

# 13 Conference calling – ending the call and following up

## Closing efficiently

### Concluding business

OK. I think we've covered everything.

Before we finish, let me summarise the main points.

Is there any other business?

### Looking forward

So, Bob, you'll produce a marketing report for the next meeting. OK?

Can we fix a time for the next meeting?

### Ending the call positively

Good. I think we made a lot of progress today.

I'd like to thank you all for your input.

OK, we can finish there. Thank you for calling in.

Let's leave it there. Many thanks.

### It's the way you say it!

Remember: other people cannot see you during a conference call so they do not have all the usual clues to work out your mood or your attitude from your body language, facial expression, gestures or posture. Therefore, it is critically important that you use your voice effectively:

- Speak as clearly as you can and articulate clearly.
- Use intonation to make it clear when you are affirming and when you are asking a question.
- Make sure the volume of your voice is high enough.
- Explicitly ask for a response if you ask a question or make a comment which needs it.
- Be clear and explicit about your attitude ("I'm happy / confused / worried / unsure ...")



## Follow up

It is very important to follow up the conference call in order to ensure that everyone understood what was discussed and is committed to the decisions which were taken. You can do this by:

- calling participants individually to check their understanding of the discussion and the decisions
- sending detailed minutes
- asking people for feedback on the call in terms of the process (e.g. did they like the way the call was moderated?) and in relation to levels of understanding (e.g. did the native English speakers talk too quickly, and too much, for the non-native speakers?)

# 14 Golden rules and cultural tips

## Do

- plan the call thoroughly. Have clear objectives.
- consult your Minimax for essential phrases!
- send all relevant information before calling.
- have all information you need available to you.
- anticipate what the other person will say and prepare possible responses.
- start the call positively and politely. (Smile while you phone.)
- check that your respondent is free to talk.
- explicitly clarify the reason for the call.
- give information in short, simple sentences.
- speak clearly and slowly but be concise. Time is money.
- carefully check that the other person understands what you have said (and meant).
- listen actively, and summarise and confirm regularly that you have understood.
- be polite and give people time to state their point of view.
- handle aggressive comments to you politely.
- finish positively and courteously.
- send a follow-up email to confirm agreed points.



## Don't

- assume your respondent is available to talk when you call.
- forget that you represent the company on the phone.
- waste time.
- pretend to understand when you don't.
- assume that the other person has understood everything.
- interrupt frequently.
- talk at the same time as others during a conference call.
- lose control if someone becomes aggressive.
- end the call too quickly or abruptly. It can seem rude.
- say something rude in a conference call if you haven't muted your microphone!

## Cross cultural tips

- Begin and end with a little small talk *if it is expected by others*. (It is not always the case).
- Be aware that some people see directness as impolite.
- Be patient if there is silence. Some people need time to think and to decide what they want to say and how to say it.
- Be sensitive to how the use of first and family names can vary across cultures.
- Be friendly but be aware that some people regard over-friendliness as a sign of a lack of professionalism.
- Keep it simple. Idiomatic language is difficult for non-native speakers to understand.
- Use silence carefully as it can mean different things (agreement, indifference, non-understanding, ...) to different people.
- Respect expectations concerning punctuality.
- Use humour carefully and sensitively as it is often very personal and culturally specific.
- Ask for written confirmation where critical information is being transferred.
- Be patient if the other person's level of language is not as good as yours. You were there once!