

Estimate time for reading: 3 min 20 sec

How to Have a Successful Online Conference?

Times have changed in a blink of an eye and had to embrace CHANGE.

NOW, for some, it is already a routine while others still struggle with technology!
In a very short time, we all had to learn to walk the distance, travel across terabits and reinvent socializing in the virtual world.

There is a significant gap between our expectations and what an online conference turns out to be.



What are the Benefits in using online conferences?

Time Saving / Increase Efficiency - One of the most significant ones, I believe it must be “skipping” the traffic jams and then finding a parking space. With video conferencing, all you need to do is finding your most comfortable seat in the nearest

available room. You can also connect with your long-distance team members/classmates at the click of a button, allowing everyone to be present.

Staying Informed / Attending More events- In my case, I have to be present at several meetings, courses, webinars ...networking all in the same day. The result: getting home late, having no more time to spend with my family and not to mention that I had to be a “Super Woman” to be able to attend everything scheduled in my agenda. Sometimes prospects could have been hard to catch due to other commitments.

The Downside of Video Conferencing:

Let’s be honest and say how many times have you or the others who attended the same meeting had a poor internet connection!

If not you, maybe someone in the room started glitching while something important was being discussed. That is when you wish you were just in a regular face-to-face meeting.

Noise – You manage to set up the connection; everyone is in the virtual room and, the backup noise makes it difficult for everyone to focus. Somebody else’s TV or radio might be on. You want to add or ask something and you are not being heard....

***You can't see people / It's difficult to identify people's voices* – There are 9 pieces of advice to overcome these problems in order to have a successful conference call.**

1. Always greet people and check who is online. Make sure you say your name clearly
2. Always identify yourself when intervening.
3. Check you have no noisy accessories.
 - Don't tap your keyboard when your microphone is on.
 - Don't click your pen.
 - Don't tap your fingers on the table.
 - Turn off your mobile phone or put it on mute
 - Take off noisy jewellery.
4. Avoid “dead time”. Complete silence can make people think you are offline.
5. Be careful on heavy breathing. It can sound very loud in a conference call.
6. Find ways to ask people to repeat or speak more slowly when you don't understand something.
7. If you are the Chair, find ways of asking people to speak succinctly so that you keep to time.
8. If you are the Chair, summarize contributions and at the end of the conference call summarize the action points. This way you ensure there are no misunderstandings.
9. If you are the Chair, thank everyone for their participation.

What are the “ingredients” of a successful international call?

1. **Time** – Agree the timetable for the meeting in advance. Remember, different groups may have different ideas about punctuality and suitable time across time zones.
2. **Hierarchy** – find out before you start who is the most important person in the group. It may be important to address the first or with respect.
3. **Purpose** – Make sure everyone understands the purpose of the meeting

4. **Sensitivity** – Be sensitive to different personalities when you know them. If someone is shy or uncertain, make sure they have space to speak. If someone dominates the conversation, ask them to be succinct and brief.
5. **Expectations** – If you can, find out people's expectations before the meeting in one-to-one small group conversations. Preparing the background and knowing participants' expectations can make a big difference between a successful conference call and an unsuccessful one.
6. **Small meetings are better than big ones** – think about having a small conference call with few people. This may help quieter participants and non-native speakers of English. If it has to be a big meeting, you can delegate someone to summarize the discussion.
7. **Explain the Context**- Always explain “why” decisions are taken, not just what the decisions are. People feel more integrated into a strategy if they understand it., even if they don't completely agree with it.
8. **Alternative communication channels** - For people who won't speak in public, ask them their opinion in private. They may find it easier to communicate their opinions in writing.

In a video conference call, there are additional problems compared with a telephone conference call, and one advantage – you can see the people!

What advice can you follow during your video – conference calls?

1. **What is on your wall?** – Anything confidential? Anything outsiders shouldn't see? Does the wall behind you promote your company? Do designs on the wall make participants look stupid?
2. **What's on your table?** – is your desk tidy?
3. **Can everyone see you?** – Don't hide behind the large person next to you. If you are on the side, don't lean backwards, as you will be out of shot.
4. **How are you dressed?** – Bright clothes are fine. Be Careful on stripes – they strobe, creating lines on the screen. Are you dressed respectably? Does your dress code match the conventions of the other people? This may particularly apply to you if you are dressed too casually or reveal more flesh than appropriate.

5. **Wave** – Six people in a video conference call can be hard to distinguish. When you start to speak, make a gesture or wave so everyone knows who is speaking.

Last but not least, I hope you do have all the linguistic skills with you!

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Belle Languages - Best Language Centre Award 2017 “Best CUP Centre in Romania” – Cambridge English Qualifications / Plus Level Centre 2020 – British Council

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