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InterCall: Flawless execution

Last year, a major financial-services company hosted an investor relations call featuring six speakers located on four continents. Concerned about providing a seamless performance for the 300 eager investors who would participate, the company began planning with InterCall two months in advance of the conference, working with a single meeting consultant responsible for 'choreographing' the event.

When the day of the call arrived, speakers in Singapore, London, New York, San Francisco and Sydney communicated in perfect sync. 'Coordinating an event like this becomes almost like a Broadway production,' observes Ray Britt, InterCall's vice president of marketing.

One reason why IROs select InterCall for events this complex is that the Chicago-based company is the world's largest service provider specializing exclusively in conference communications. Founded in 1991, InterCall defines its mission as keeping businesses connected through reliable audio, video and web conferencing – while providing great service and ease of use. The company, a division of West Corporation, has more than 25 sales offices in the US, as well as offices in the UK, France, Germany, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore. InterCall serves 200,000 individual conference leaders in more than 30,000 organizations worldwide.

InterCall specifically targeted the IR profession and has grown rapidly in this arena thanks to its IRcall.com offering. When working with InterCall, an IRO is assigned one of the company's more than 200 meeting consultants, who walk the public company through the initial request and preliminary planning stages to the delivery of post-call services like archiving and transcription. The company then enjoys the full resources of InterCall's more than 800 operators, customer service representatives, call supervisors, and accounting, marketing, information systems and IT professionals.

Planning an investor conference must start with a determination of the structure of the event. The meeting consultant helps

estimate the number of participants to expect, based on past attendance records and recent history. 'If a company has been in the news, you can expect a lot more participants,' says Britt. 'We've planned for 150 people and gotten 600 – that happens every hour to somebody, so we have extra capacity built in.' Making sure that your conferencing company can handle overflow is a must for IROs. 'You don't want to turn anyone away,' emphasizes Britt. 'And we never do.'

The meeting consultant and a team of event-call specialists then guide the IRO through a dry run. InterCall provides scripts for handling Q&As, which for most IROs is the most angst-provoking aspect of any call. The company also preps executives on conferencing etiquette so they come across well, and employs professional, broadcast-trained operators who can moderate these events. Britt stresses that these details, taken together, give calls 'a professional sound.'

InterCall's premium web-conferencing service, Mshow, is a perfect match for IR conferences. With its range of interactive broadcast capabilities and multimedia features, Mshow turns ordinary audio conference calls into web-conferencing events. IROs can use it to combine participants' phones and internet-connected PCs and instantly extend the reach of their message to as many as 10,000 locations. The addition of Mshow's streaming capabilities can further extend that reach to anyone with an online connection.

InterCall has also unveiled other enhancements specifically designed for IROs. For example, the individual conducting a call can use Leader-View, a web-based tool that allows users to learn who is participating on the call and either screen or prioritize their questions during the interactive parts. IROs can also communicate with the lead operator outside of the conference to provide timing cues or handle other administrative details.

Finally, InterCall prides itself on its post-conference support. 'All investor relations calls are taped and digital recordings made available so investors who weren't there at 10 am today can listen to the whole thing later,' says Britt. InterCall makes sure the call's recording is available within two hours after an event has ended and is available 24/7 from then until the company is ready to deactivate it. A call could also be accessed through a stream of the web conference, a link to which can be posted on a company's web site or e-mailed to investors who missed the call.

When Britt speaks with IROs, one theme that regularly emerges is a desire for stellar service, so InterCall oversees the call from the early planning stages to the wrap-up. 'IR professionals have enough to do managing investors,' concludes Britt. 'The last thing they need is to have to worry about behind-the-scenes aspects of the call. That's why InterCall specializes in great service.'

For more information

www.intercall.com