participants using their computer keyboards. The following are common features that make web conferencing interactive.

Polling/Voting

The polling or voting feature allows you to know what participants are thinking at a given point in time. By posing a question you can have all participants engaged by choosing an answer from the screen poll and you will immediately know how they are thinking – allowing you to follow up as necessary. You can make the results public so that all participants can see them.



The screen example above shows a simple poll to decide on the colour of the new company logo.

Questions can be:

- multiple choice
- yes/no
- true/false

By using your creativity you can formulate questions that will incorporate all levels of thinking

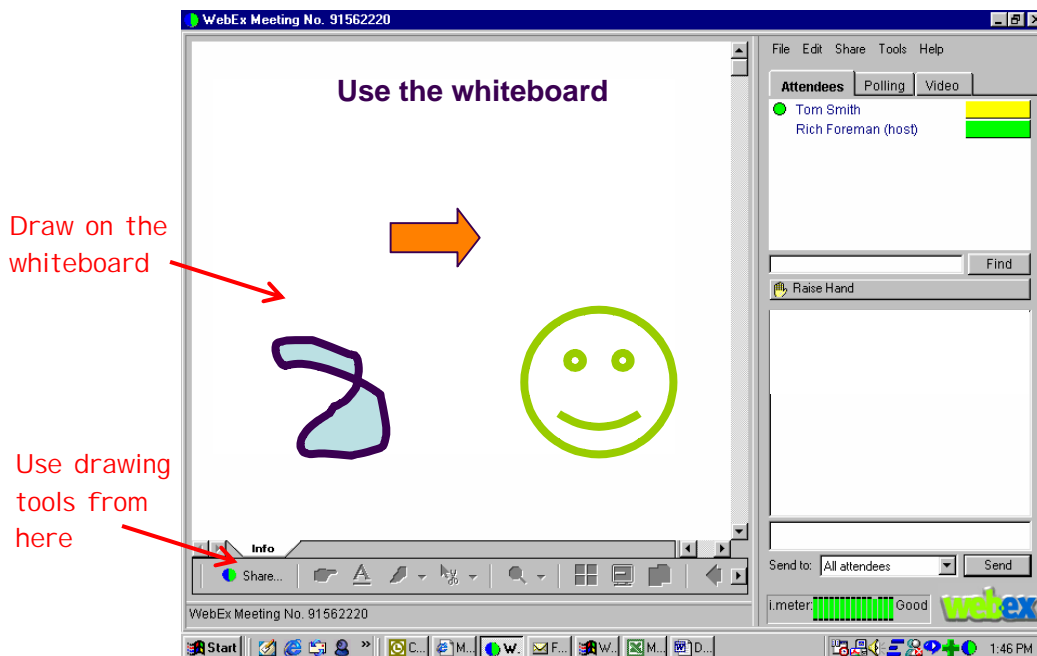
Whiteboard

The whiteboard gives you features typical to drawing programs. For example:

Draw: You can 'pick' a pen - colour & thickness - and draw freehand or make defined shapes eg circle, rectangle, triangle etc. This is fine for rough outlines, but unless you are very dexterous drawing with a mouse, it is a little clumsy & has limited use.

Type: There is a 'text' feature that allows you to type onto the screen in real time. This is useful for brainstorming sessions or collating ideas from participants.

Highlight: This feature allows you to choose a 'highlighter pen' - colour & thickness - and use it to highlight anything on screen. There are also arrows you can use to highlight a particular section on screen. This is useful for drawing attention to particular points.



The screen above shows a typical whiteboard. It will appear in the space where slides were. You can easily flip between slides and the whiteboard.

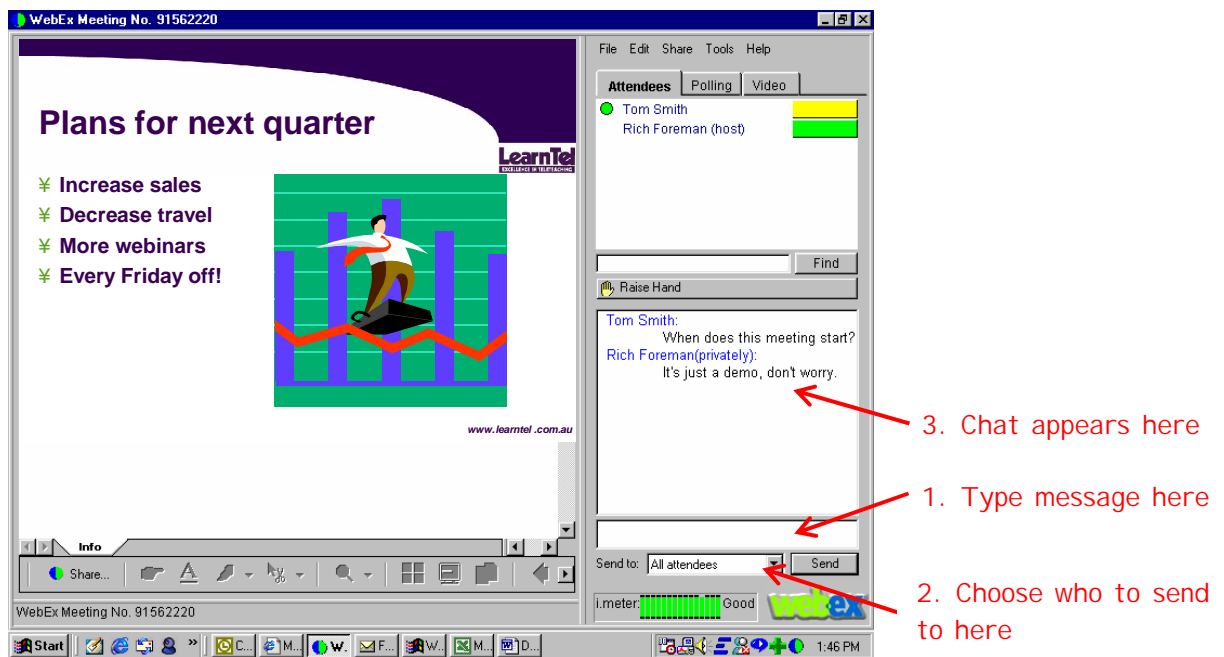
You can also allow participants to draw or type on the whiteboard. At any point in time you can clear the board and take drawing privileges away from participants.

The highlighting features can also be used to draw on your slides. This is useful to emphasise particular points.

Chat

The chat feature works just like a standard online chat session. As host of the session you can set the level of chat you will allow. Options are:

- **Chat to everyone** - this allows everyone to chat to everyone else. Participants can post a message to an individual or to the whole group. I disengage this level of chat as I feel that participants can easily get sidetracked into conversations not related to the topic at hand.
- **Chat to presenter only** - this allows any participant to send the presenter a message. This is an important feature as some participants may not want to question or comment via the telephone link, but might be more encouraged by the relative anonymity of communicating with the presenter privately - who can then comment without revealing the source.
- **Chat to host** - it is possible to have a 'host' in your session who deals with any issues that arise. In this way, problems can be dealt with by another person, who relays to you only the most urgent needing attention. For example any technical problems can be dealt with in this way rather than interrupting the presenter.



The presenter can send a message and/or chat to any one person or the whole group at any time.

Chat can be used effectively for interaction with participants eg asking everyone to comment on an issue and send it to you via the chat box. This works well at the end of the session to gather any follow-up individuals feel they need. Chat is also useful for brainstorming sessions.

Web Surfing

The web surfing feature allows you to take participants to a particular website. You click through to the site from your computer and they are all taken there with you.

Different web conferencing systems provide different features:

- Some systems lock participants into the site and don't allow them to move away from it.
- Some allow them complete freedom once you have taken them to the site and they are able to move away from the original site.
- Some allow you to 'set them free' on a site to web surf and complete a set task eg find 3 products on this site that are in direct competition to our own.

You can bring the group back together by sending them a slide - this will immediately pull them away from the website so they can see the slide.

Document Sharing

You can open any document on your computer and share it with participants. You can work collaboratively on it with participants making changes to the document in real-time. These changes can be saved for later reference or for further work.

Various web conferencing products will offer other features – I have covered here the basic ones that they all include. Ask the vendor or service provider to demonstrate their features to you.

SAVING SESSIONS

Your web conference session can be saved for viewing at a later stage. This is particularly useful for reference by people not able to attend. In a training situation it can serve as a revision resource for learners to access in their own time.

HOW CAN YOU USE WEB CONFERENCING?

There are unlimited applications for web conferencing. Following are just a few:

- **Training** - Run live presentations with people in various locations and get the same message to everyone at once. Show software applications, documents, new procedures, run polls and interact real-time.
- **Meetings** – Any type of meeting where people have to exchange information. Ideal for working collaboratively on budgets or project planning.
- **Marketing** – The visual element allows you to show products or to demonstrate software tools and web sites live.
- **Webinars** - Conduct live seminars with experts interstate or overseas.
- **Technical support** - Remotely control software and troubleshoot at a distance.

CONTACTING CAROL DAUNT

Email

cdaunt@learntel.com.au

Telephone

You can talk to me by telephone at any time. I'm happy to give you 5 minutes of my time free of charge. If you would like more extensive consultancy, this is charged on a per minute basis. Please email me for rates.

Web

www.learntel.com.au

Mail

LearnTel Pty Ltd,
PO Box 307, Lutwyche, AUSTRALIA 4030



SERVICES

For information about workshops, presentations, books, videos and consultancy services see the website: www.learntel.com.au

PROFILE OF CAROL DAUNT

Carol Daunt is an experienced educator and trainer who has been involved with all forms of communications technology for over 15 years. During this time, Carol has been involved in the design, application and effective use of communications technology for business communications and training. She works with lecturers, teachers, trainers, health workers and management from government departments and private organisations throughout Australia, New Zealand, USA and Europe. Carol is a frequent speaker at international conferences, having most recently given papers in seven countries both in person and via videoconferencing.

Carol holds a Dip T, Grad Dip Dist Ed, B Ed & M Ed (Research) and is the Managing Director of LearnTel Pty Ltd. Carol sits on the following Steering Committees & Industry Bodies:

- National ICT Industry Alliance (NICTIA)
- CSIRO CeNTIE Telecollaboration focus group
- Females in Information Technology & Telecommunications (FITT)
- Learning Technologies User Group: Co-Founder & Executive Officer
- TeleConnections: Founder & Executive Director
- National Communications Fund Advisory Panel