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THE PROJECT
Kicker Conference Phone
Prototype

THE CLIENT
Kicker Studio

THE TEAM
Jennifer Bove, Dan Saffer, principals/interaction designers; Jody Medich, principal/visual designer; Emily Moyer, lead industrial designer; Tom Maiorana, visual designer; Mike Scully, industrial designer

THE YEAR
2009



MY BEST WORK

JENNIFER BOVE

This project is special to me because it's a project that my company, Kicker Studio, did at a time when we really needed something to keep us together and focused on the future. We were a new studio, formed on the day that the stock market crashed and when the 2008 economic downturn kicked into high gear.

We had an idea of how we wanted to work together but no work with which to prove ourselves, and little hope of the economy turning in our favor any time soon. So we designed our own project to solve a problem we'd experienced firsthand—that, despite all of the innovation in technology and telecommunications, conference calls still suck.

We put a lot of thought into the little things that bugged us (and the people we interviewed) about conference calls and the behaviors that are so common in face-to-face meetings but are difficult to work around when dialed in. For starters, how do you know who else is on the conference call when you join? Or whose voice you're hearing at a given time? We solved this with a visual interface that allows people to see who's on the line and who's talking.

And then there are the subtle cues of eye contact or the under-the-table kick to alert the speaker that you've got something to say, or to privately call someone's attention to something that's been said. To

enable these behaviors, we designed features such as "hand raising" and "poking" into the call experience.

We also thought about the mobility of the speaker on a conference call, as the need to draw at the whiteboard and still be heard came up in our own experiences. For this, we incorporated small microphone pods, stored in the sides of the phone, which also allow remote access to muting, hand raising and time-stamping recorded calls. By enabling the interactions of a shared space and designing for these small but important behaviors, we aimed to make the conference call experience more transparent, more human and more enjoyable than our own experiences had been.

Our concept, the Kicker Conference Phone, is designed from the inside out, with attention to form and function and a focus on the details that make the everyday interactions with a common object both easier and more desirable. It stands out for me as something that we did for ourselves, to prove—both to us and to clients—that our design process and our company has a future ahead of it. **HOW**

Jennifer Bove is a founder and principal at Kicker Studio in San Francisco. She is an interaction designer by trade, people person by nature and bi-coastal by design. www.jennbove.com