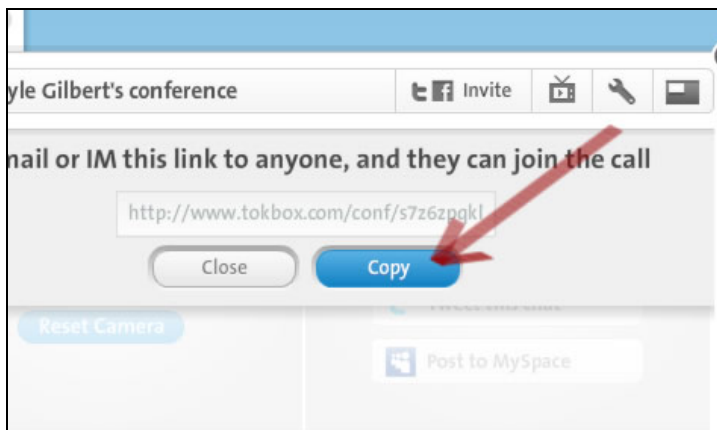
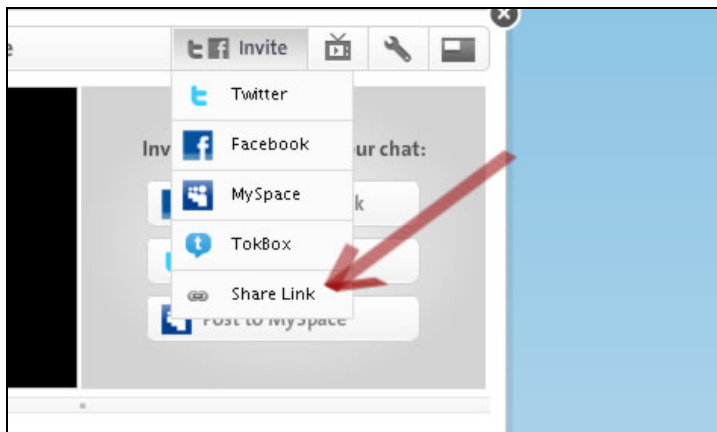
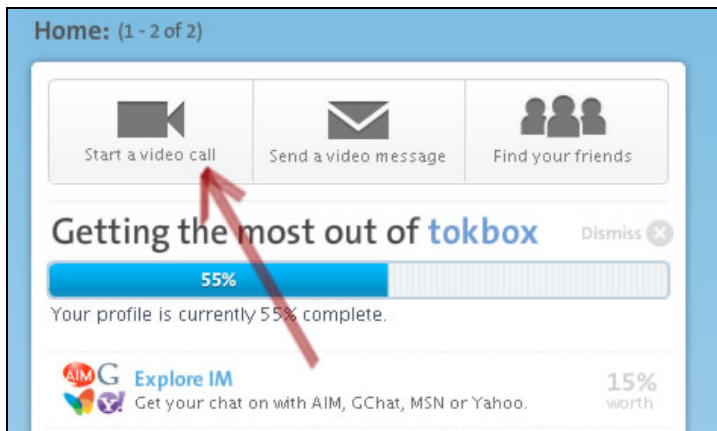


Recommendations for Online Groups

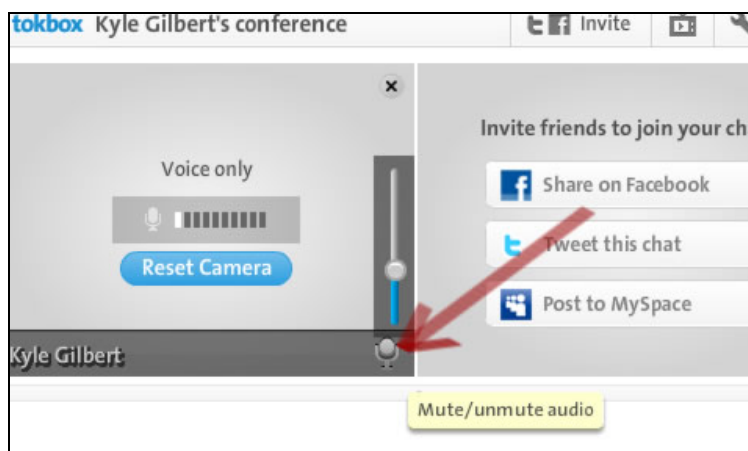
It's amazing to see how technology is allowing people to connect online. People who aren't able to attend a regular face-to-face group because of poor health, geographic location, or issues with kids are still able to connect online and be a part of group.

Below are some recommendations on best practices for having a face-to-face online group using webcams.

1. You can get multiple people connected into one room online through a free service at Tokbox.com. The leader needs to set up an account there, and then he or she can invite other people to attend by copying and pasting a link to their video chat (see below).



2. To reduce the amount of technical problems during your first group meeting, I would suggest that the group leader ask the members of the group to test out Tokbox before the meeting is scheduled to begin.
3. Since there is often a lot of feedback and room noise that gets picked up on webcam microphones, I would suggest asking people to mute their webcams and using a free conference call room instead. You can get one online at <http://freeconferencecall.com>. The only drawback is that people will have to make a long distance call to get connected to the group each week.
4. Here's a diagram that shows you how to mute your webcam in Tokbox:



5. You can use both the Tokbox link and the conference call information over and over again from week to week so that there's no need to send new information each week.
6. A few other tips regarding online groups:
 - Once the leader has logged into the group on Tokbox, I recommend posting the conference call number and extension in the chat area of the screen.
 - Tokbox has a full screen feature that works well. Pressing escape on your keyboard will take you back to the regular view.
 - Just like regular groups, it may take a few weeks for a group to gel. Don't give up when people forget to show up.
 - If you're coordinating a mixed-gender group or couples group, make sure that this doesn't become a place for unhealthy relationships to form. A married man or woman shouldn't meet alone with a member of the opposite sex.
 - Keep in mind that online groups may tend to work better during later times of the day when there are less distractions at home and kids are in bed.

Kyle Gilbert
 Pastor of Communications
 Faith Promise Church
<http://faithpromise.org>

Blog: <http://kylesrandom.com>
 Twitter: @kylegilbert