

***Think Out Loud* Call Screener Guidelines**

Callers are important contributors to *Think Out Loud*. They often add the expertise that we're looking for to give broad policy initiatives or trends a real-world perspective.

Time and again, our host's requests for people with certain experiences to call into the show yield just what we're looking for. We get anywhere from 10-25 calls per show, and we usually put 3-5 callers on the air per one-hour show. (See screener script and screener form below).

Think Out Loud screens calls, and our call screeners (two per show) are looking for the same things that our producers are looking for when they book guests for the show:

- ◆ Experience—not opinion—is the key. Our host makes specific call-outs for people to call in if they have experience with whatever topic we're talking about. We want storytelling, details about what they experienced that shaped their views on a topic.
- ◆ We have a line on our "screener sheet" (see below) for the screener to specify the caller's experience for the producer.
- ◆ Sometimes people call in who DON'T have the experiences we expected to hear about, but who have strong stories to tell about their experience that takes the conversation in a new direction. Screeners should remain open to these experiences.
- ◆ Passion is fine, but we don't want rants.
- ◆ We do want people who will feel at ease having a conversation with our guests and hosts, and challenging the big picture "experts" we bring onto the program, using their experience as a lens for questions. Some of the best moments on the show involve conversations between our callers and our guests.
- ◆ If people want to voice opinions (instead of talking about experiences), our screeners suggest that they post those thoughts online.
- ◆ We try to get a good mix of male/female voices on the program
- ◆ We try to get a good mix of ages on the program. Anybody calling in age 16 or younger has to get permission from a parent (who must speak with our call screener).
- ◆ Screeners note other things of interest to the producer. Does this person have a good phone line? Are they in a car (we don't take calls from people in moving cars, for safety reasons, and also because we don't want to lose their call)? Can they tell their story in a concise way, or do they ramble? During election season: are they involved in a campaign, what is their party affiliation and who do they plan to vote for (to try and achieve balance in our show callers).

THINK OUT LOUD-CALL SCREENER SCRIPT

To pick up a line or put someone on hold:

*Push green or yellow flashing button.

*If several lines are ringing at once put all callers on hold:

SCREENER: “Think Out Loud, will you hold please?”

CALLER: “Yes”

SCREENER: “Thank you”

To take the call:

* Indicate the line you are answering on the call sheet- this is easy to forget once you have answered.

SCREENER: “Think Out Loud, what is your question or comment please?”

CALLER: “I want to ask the guest about their statement regarding...”

*Take notes as caller comments to provide a clear summary for the Producer. Ask them questions to determine exactly what they have to say. Also note the gender of the caller.

To get more information:

SCREENER: “Thank you, what is your name please? Where are you calling from? What is your experience with this topic? Are you involved professionally? (Make sure to note all of this information on caller sheet)

Rating callers:

Rate the caller from one to five. One is worst, and five best, based on the quality of the phone line and the speaker’s voice – not on the editorial content of what they have to say. (i.e. Quiet or loud? Rambling or clear? Fuzzy line? Cell phone?)

To prepare a caller to hold/go to air:

SCREENER: “We are going to try to include you in the conversation. I will put you on hold now. Please turn off your radio if you have it on. You will be able to hear the conversation through your phone. Please do not go on speakerphone or a headset. If you are included in the conversation, you will hear our host introduce you. Please go ahead with your comment. We won’t warn you before we bring you to air, so please stay quiet on the line.” (If the caller is on a phone in the car, ask them to pull over.)

*If the producer has questions about the caller you can take them off hold to ask for clarification. Once a caller has been transferred to “AIR” (as indicated on computer screen) don’t touch the line.

Call colors:

Green or yellow flashing button: A ringing call/call on hold

Solid red or blue button: A call going to AIR/ON AIR

Election shows:

Please ask callers if they are involved in a campaign in any way, if they are registered to a party and/or who they plan to vote for.

THINK OUT LOUD-CALL SCREENER SCRIPT

Think Out Loud call screener form:

Telephone line: _____

Name: _____

Location: _____

Gender: Male Female

Experience: _____

Notes:
