

Workplace Etiquette

Do's and don'ts of multi-way phone conversations



- Do use the right phone in a quiet, undisturbed room.



- Do get comfortable with the fact you will be talking in front of a group and receiving no visual cues or feedback.



- Don't use cell phones or phones that pick up background noise. Calling from an open plan office is the equivalent of having a conversation in a public place. If you really can't find a quiet room, use the mute button until you are required to speak.



- Do learn to use the mute button and other phone technology. Your intelligent contributions mean nothing if no one can hear them.



- Do set up the meeting in advance and communicate the dial in number, passcodes and other information. Keep in mind the timezones of your colleagues sharing the call.



- Do start the meeting absolutely on time; don't reward latecomers' bad behaviour by waiting for them.



- Do take a role call at the start of the meeting, highlighting the missing attendees. Go on, get tough, people will love you for it!



- Do treat the conference call as if it were a meeting. You know the routine; prepare and circulate an agenda and take notes.

- Do get each caller to say hello and introduce themselves. Even though you may never meet in person, it's a good relationship builder and gets the shyest of people to at least say their name.

- Don't assume everyone recognizes your voice. Say your name before you speak. This is particularly important for employees taking meeting notes.

- Do make use of guest speakers. Invite a special or important guest and get them to say a few words at the beginning of the meeting. No one will know they slipped out after five minutes and you'll get the benefit of undivided attention and best behaviour.

- Don't allow the topic to wander. Be polite but firm if people talk too long or over each other

- Do ask for input by using a person's name. People will pay more attention to avoid the embarrassment of needing the question repeated.

- Don't shuffle papers; scrape chairs, pencil tap, hum or other distracting, noisy activities.

- Do close the meeting formally, thanking everybody for their time. That little bit of recognition will make them feel good about talking to you again.

- Do not sit on a leather chair. The problem is each time you move around, an embarrassing noise is emitted at just the right frequency to carry clearly over the phone. Do use fabric covered seats!