SPEAKEASY

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL COMMUNICATION GAP

TOP 10 STRATEGIES FOR CONFERENCE CALLS THAT WORK

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL COMMUNICATION GAP

TOP 10 STRATEGIES FOR CONFERENCE CALLS THAT WORK

In today's business environment, virtual meetings and conference calls are inevitable. As business relationships extend far beyond state and country boundaries, virtual meetings are a must to connect with co-workers, clients, and key stakeholders. In contrast to face-to-face communication, virtual communication challenges the most powerful factor in personal communication - engaging others to build connections.

Despite the growing popularity of virtual meetings and conference calls, their effectiveness is quite dismal. Recent surveys have documented the lackluster results of conference calls, as evident in these statistics:

76%
of conference call attendees do other work while on a conference call[1]

27%
reported having fallen asleep on at least one occasion[2]

82%
of the participants prefer to use their mobile device on conference calls - giving them more opportunities to mute the meeting and continue their daily routine[3]

SPEAKEASY

ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO • NEW YORK • AMSTERDAM
BANGALORE • MUMBAI • CHICAGO • BOSTON • HONG KONG

T. 1-888-375-1801

Info@Speakeasyinc.com
SpeakeasyInc.com

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL COMMUNICATION GAP

TOP 10 STRATEGIES FOR CONFERENCE CALLS THAT WORK

With background distractions so abundant, it is no wonder that conference calls are subject to disengaged audiences who are likely multi-tasking, surfing the Internet, reading social media posts, or even using the bathroom.[4]

Taking the time before the conference call to consider your audience and potential distractions could mean the difference between your audience saying, "this was a great meeting", or "this was a waste of time." This point extends to international audiences as well. The most effective conference call speakers spend time learning their audience's communication preferences and are mindful of:

Cultural language barriers that may hinder building a connection over the phone

Language nuisances or business communication customs that may influence the level of audience participation

Their tone and speed of speech that play a role in the audience's level of comprehension

Here are the top 10 conference call strategies you should follow to prepare for and conduct your next conference call. Keep in mind that your top priority during the call should be to connect with and engage your audience, so that the information being shared is actually heard.

SPEAKEASY

ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO • NEW YORK • AMSTERDAM
BANGALORE • MUMBAI • CHICAGO • BOSTON • HONG KONG

T. 1-888-375-1801

Info@Speakeasyinc.com
SpeakeasyInc.com

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE CALL, BE SURE TO...

1 PLAN YOUR CONTENT AND AGENDA

Create an agenda with estimated timeframes for the meeting and share this with the audience prior to the conference call. This will keep the call organized and ensure you are able to cover all topics in a systematic manner. Communicate the agenda, how the call will proceed, and what you may need from the audience, and when. For time sake, avoid long-winded explanations or drawn out conversations - this will bore your audience. Build in short segments for audience participation and questions, whenever possible to sustain engagement.

2 CONSIDER YOUR VOICE QUALITY

Try a practice run, in the room where you will conduct the call, so you are able to hear your voice and how clear it comes through to the listener. Headsets or microphones may work better to amplify your voice than using laptop or table top speakers. Take the time before the call to consider the placement of speakers in the room, in relation to the microphones or speakers that are available. Be sure all conference call equipment is arranged within 1 feet or less to the speaker(s) to prevent having to shuffle the equipment during the conference call.

3 ELIMINATE BACKGROUND NOISE

Some noises are unavoidable, but for those that are easily predicted like background conversations or office music, reduce their impact by eliminating them. You may need to post signs around the office to remind others that there is a conference call in progress. If the conference call will be held in a conference or meeting room, go and sit in the space for 10 minutes and just listen. Taking this time before the meeting to determine what background noises may be present can go a long way to making your call effective and engaging, without unnecessary distractions.

SPEAKEASY

ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO • NEW YORK • AMSTERDAM
BANGALORE • MUMBAI • CHICAGO • BOSTON • HONG KONG

T. 1-888-375-1801

Info@Speakeasyinc.com
SpeakeasyInc.com

DURING THE CONFERENCE CALL, REMEMBER TO...

4 BUILD IN TIME FOR INTRODUCTIONS

Avoid assuming that your audience recognizes your voice. Instead, take the first few minutes of the call to introduce all speakers, including their names, their titles, and locations. If it is manageable, consider having your audience do the same. As they do so, take notes on their names and locations. As part of effective communication skills training, Speakeasy communication consultants recommend engaging your audience by using their names throughout the meeting to solicit their feedback/ opinions.

5 DEAL WITH DISTRACTIONS OFFLINE

Should an unexpected event occur that needs to be handled during the meeting, avoid doing it online with your audience waiting. Find a way for the meeting to continue, and excuse yourself to attend to the issue. Handling distractions on the call, gives the audience the permission to "mentally check out" and it may be hard to regain their attention when you resume the meeting.

6 ENUNCIATE YOUR WORDS, CLEARLY AND SLOWLY

You may have a riveting message to share, but if your audience cannot understand what you are saying - the message will fall on deaf ears. Open your mouth and fully own the words you speak. In our communication skills courses, we often advise our clients to speak slightly slower than their normal verbal gait. This will allow those who may not be familiar with your vocal cadence to easily adjust and understand what you are saying. Also make statements sound definite - ending on a downward inflection, not an upward question mark.

DURING THE CONFERENCE CALL, REMEMBER TO...

7 | PAUSE FOR UNDERSTANDING

Taking strategic pauses during virtual communication is even more important than in face-to-face communication. Why? Pausing gives your listeners the moment to catch up and process what has been said. Plus, it gives you, as the speaker, the opportunity to breathe and collect your thoughts. Be mindful of the length of your pauses and their frequency. Using too many pauses may disengage your audience and lessen the connection they have built with you and what you are saying.

8 | USE BODY LANGUAGE TO BRING YOUR WORDS TO LIFE

Communication consultants suggest moving your hands, making gestures, and smiling when you are speaking, even if your audience cannot see you. This non-verbal communication is a powerful tool to make your virtual communication lively and more conversational. Remember, lectures are not as effective in a conference call, but making the meeting a collaborative conversation can help to engage your audience and build a productive connection.

9 | PART 1: TAKE TURNS - AND DON'T INTERRUPT OTHERS

Virtual communications that are conversational are generally more effective in keeping the audience's attention. However, the structure of virtual communication is essential to keeping order and avoiding interruptions. If more than one speaker will be on the call, be sure to clearly announce when it is time for the next person to speak, and encourage others to listen first, then speak, without jumping in.

SPEAKEASY

ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO • NEW YORK • AMSTERDAM
BANGALORE • MUMBAI • CHICAGO • BOSTON • HONG KONG

T. 1-888-375-1801

Info@Speakeasyinc.com
SpeakeasyInc.com

DURING THE CONFERENCE CALL, REMEMBER TO...

9 | PART 2: ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE TO CONNECT AND SHARE

You can receive a wealth of information by allowing listeners to provide input during a conference call. In fact, over 70% of workers say virtual meetings do not work because attendees are not encouraged or allowed to provide feedback or ideas.[5] The business communication skills experts, at Speakeasy recommend that the leader of the conference call, invite participants, by name, to provide their suggestions and opinions on the topic(s) being discussed. When you can recognize your listeners by name, you validate their opinions and engage them in conversation. When they engage, make sure to listen as attentively as they speak. Also, having one dedicated moderator, controlling who speaks and when, will help to better organize participant feedback, and keep the call structured.

10 | SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS BEFORE ENDING THE MEETING

Before closing the conference call, the leader should summarize what was discussed and review any assignments or expectations. This can also be a great time for Q&A. However, be sure to bring every meeting to an appropriate close, and end on a positive note.

SPEAKEASY

ATLANTA ● SAN FRANCISCO ● NEW YORK ● AMSTERDAM
BANGALORE ● MUMBAI ● CHICAGO ● BOSTON ● HONG KONG

T. 1-888-375-1801

Info@Speakeasyinc.com
SpeakeasyInc.com

CONCLUSION

Following these Speakeasy conference call best practices are additional steps toward helping you lead effective virtual communications. With practice and guidance, your communication skills will naturally improve, enabling you to unlock the master communicator within you. It is important to remember that communication is rooted in authenticity, sharing information, and collaborating with others. By approaching your audience as human beings who want to be engaged in lively conversation, you can take steps to reduce the likelihood of "off the call" distractions. In addition, the impact of cultural differences should not be overlooked. Instead, prepare for every conference call by researching your audience and incorporating the best practices above to ensure that your virtual communications are powerful bridges that will build lasting business connections. The business communication consultants at Speakeasy specialize in empowering speakers, of all levels, to tap into their communication potential. Our best-in-class business communication skills training programs provide participants with real-world opportunities to put proven communication strategies into practice. Register today for one of Speakeasy's landmark communication programs. Our dynamic and credentialed faculty are excited to help enhance your effective communication skills, for your next conference call and beyond…

To learn more about our dynamic communication classes visit our website at **http://www.speakeasyinc.com/**,
or call one of our communication advisors at **1-888-375-1801**.

S P E A K E A S Y

SpeakeasyInc.com

---

[1] http://www.intercall.com/blog/index.php/audio-conferencing/survey-reveals-workers-conference-call-hold-habits
[2] https://hbr.org/2014/08/what-people-are-really-doing-when-theyre-on-a-conference-call
[3] https://www.speek.com/resources/meeting-tips/people-not-paying-attention-conference-calls/
[4] https://hbr.org/2014/08/what-people-are-really-doing-when-theyre-on-a-conference-call
[5] https://www.speek.com/resources/meeting-tips/people-not-paying-attention-conference-calls/

S P E A K E A S Y

ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO • NEW YORK • AMSTERDAM
BANGALORE • MUMBAI • CHICAGO • BOSTON • HONG KONG

T. 1-888-375-1801

Info@Speakeasyinc.com
SpeakeasyInc.com