

Nonprofit 911 – July 28, 2009
**Dialing In, Logging On and Nodding Off:
The True Costs of Teleconferences, Videoconferences
and Webinars**

with Andy Goodman
Sponsored by Network for Good

The MP3 audio transcript can be found at
www.fundraising123.org or www.nonprofit911.org

Rebecca Higman: Now I am happy to introduce our speaker. Andy Goodman is the director of the Goodman Center. He is a nationally recognized author, speaker, and consultant in the field of public interest communications.

Along with “Storytelling as Best Practice,” he is the author of “Why Bad Ads Happens to Good Causes” and “Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes.” He also publishes a monthly journal, “Free-Range Thinking,” to share best practices in the field.

In terms of his speaking background, he has been invited to speak at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, The Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs at Princeton, as well as at major foundation and non-profit conferences.

In fact, in 2007 he was selected by Al Gore to train 1,000 people are currently conducting presentations on global warming throughout the US and around the world. The year after that in 2008 he co founded the Goodman Center to offer online versions of his workshops.

I would be doing everyone on the call a disservice if I didn’t share his website addresses where you can learn more about Andy and his work. They are www.agoodmanonline.com and www.thegoodmancenter.com.

So without further a due, I am happy to turn the floor over to Andy.

Andy Goodman: Thank you Rebecca, and thanks to everybody for joining this call. We are going to go through the slides that hopefully you have downloaded as pages of PDF, and I will just simply say the numbers as we roll along.

If you have already downloaded them and taken a look, you might have said to yourself, “Oh my gosh! 100 slides or 100 pages in 45 minutes or less?” But don’t be dismayed. We are going to go through them very quickly as you will see. Several of them we just flash over in seconds.

But stick with me, because I think that the visuals will help make this call that much more interesting. And if you go to slide 2 right now, you will see there I am staring back at you. So you know at least what I look like. I will just have to guess what you look like.

Next page is our agenda for the hour we spend together here, or at least until the hour is complete. Here is what we are going to talk about. First the premise for today's discussion: Why are we talking about conference calls, video conferences, and webinars, what we group as telemeetings? We will get to that in a moment.

We will talk about the research we have done into how non-profits are using these technologies. And then we will zoom in on what is going right and what is going wrong when we meet by phone, by TV, or by the web. And then we will also suggest some resources to help you do this better.

Let's start with our premise, why are we here? You all work at non-profits. Let's imagine for a second that you work at this non-profit, The World Improvement Federation. And here you are at your beautiful headquarters in Washington D.C.

And you need to call a meeting involving about nine people. So if you go to the next page, slide five, here are the nine people you want to bring together at the World Improvement Federation.

In the older days this would be a simple matter of just knocking on people's doors or getting on the intercom and saying, "Let's all meet in the conference room." But today we tend to be spread out.

Look at slide 6. You will see that the four people that we see here with HQ next to their name, these are the four people who are in the headquarters office with you. So for them, it is simply a matter of knocking on their door, calling them on the phone, or sending them an email saying, "Conference room in 10 minutes. See you there." But that is not just the only people you want in the meeting. Next slide.

You also have these two guys who you want to have there, the guy on the left, Mr. Grumpy, with his arms folded, he works at home because nobody likes him and that is the only place he can work. And the guy to the right there in the white shirt scratching his chin, he is working at home today because he can't find his car keys. Next slide.

Down in the lower left there you see two people. They work in your New York City office. You want to get them to be part of the meeting, but they are not going to fly in from New York, so there is a little challenge there.

And next slide on the far right is that beautiful young lady there with the sunglasses. She is in Los Angeles presumably on business, but she is actually trying to start her career as an actress.

Anyway, be that as it may, next slide, these are the people you want to bring together. So you figure, naturally, just like we are doing now, let's do it by the phone! It is cheap. It is easy. We will all get on the phone and we will save money.

And if you look at slide 11, that is the whole idea here. Teleconferencing is a cheap and easy way to save money, so let's all do it. But that is only part one of our premise. Let's move on to part two. Next slide.

When you meet by telephone, or really by video conference or webinar, now everybody on the call, everyone you have connected, works in the same place. And that place has a name, and that name is on the next slide, and we call it Distraction City. Distraction City: Population 1.

If you are sitting on the phone right now staring at your computer screen as you will see in the next slide, this is what we look like. This is what it looks like to be a resident of distraction city.

When we think about conference calls we assume that everyone is participating. It is like a meeting. We are all in the room together. But it is really a far cry from that, because if you go to the next slide you will see that when people are living in distraction city, they can be eating their lunch, checking their email, someone can be yelling at them from another office, and they might even be updating their Facebook page on the computer while they are presumably focused on your meeting.

So this is what you have to overcome. If you go to the next slide, 16, this is sort of the fundamental problem here. This is why when we have teleconferences, what we really have, slide 17, is this situation where people can't hear each other, they are wondering who is there, they are missing the materials necessary for the call, or they are too busy wondering about their Facebook page. Next slide.

While we believe fundamentally, and while it is true that teleconferencing is a way to save money when you want to have meetings involving people from all over the country, the question is, next, if teleconferencing wastes time and the meetings are unproductive, is this really a better way to go?

So if you look at slide 20, the next one, this is the basic question that was bugging us. Given the current economic downturn, if organizations, if non-profits, looking to save money want to have more meetings and trainings via teleconference, via video conference and webinar, will this necessarily be a good thing? Will people know how to use these technologies to maximum effect?

I think I should say right up front, Network for Good does. They are very good at how they do this and how they set these things up. But I think if you participate in these conference calls versus other conference calls you may be seeing a big difference.

But we didn't want to just wonder at this question. We decided to do some research. So if you look at the next slide, 21. Back in March we put up a survey on the web. And we contacted people like you at non-profits, foundations, government agencies, etc, what I like to call good causes, and we asked them, "Would you please take a few minutes to complete this online survey and tell us your experience of teleconferences, video conferences, and webinars? How are they going? Are they good? Are they bad? What is working? What is not?"

And you will see from the next slide, over 1,200 people took the time to fill this out from across the US and Canada. Now because this was a self selecting audience, this was not a statistically accurate survey. I can't say that. But it is a pretty rich data set. And I think that when you look at what they told us, it is hard to ignore, because it was so many people speaking very clearly about what was working and what doesn't.

Now if you are wondering, "Am I represented in this data set?" look at the next slide, 23. This is who we heard from by sector, and the vast majority came from non-profits. So if you work in a non-profit you are probably there.

The next slide shows the experience level of the people we heard from. What you can see here is that more than 60% had been in their job for six years or more. So this is a pretty experienced crew of people.

And from the next slide you will see the issue areas they work in. So think about what you do and which of these you would have checked. You may see that there are a lot of people like you or at least some. By the way, if you look at these numbers and say, "Gosh. That is a lot more than 100%" that is because you may look at the issue area and say, "Well I work on the health of children so I would actually check categories two and three." And that is what we told people: check as many categories as apply.

But this gives you some idea of who completely the survey. And hopefully you are looking at these numbers and saying, "Yeah, I am represented in here. So get to the results Andy."

All right. Let's look at some of those top lines. Next slide. The first thing we wanted to confirm was usage. How much of these technologies are part of your daily life? So we asked, "How often do you participate in teleconferences, video conferences, and webinars?"

And the percentage who said, "Yeah, this is frequently or very frequently part of my work life," you see there nearly 60% of the respondents are doing these conference calls. A lot few are doing video conferences. I was surprised it was so low. Webinars is at 25%. It is not as much as teleconferences, but clearly it is a coming form.

We heard from a lot of people that, "No I don't do webinars as much as teleconferences, but they are happening more frequently. I think they will be more of a fact of life." Next slide.

We wanted to see if this was going to change in any way, particularly given the economic downturn, so we said, “Do you think it is going to increase, decrease, or stay the same?” As you can see here, about half thought that it was going to increase, with slightly more thinking that webinars were going to rise. Very few thought it was going to decrease. Only 5 or 6% though we would be doing this less. About half said we thought it would stay the same. So the tendency here is that we are going to be doing this the same amount or more, if not going away.

Now if you get to slide 28, here is where we get to what I think are the most significant numbers that came out of the research. I should have mentioned this earlier. The entire report will be available to you after this call. I will give you an email address where you can send it. We will send it to you for free. So you don’t need to be madly jotting down these numbers. And there are more numbers to be seen, but here is what I think are the most important ones.

We wanted to compare the amount people were using these technologies versus the amount of training they had to make sure that they used them most effectively, because this does not come naturally. There is a way to do a good teleconference. There is a way to take advantage of video conferences or to do good webinars.

So take a look at slide 29. Let’s look at teleconferences. Let’s focus on that for a second. 60% of respondents said, “Yeah we are doing this frequently or very frequently.” So it is a fact of life. About half of those said, “Yeah, it is going to increase.” But look at the last number. 75%, three out of four, have no training in how to do teleconferencing effectively.

The organization just figures, “Look. This isn’t rocket science here. It is a telephone. It is a bunch of people. Let’s go get on the call together.” But in fact, there are protocols and things that make it work. And when they are ignored it can be chaos.

So you can see across the board those last three numbers. More than 70% in every category had no training into how to use this effectively. So I think that leads to problems. Now we are going to see, as we zoom in on each technology, what went wrong.

Let’ zoom in on teleconferences, exactly what we are doing now. The first set of questions we asked in the survey was we asked people to give us a report card. Let’s grade on an A-F basis on the three major aspects of the conference calls that you are on.

Number one: Do they accomplish the objective of the conference call? Did you get to where you were trying to go? Number two: Do they involve all the participants? The presumption is that everyone is on the call because they are all supposed to be there, so did they bring you in or did you feel like this was a waste of your time? Number three: How good was the person who was leading or facilitating the call, because often the success or failure of the call is in their hands? And a weak facilitator will hold you back.

So those are where we asked the grades. And if you go to the next slide, 32, you see the grades.

B-, C+, B-, which is technically slightly above average. I don't know what kind of grade you got in school and what your expectations are, but these are not great. It would be nice to see A's or A's and B's. But no, we are kind of in the land of mediocrity here.

So pressing further, if you go to slide 33, we identified six problems that we wanted to have people talk about in two ways. The first was frequency. Here are six major problems that occur. We wanted to know how often they occur. Which of these occurs most often for you? So we are just looking for a frequency here.

Now you might be wondering, "Well how did you identify those six problems as the ones to zoom in on?" Well prior to doing the survey, go to slide 34, we went to the web and we looked up such terms as "teleconference guidelines," "problems with teleconferences," "conference call guideline," etc to see what people were talking about out there. If you take that and combine it with your own experience, you could start to chunk it down to about four or five, or in our case, six areas where there tends to be the preponderance of problems and advice.

We went to lots of websites that looked like this, go to slide 35, where you see the kinds of advice people give. So going to slide 36, that brings us back to these six common problems. So we asked people first of all, which of these occurs the most often?

Take a moment and look at that, and just think which of these six occurs most often on the conference calls you are on as a problem? Have you got it picked out? OK. Here is your winner. Slide 37.

Lack of participation. That was cited as the problem that occurs the most often. You have been asked to dial in and you sit there, and you sit there, and you sit there, and you never talk or you are never called on. No one ever asks for your opinion. And then you hang up and it is like, "Why was I even there?"

Or, you are leading the call and you are looking for people to speak and they are out there in Never-Never Land. You don't know if they are paying attention or multi-tasking or whatever. So that problem was reported most frequently.

Go to slide 38. Then we asked people on the survey to take a look at those same six issues. Now the question was, which of these when it occurs had the most negative impact? It doesn't have to be the most often, but when it happens it is just the most damaging of the six. Take a moment and look these over. Decide for yourself. When this happens, which of these will do the most damage?

And according to our survey, poor leadership was the number one problem. A lot of other things can go right. But if the person leading or facilitating the call doesn't know what he or she is doing, that will just drag the whole call down. So these are the problems that

came up, and you can compare that with your own experiences. Hopefully this is resonating with you.

We gave people some open ended questions where they could comment. We asked, for example, besides those six factors listed above, what else makes a teleconference just a complete waste of your time?

So people can look at these six factors. And we said, “Maybe we are not covering the whole waterfront here. What else is going wrong?” Here were the top five that people brought up. Take a moment to look those over.

And you see some overlaps. For example, insufficient interaction is one of the six problems that we offered, but people did bring that up again. This is what people said. And as you think about things that go wrong at your end, I imagine you are seeing some of your thoughts right there.

Some of the verbatim comments were so interesting I want you to see them in their entirety. I will put them up on the screen. For those who do not have any visuals, I will read them to you.

The first one was about the fact that the purpose of the call did not match the medium. One person said, “The purpose of the meeting doesn’t match the medium. For example, the purpose is to wrestle with a difficult issue with opposing positions represented. But the phone is too impersonal to allow for constructive dialogue. A conference call is not good for handling sensitive topics where people need to see each other and pick up those verbal cues and know what is really going on. Often a voice just won’t do it.”

Another verbatim comment, slide 44, is this issue of mixed meetings where some people are on the phone and some people are in a room. One person said, “Most of ours are mixed, some on phone, some in person, which brings its own set of problems. Some people talk only to the group that is physically present. I have also heard that the opposite happens, that people focus so much on the phone that they are ignoring the other people in the room and it throws the meeting off. So mixed meetings present their own set of problems.”

Go to slide 45. We also asked people what makes a teleconference a good use of your time, not to just be dwelling on the negative here. Now on the next slide you will see that these were the top five things: focused agenda, clear goal, well organized, the ability to connect without travel, good facilitator, and learned new information.

If you will look at those five, what I hope you will notice is that the one in the middle, number three, “connect without travel,” that is the only one that is specific to a teleconference. The other four could describe any meeting. Look again.

That really leads to the last quote I want to share with you, slide 47. “In general, meetings can be a waste of time, whether done in person or whether done on a teleconference. I

don't see the medium as the issue. Useless meetings are useless meetings either on the phone or in person."

We heard that a lot. You are going to see this repeated that ultimately, first we have to get better at having meetings. And then we have to know how to deal with the technology that intervenes whether we meet via telephone or via web. But a bad meeting is a bad meeting no matter where it happens. I don't think anybody would argue with that.

If you have any questions about the teleconference part of the research, now is the time to send them into Rebecca, and then we will hopefully hear from her and she can share them with me as she jumps in. But let's move on now to slide 49 and what we heard about video conferences.

Again, we went through the same sets of questions. The first thing we asked people for was a report card on those three big important points, accomplished objective, involved all the participants, and the skill of the meeting leader. If you look at slide 50 you will see the grades, which are an exact match, coincidentally, of the grades we got for the teleconferences.

Again, better than average, but kind of in the mediocre range. Slide 51, same issue here; common problems. We looked at these six common problems. Once again we identified these by doing some homework as to what people were talking about with video conferences.

In terms of frequency, the number one, take a look at those six. Make your pick. Which happens most frequently in the video conferences you are in? And the answer is...And I feel like we are in Family Feud here. Survey says! Slide 52. Technical problems happened the most often. We just can't seem to master this equipment. It is like, "We have lost the other city," or, "The camera doesn't move," or, "I can see you but I can't hear you."

Slide 53. Let's look at those problems again from the terms of their negative impact. Which of these has the most negative impact when it happens? Again, take a look. Make your pick. And the survey told us, slide 54, again, technical problems. So if we go to slide 55, you see technical problems scoring that rare double win. It is the most frequent and the most negative problem. We heard this again, and again, and again.

Slide 56. We asked, "Beside the six factors listed above, what else makes a video conference a waste of your time?" Slide 57. People looked at those six factors and we said, "All right. What else? Let's make sure we haven't left anything out here. What is noticeable here is among these common problems you will see technical problems. Remember, we just said, "What else beside technical problems bothers you?" Look at slide 58.

"Besides technical problems, my number one concern would be technical problems."
[laughs] 33% used the open ended question to say the same thing. Clearly we have got a

problem here with the technology. You see the other issues that came up. Time management, lack of agenda, boring topics, poor leadership. Again, two through five all about meetings not necessarily related to the technology.

Slide 59. Some of the verbatim comments. “I hate that your image is always on the screen even though you are not actively speaking. I feel like I am always under the microscope.” Some people are just very uncomfortable to be on camera.

Conversely, if you look at slide 60, “Cameras must move to capture the image of the person speaking. A talking head off screen is wasteful and a counter to building relationships.” This person is saying, “Make sure the camera is on me.”

And slide 61, “The technology seems to fail every time. Way too much time is spent on the technology and not enough on substance. Or put another way, we are spending too much time on how we are meeting and not why we are meeting.”

Again, on slide 62 we asked, “What makes a video conference a good use of your time?” And if you look at the answers on slide 63, people just can’t stop talking about those technical problems. The thing that makes it good for them is no technical problems. 34%, number one answer.

But other than that, two through five said the same things that make a good meeting. I know you are probably saying, “Gee Andy, you re sounding repetitive here.” This is what we found out and you are going to see it again when we get to webinars.

If you look at slide 64, again, content trumps technology every time. Ultimately, it should be about the meeting and what we are talking about. The technology should just sort of dissolve and fade to the background if it is used properly.

Slide 65, again, we solicit your comments or questions. Again, send them by email. I would love to hear back from you what is resonant or ringing through with you or if anything is really contradicting, or if you feel that you are having a very different experience we would like to hear from you as well.

Rebecca: Hi Andy. Do you mind if I jump in for a sec? We do have a couple of questions that have come in.

Andy: Go ahead.

Rebecca: Great. So Holly wrote in with a couple of great questions, jumping back to teleconferences for a second. She wanted to know with regard to the research, “How many people responding were facilitating conferences as opposed to participating in them?”

Andy: Holly that is an excellent question. If we could go back and redesigned the survey, we would have asked people to distinguish themselves between, “Are you primarily a facilitator? Are you primarily a participant? Or is it a little mix of both?”

We did not capture that information. So unfortunately, I don’t know. And I am slapping myself because when we looked at the data, the first thing we thought was, “We should have asked that!” So I am sorry.

Let’s get to the last section, which is slide 66, and that is webinars. Once again, we asked people for report cards on these three major objectives. If you look at slide 67, you will notice B’s across the board, and this is better than the other categories.

Frankly, I found this surprising, because of the three technologies, this is the newest. It is fairly easy to use. People know how to use a computer and a phone; put them together. Video conferencing technology can be much more expensive and more complicated. But still, it is a new form, but somehow people felt we were off to a better start here. So I was impressed by these grades.

Let’s talk about what was working and what doesn’t, slide 68. Again, we identified six factors that we felt were the major issues with webinars, and we asked people about frequency and impact. Take a look at those six factors and ask yourself, “When you are in a webinar, which of these occurs the most often?”

According to our surveys, slide 69, boring visuals. What we heard from a lot of people was that the same thing that the devil in room presentations when we are all together, you know, lousy PowerPoint’s that are just text heavy and lots of bullets, and very dense and uninteresting. Webinars have basically allowed us to slap those up on the Internet for people to watch from their computers. It is just as bad as sitting in a room watching it from your chair. So boring visuals, the most frequent problem.

Slide 70, again, looking at these six issues, which of these when it occurs has the most negative impact and is the most damaging to your meeting? Take a look. Make your pick. According to the survey, slide 71, poor leadership.

Just like with teleconference, the person in charge of the call, in charge of the webinar, if he or she doesn’t know how to make the most of this medium, then it is all downhill from there.

Slide 72, we asked for the open ended question. Besides those six factors, what else makes webinars a waste of your time? If you look at slide 73, we said to people, “Look at this. We have got these noted. What else?”

If you look at slide 74 you will see the answers to our questions here. And again, there is some overlap. People are saying what was already listed, but poor leadership facilitation, people couldn’t talk enough about that. That came up as number one.

I was interested in number three, misleading description of topic. I wasn't aware how much of this was going out there where people think they are going to get one thing from a webinar, they sign up, they dial in, they log on, and it is something else. What a lot of people said was going on here was that they were really just being sucked into to be sold something. And that is what it was. It was kind of more like a sales presentation than real valuable information. So I think that is what that one was all about.

Slide 75, some of the interesting verbatim comments. "In too many cases a webinar ends up being a talking head, and there are many distractions and attractions to multi-task. The speaker must make it interesting enough for participants to concentrate." So too many David Burns' out there.

Slide 76, "It is very frustrating to be typing questions, when people use the chat box that is available, and wondering if they are going to Never-Never Land and weren't received or were just being ignored."

If you have been in enough webinars, you know you may also be solicited to use the chat box to send in question or comments. And then if you don't hear them addressed in any way, you wonder, "Did they get it? Are they ignoring me? What is going on?"

Slide 77, "Many webinar leaders make the mistake of just repeating verbatim the PowerPoint presentation. What a waste! If that is all the facilitator is going to do, just give me the PowerPoint and let me read it on my own." Or as we say at the top here, "You know we are in a bad way when people are actually asking you for the PowerPoint!"

Slide 78, we ask what makes a webinar a good use of your time. Let's focus on the positive here. And the top five answers on slide 79, you see them right there. Again, people go right back to the facilitator. The person in charge is the biggest thing in terms of making a difference one way or another.

And the last comment on slide 80, "A good webinar is largely determined by the same skills as any good presentation: engaging content, presenter's ability to connect with the audience, which can be harder online, use of stories, examples, etc" which is just a repeat of what we said before. First it is about being a good facilitator and running a good meeting. And then it is about making sure the technology doesn't get in the way.

On slide 81 we asked for questions about webinars. So let's go to slide 82 for what is really, I thought, the three biggest takeaways from this entire study. What did we learn from this whole process?

Number one on Slide 83, yes, meeting by phone, by video, by web, it is going to save money. There is no question about that. But if those meetings are a waste of time, if they are unproductive, they may not be a net positive for your organization.

So as we stampede towards these types of meetings to save money in a down economy, we may be just creating more wasted opportunities for ourselves, more boring meetings. That is not good.

So point number two on slide 84, if you have no training in how to take advantage of these technologies, you will spend more time focusing on the “how” of your meeting than why you are meeting.

And so the third takeaway is that bad meetings are bad meetings no matter how they are held. So if you want to improve your telemeetings, the very first thing you should do is make sure that you brush up on your meeting skills. Be better meeters in person. And once you have mastered those skills, then you can jump to the web and start to deal with the technical issues as well.

On slide 86 you see a copy of the report here. We are happy to send you a free PDF by email if you just send an email to my associate Lori@agoodmanonline.com, and just say, “I would like a free copy of your report, Dialing In, Logging on, Nodding Off. Or just say a free copy of the report on telemeetings. She will send it to you.

Now inside this report, what you are going to find, look at slide 87, is in the very back section we talk about how we start to turn this around. How do we let the learning begin to get better at using these technologies?

Look at slide 88. For teleconferences, as I have already eluded to, there are many good sites on the web with good tips on how to hold effective meetings via phone. This is not rocket science. There are some very simple protocols you can follow so people know when to speak, or how to speak, or how to submit questions, etc.

You see three of the sites there. And if you go to slide 89, for example, that is one of the sites that offers tips, the USAconferencing.com. Slide 90 is another from Vnet. There are plenty of good ones. You can go to the web and find them or just follow the links right from the guide we send you. I think you can jump up your teleconferences a notch just by following those guidelines.

Look at slide 91. When it comes to video conferences, I think Dean Freidman is the guy. Dean Freidman is the director of new technology at EdNet in New York. For the last 10 years he has been installing video conferencing systems for non-profits and universities and cultural institutions and teaching people how to use them.

I interviewed him in my newsletter, Free Range Thinking, back in October, 2006. If you want to read that interview you can go to my website, agoodmanonline.com, to the publications section and you can download that for free. Or, you can go directly to his site, slide 92, and get his top 10 video meeting tips. And again, the link to Dean’s site is in the PDF that we will send you. So if you get that PDF, all the links that you will need are right there.

Slide 93. When it comes to doing better webinars, here is where I am a little less able to give you advice, because I looked online for other classes that teach this. They are out there. There is no shortage of classes offering to teach you how to do a better webinar. I have yet to see one that I think really captures it. And that is why at my own online school, The Goodman Center, we are developing a course right now, because we think we do have some ideas we would like to share, but we haven't seen them out there anywhere else.

And I will share one of them with you right now. If you lead webinars, if you participate, it is kind of a new way of thinking about them. Look at slide 94. This is the formulation when people think of webinars. They often think of webinars as kind of like giving a presentation in a room where people can see the visuals and hear your voice. They just can't see you and you can't see them.

So a webinar is kind of like presenting minus eye contact. But actually, I think it is different, and this may be because I spent 13 years of my life working in talk radio. So if you go to slide 95, I think webinars are more like listening to a talk radio station where you can see visuals, where you can see some pictures to go along with the conversation. And that means that the webinar leaders is more like a talk radio host who has to use the two assets they have to them, voice and visuals, and use them to the maximum degree to engage people, to provoke them, to get them entertained, to get them to participate.

So for me, webinars really are more like talk radio plus visuals, which is kind of a positive way of looking at it, as opposed to presenting minus eye contact. But more about that when we offer our webinar on webinars.

If you go to slide 96, there is the homepage for our website, thegoodmancenter.com. We will be offering a course on meetings in the fall. We had one scheduled in July that we postponed to October. So if you are interested in improving your meeting skills starting there, hopefully you will join us online. Check out thegoodmancenter.com.

If you go to slide 97, that is what we are going to be talking about in that class: How do you create an agenda? How do you be a better meeting leader? How do you be a better meeting participant? It is a two hour course, one hour each of those days. Learn more about it on our website.

But most importantly, slide 98, please. If you want a full copy of the report, *Dialing In, Logging On, Nodding Off: The True Costs of Teleconferences, Video Conferences, and Webinars*, just send an email to Lori@agoodmanonline.com and we will send you a free copy. And that sums up everything that we talked about today.

So let me throw it back to Rebecca in slide 99 here. Any questions or comments Rebecca that have come in that we can take in the time we have?

Rebecca: Absolutely. Thank you so much Andy. We do have about half a dozen questions. I would like to open the floor again for folks who have not sent in their questions yet. First a comment.

For those of you who, I apologize, went to the wrong links for the slides, that was my fault. Just visit nonprofit911.org and you will find the slides for today's presentation under today's date and title. We got a couple of emails just wondering where the slides were. So again, it is nonprofit911.org. And today's presentation is up with the slides with today's date.

OK. So to dive back in, I do want to get back to Holly's question. She had a great strategic question. She wanted to know, "How many participants do you think are too many for a conference call? Is there a magic number?"

Andy: That is another good question Holly. There are two types of conference calls. The one we are on today, and I don't know the exact number. You told me before Rebecca. There are a lot of people on this call. That forces us to mute all the phones, because otherwise there would be all that room noise from all these different people.

And the disadvantage of that is one of my principles of teleconferences and also webinars, and here it is. An un-muted phone is the closest thing that you have to eye contact. That bears repeating. An un-muted phone is the closest thing that we have to eye contact.

The idea being that when that mute is off and you know that I can hear you breathing or I can hear the noise in the room, you tend to pay more attention, be more focused, be more aware of that connection than when the line is muted and then you know that you can say anything, you can do anything, and people can come into the room. You have sort of broken one aspect of connection.

So in conference calls and in webinars, I like to limit it to 10, 15, maybe 20 people tops. And when I do those classes or those conference calls, I say please leave your lines open because I know it changes the way people conduct themselves during the call or during the webinar.

So the only time that I say you absolutely have to mute the phones is when you have a whole bunch of people like we have now, and that does make it tougher, because you all know that you are sitting there with a muted phone. You know that you are in a different environment than if I can hear you.

So in general, I like a smaller group. I like un-muted lines. And I only will mute them if I have to have a larger group because that is the only way to reach a whole bunch of people at once. Holly I hope that answers your question.

Rebecca: Wonderful. And we have a couple of comments from Bella which I definitely think are worth sharing. She said, "As an employee of a very small non-profit, I would

like to mention two great attributes of webinars and teleconferences in general. They overcome the problem of one, geographic isolation, and two, they work on a shoestring budget. I can learn on an equal basis with every other participant based on geography and the low budget requirement.”

And she did comment for you, “Should I ever serve as a facilitator now that I know what to avoid? Thanks so much Andy.”

Andy: I am glad that you found this useful, and I agree with you. If you are at some far flung office in either a large non-profit or in a small one...I like to refer to the loneliness of the long distance learner. You know, the person who is out there on their own. A well known conference call, webinar, or video conference will make you feel part of the larger organization. They will bring you in. The challenge is to know how to make that person feel like part of it. And all too often, even though you have connected technologically, you may feel very disconnected if they leave you out.

So it can do those things. I agree. But people have to consciously run their meetings better to make sure you feel connected.

Rebecca: Excellent. We have a question from Ed, and I know his question will relate to some of the folks on the phone today. He just wants to know in your experience have you had any history working with religious organizations, especially, if it is a church, across multiple denominations. He says, “I am looking for help in starting our denomination into video conferencing. Have you ever been successful in working in that field?”

Andy: I have worked with religious institutions, but I have not worked with them specifically on video conferencing. What I would do is for any questions about video conferencing, I would refer you to Dean Freidman. He really is the expert on that subject.

So get a copy of the PDF that we are sending out. You will see the links that are in it. That will show you exactly how to get a hold of Dean Freidman. He is also very accessible. You can email him or call him on the phone. If your question is about video conferencing, that is the guy to talk to.

Rebecca: Excellent. Thank you for sharing him as a resource. Let’s see. It says, “In the research you mentioned that between 70 and 75% of respondents have no training in the various media. Were you surprised these numbers were as high as they were? And how do you receive this sort of training?”

Andy: Yes I was surprised. I had a hunch that this was part of the problem. And this happens so much, particularly in non-profits, where we get these new technologies and we are sort of thrown into using them, and no one has ever bothered to teach us how to do it.

There are some very old technologies by the way, like how to have a meeting, that a lot of us are just assumed that you know how to run a meeting, and no one has ever taught you how to do that either.

So I was surprised it was so high. Where do you go get the training? As I said, for something like teleconferencing, there is advice all over the web. And if you go to Google and you search teleconference guidelines or conference call problems or any of those terms, you will find your way to those websites. And if you compare two, or three, or four of them, eventually you are going to see that they are all saying pretty much the same thing. So there is some pretty good advice there.

Then it is simply a matter of copying it down, sharing it with everybody in your organization, and sticking to it. It takes some work. It takes some effort to be consistent.

Video conferencing, I refer you to Dean. And for webinars, I hope to be offering in September a course called The Webinar on Webinars to teach people what I think are the best ways to do that. So that training, I personally hope to offer that in September.

Rebecca: “Can you expand on the role of the facilitator?” I know that came up a few times in the research. “Do you have any tips for being a strong leader? And what if folks are running into situations where there is not necessarily a defined leader, where it is not a training but more a meeting of the minds, a brainstorm or something?”

Andy: If you are on a conference call, a video conference, or a webinar, but particularly where there isn't eye contact, somebody has got to run the show. It doesn't mean that person has to be dominant or has to be in charge, but you need a traffic cop. You need someone who says when this lane goes and when this lane stops.

These things do not happen intuitively. In fact, it is very counter intuitive because you can't see each other. So somebody has got to be in charge.

Again, there is good advice on the web. There is also a book by Sam Kaner. He wrote a book called, “The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making.” It is mostly about facilitating in person meetings, but it is one of the best guess I have seen as to how to facilitate meetings, how to run meetings. So I would refer you to that book as well. You can search it on Amazon. Sam Kaner.

Rebecca: Excellent. “What are your thoughts on mixed meetings? Are they worth it or should you just opt, when you have the opportunity, to choose just virtual or just in person, assuming that if you choose virtual across the board that you have enough phone lines to support that?”

Andy: Another good question. When I do a webinar, often what people say to me is, “We have a bunch of people we can put in a conference room. Would it be easier if we were all 20 around a table and we project it up on a screen and all look at it that way and heard

you through the phone? And we have a couple other people scattered around the country, and they will dial in. Is that better?"

I say absolutely not, because then you have that mixed meeting situation, and the conference room setup is not ideal. It is harder to see. It is harder to hear. A webinar, very much like a conference call, the clearest that you will hear and see is when you are sitting at your desk, preferably with a headset and a computer right in front of you. Then you can see it and hear it, and you have a much more direct connection to the experience than when you are in a conference room.

Sometimes it is unavoidable. Like we said in our original premise, you have got six people in the home office. You have got three people in New York. You have got two people there. You are going to have a mixed meeting.

But then when that happens, you have to be aware of certain protocols. If the majority of the people are in one room at headquarters and there is a handful on the phone here and a handful on the phone there, as a facilitator you have got to make sure that the room doesn't dominate, that when people have a discussion in the room the person speaking says who is speaking to the people on the call, that the people on the call are called on on a regular basis to make sure they are brought in.

Again, there are rules and guidelines to do this right. You just have to observe them. Often it is either ignorance or laziness that allows us to have lousy mixed meetings. There is a way to do this. It is not a secret. Go find the answers.

Rebecca: Excellent. Without getting too much into leads, but one other point that came up in the research was that boring visuals were one of the downers for webinars in particular. And I am sure you will cover this in your upcoming training.

But just to pick out one point, what do you recommend for less boring visuals when folks are putting together their presentations?

Andy: Well I hope people either had a chance to download the PowerPoint's or the PDF that we use for this conference call. If you haven't seen it yet, please do. Not to be patting myself on the back here, but I hope that you would look at these visuals as an example of what I am talking about.

They are not very text heavy. They are not very dense. We went very quickly from slide to slide. The accent is on the visual. It should be something that is interesting to look at with just a few facts per slide for you to look at, because you don't want this to be reading. You don't want people to be sitting there reading dense text off the screen. That is not an enjoyable experience for anybody.

For a conference call, for a webinar, primarily it is the live human exchange that should be the major way of sharing information. The visuals should be there as a reference point

to let a picture save a thousand words. And then for the heavy duty data transmission, you can always send people the report, email them or fax them the paperwork that they need.

But keep the text off the screen. As I like to say, say the words, show the pictures, and then use paper for the heavy duty data.

Rebecca: Excellent. And then with just a couple of minutes left, I figured this was a good question to round out, and it might apply to some other folks on the phone. It says, “If a small non-profit is considering going virtual for board meetings or volunteer information meetings, what tips do you have for those organizations?”

Andy: Well I think that webinars, as opposed to conference calls, are a good technology. With this conference call you do have the benefit of the visuals, because people could download them in advance, although there is some question about that. And we may not all be looking at the same thing at the same time. It is a little less controlled.

Webinars, the technology is out there. Virtually everyone can participate. So I think if it is a choice of one or the other, I like the web format because you have all the advantages of a conference call, in terms of people hearing each other and being able to talk, but you also have the images on the screen which the facilitator can control so that everyone is seeing the same thing at the same time.

So if a small non-profit is thinking about taking board meetings virtual, I would go in the webinar direction. I think it is more enhanced than the teleconference and not as technically problematic as the video conference.

Rebecca: Excellent. Wonderful. Well it is just a couple minutes to, so I will leave the floor to you to wrap up our presentation today.

Andy: Well thank you very much Rebecca. Thank you Network for Good and Nonprofit 911. But most of all, thank you for dialing in and listening. I hope this has been interesting to you. I hope it has been a good demonstration of how to use this form. And I hope, again, that you will get a copy of the report.

These things do not come naturally to us, meeting by phone, meeting by video, meeting by web, but it is not rocket science. If you just follow some very simple protocols you can get past the “why” of your meeting and focus on what you are meeting about and have better meetings no matter how you meet. And I wish you every success because the work you do is important. You don’t need to be wasting time with the technology.

So thanks for your time. I hope to be seeing you in my classes or hearing from you via email in the near future.

Rebecca: Excellent. Thank you so much Andy. And I would like to reiterate thank you for being here and thank you to everyone who joined us today. Have a wonderful day!