

This 10-point guide will help you:

- ask the right questions when comparing conference call providers
- understand the service that will best fit your business needs.

1. Audio Quality

Choose a provider that pays special attention to audio quality. Don't choose cheap pricing over quality of service, it could be more damaging than you think. As soon as your conversation becomes difficult to hear, your attendees will switch off or become frustrated, impacting on your professional reputation as well as your productivity. Your chosen provider should be constantly checking its PESQ scores. for audio quality.



2. Security Reassurance



Choose a provider that will set up your account with multiple conference rooms at no extra charge. If you have only one conference room but there are multiple users within your business, there may be security implications with PIN numbers and separate meetings trying to access the room at the same time. Multiple conference rooms for different users keeps security risks to a minimum whilst being able to track charges against different cost centres.

3. Number of Participants

Choose a provider that gives you best practice guidance based on the number of people you have attending . You need to have functionality to turn name announcements on/off, to mute participants, to enable immediate access for everyone or a chairperson to control when the meeting begins. Waiting for a large amount of people to join is tiresome as well as costly, opt for a conferencing provider that allows you to dial-out to participants.



4. Call Recording



If call recordings are an essential feature for your business, choose a provider that offers this service, ideally for FREE. Call recordings avoid having to note-take, enable you to share conversations with non-attendees, aid training and auditing and may even be a required regulatory aspect of your work. Be wary of providers with additional or hidden charges for recording, storage and accessing call recordings.

5. Device— Mobile Participants

Choose a provider with a centralised billing model where there is no extra charge for mobiles to access the service. Due to flexible and remote working increasing around the world, more participants are likely to be accessing their conference call on a mobile device. If your considering premium rate conferencing, where a shared-cost model means the cost of your call is added to the individual participants telephone bill, a mobile will incur charges up to 57p per minute.



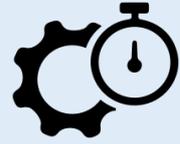


6. Call Geography

Choose a provider based on the extent of their international coverage. Calls become costly when participants are having to dial an international number to access the service. Ensure your chosen provider has the necessary coverage so that your participants have local dial-in numbers to use, keeping costs down.

7. Helping Productivity

Choose a provider that offers innovative features to improve your meeting productivity. Automated dial-outs can avoid you having to wait for participants to join your call as invited participants will be called and automatically placed into the conference call. Being able to reference calls as they happen can avoid time-consuming accounts queries when the monthly bill arrives.



8. Service Reliability



Choose a provider that runs on a tier one global telephony network. Not being able to access your conferencing service or being thrown off a call is not only frustrating but potentially damaging. Understand how your conferencing provider ensures maximum uptime and ask for their availability of service statistics.

9. Ease of Use

The management of your conferencing account needs to be simple, choose a provider that ensures this. If you have to go through customer services every time you want to manage your conferencing, you will be wasting time. Users should be able to create their own rooms, schedule calls, access call recordings and see itemised bills



10. Understand the Pricing



Pricing and cost models will differ between providers, choose one that best suits your business. Conferencing does not have to be expensive but do be warned about 'FREE' conferencing services. Free conferencing is almost certainly not free, with hidden charges often arising.

With a 'shared cost model', every participant will have charges placed onto their own phone bill and if 084 phone numbers are not included in your tariff you are likely to pay up to 17p per minute for a landline and 57p for a mobile.

Most businesses would prefer to take on a 'centralised cost model' where all conference charges can be seen on one bill. This makes it much easier to track expenditure whilst knowing that clients aren't having to pay for the pleasure of speaking with you. You will either have the option to 'pay as you go' or use a 'minute bundle'. If your conferencing usage is low or sporadic, you should choose PAYG—only ever paying for the minutes you use. If your conferencing bill shows more than 5000 minutes of usage you should consider a bundle, paying either for a set number of minutes or buying channels that allows unlimited usage.



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