

# MORE ON TELECONFERENCING . . .

- A national real estate firm trains the staffs of its franchised offices in 40 cities via teleconference sessions . . .
- A Californian who developed a super telephone sales technique is linked together with groups of trainees in 17 metropolitan sales offices on a teleconference to demonstrate his method . . .
- A training director for a large insurance company teleconferences with 30 salespeople to guide them through the written material explaining a new policy the company is offering to the elderly.

And none of these meetings would have been possible if it were not for new developments in the technology and services that are making *teleconferencing* an important new training medium.

Last fall at the ASTD Region 4 Conference in Louisville, Ky., a special teleconferencing program signaled the dawning of a new age in teleconferencing. (See "Coming Soon . . . A Magic Blackboard" — March '78 *Training and Development Journal*.)

A teleconference is a meeting

conducted via telephone lines that involves individuals or groups of people who are located in a number of distant places. It is a low-cost, effective communications tool, particularly suited to training programs. It is a way to bring many people together that overcomes the problems imposed by distance and time.

The ASTD meeting saw the first public demonstration of the new Darome teleconferencing bridging service which provides instant, multilocation teleconferencing. The glamour in that demonstration may have been the "magic blackboard" but the unique teleconferencing technology that made it possible to include the blackboard in the conference and to link the locations together is as noteworthy and no less sophisticated.

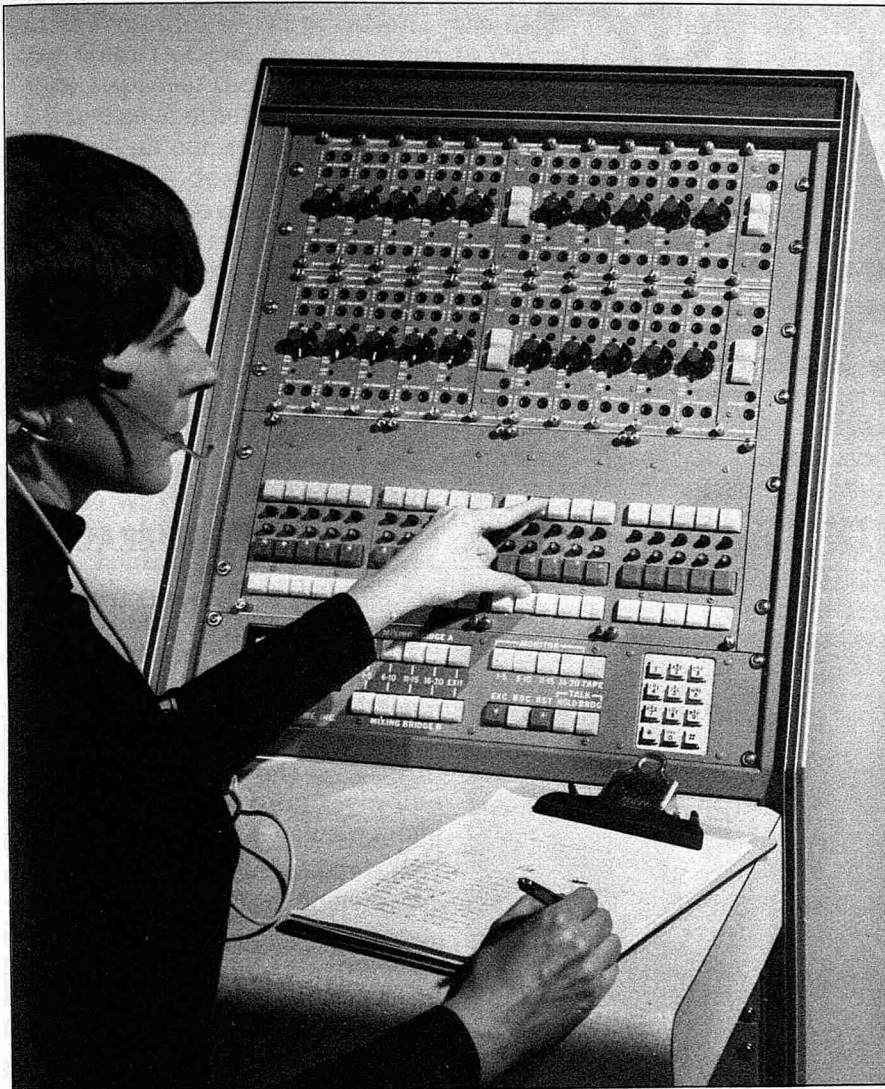
The Darome "Meet-Me" teleconferencing bridge which connects — or bridges — telephone lines together was the electronic wizard that made it happen. The exclusive 20-port (or 20-line) bridge links telephone lines into one instant conference, joining any number of people in as many as 20 different

places, anywhere in the country or in the world.

Jerry Powers, president of Darome, Inc., Harvard, Ill., said that the company created the bridging service because more and more of its teleconferencing equipment customers wanted multiple-location conferencing which the Bell System and other telephone companies were not able to provide.

"Top management is beginning to recognize that teleconferencing is valuable for its intrinsic characteristics," Powers said. "They see it as much more than just a substitute for travel, a saver of time and way to cut costs. Business leaders are looking to teleconferencing as a highly effective means for personal communication within large group meetings."

The uses of teleconferencing are practically unlimited. Some of the many applications include: top-management meetings, new-product introduction, group problem-solving, coordination meetings, continuing education programs, exchange of information, training programs, and sessions to update skills. Companies in practically



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every major industry are looking for more efficient ways of doing business. They want to train more of their people, they want to increase competency, and improve communications at every level.

Powers said that today there is more information to disseminate than ever before. "In the midst of keen competition, companies want to teach their people to sell better, to perform better, they want to inspire them, stimulate them while at the same time efficiently coordinating daily tasks.

#### Natural for Training

"Our teleconferencing customers see the medium as a way to produce a special climate that is conducive to an active and easy exchange of ideas among groups of people whose members interface on a one-to-one and a one-to-many basis."

A teleconference is a natural vehicle for a training program. An important feature is that the trainer and trainees do not have to be in the same place. Guest experts can be utilized without their ever having to leave their base of operations.

Because of the efficiency and the flexibility of the medium, more sessions can be held than would be possible with face-to-face meetings. And studies cited by the University of Wisconsin's Educational Telephone Network (ETN) show that a teleconference across the nation is as effective as a meeting across the table. (Wisconsin, with the largest educational teleconferencing network in the world, uses terminal equipment to reach some 24,000 students across the state.)

To plan topnotch teleconferencing programs, here are some re-

quirements to look for when seeking either a service or equipment:

- the service should offer convenience.
- there should be technical monitoring to ensure that everyone who comes on line, stays on line.
- the equipment for group participation should be easy to set up and to use.
- although training sessions are most often held in fixed locations, there should be mobility within the teleconferencing system so that people can participate from any location — wherever there is a telephone.
- help with organizational development of programs.
- conferences must be totally interactive and, when necessary, spontaneous in set-up.
- there must be a capability for large network conferencing.

Since teleconferencing can produce such amazing efficiencies, Powers predicts that it will dramatically change the way business will be conducted in the future.

Recently, Roche Laboratories, a division of Hoffmann LaRoche, one of the largest ethical pharmaceutical companies in the world, literally "called" its national sales meeting together when for the first time in business history, an annual sales convention took the form of a giant teleconference. Thirty-eight participating locations, throughout the country, were instantly linked together via telephone lines. About 1,000 people joined in the teleconference which went on for two days. Some 750 sales people could talk directly with the top-management team as easily as if they were across the table from each other rather than across the nation.

Several times during the meeting, when a complicated medical or scientific question was raised, the company's expert on the subject was contacted in his office or laboratory for an on-the-spot, long-distance discussion of the problem.

The theme of this Roche sales meeting was acceleration, according to Joseph Mastracchio, projects manager, Communications Development, and "thanks to the medium of teleconferencing, acceleration is what we got," he said.