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Measuring Moods

For socio-phobic company executives, Web-conferencing has been a godsend: out with the vast halls of 400 yawning, toe-tapping, hand-raising employees, and in with that kind, impenetrable computer screen.

But for those who feel uneasy about the anonymity of meeting online, Microsoft Corp. and Chicago-based InterCall have developed Con-

ference Place, a Web-conference platform that features a "mood indicator" function that brings all the interactivity of a live conference to online participants' fingertips. The program features a virtual seating chart with a colored square for each attendee. Users can change the color of their square to offer feedback to the presenter: blue for "I'm bored," for example, or red for, "Wait! You're going too fast."

"Because we're in a virtual conference, unable to replicate the face-to-face, this serves as a way for audience members to see a show of

hands, and also for the presenter to get real-time feedback from the audience members themselves," said Marc Church, vice president of business development at Bulldog Solutions, a sales and marketing firm that uses the software.

A caveat for conference-goers, though: The presenter can track down the identity behind each square, and periodically poll the audience to make sure members are tuned in.



Illustrations by Tim Carroll