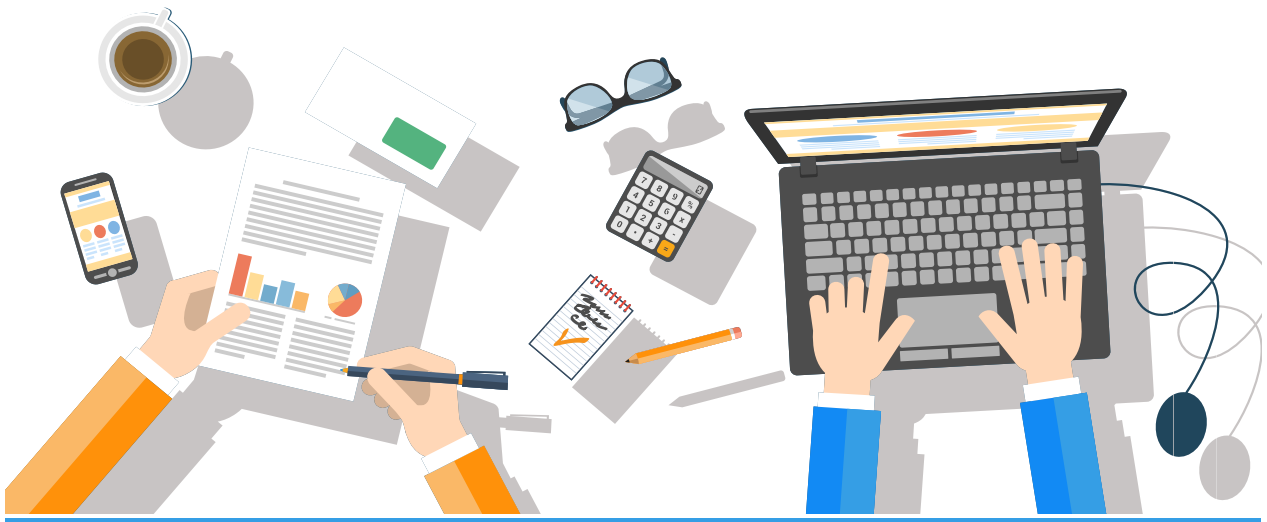


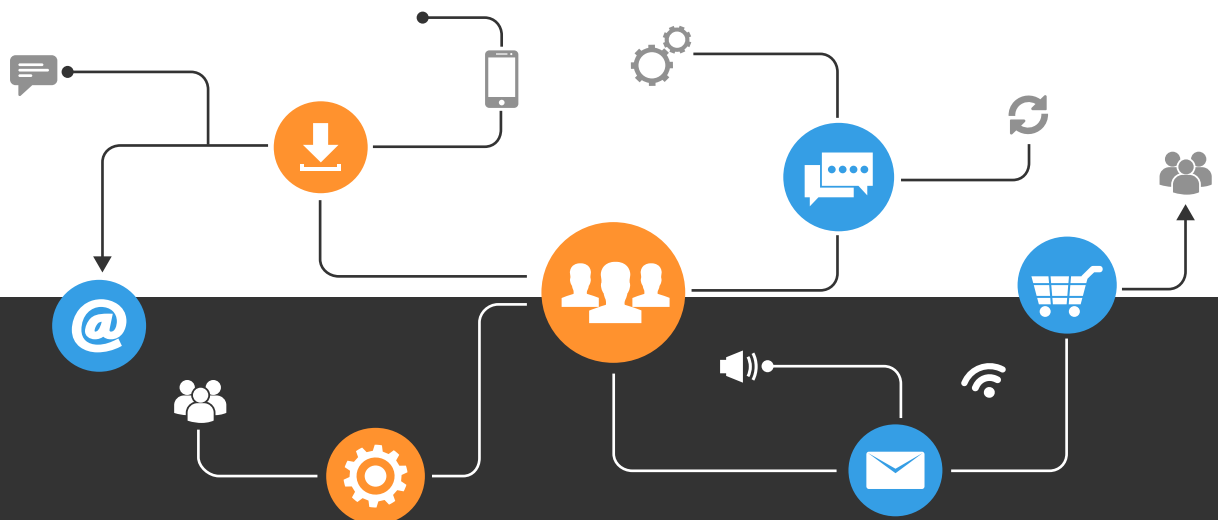
THE FUTURE OF MEETINGS IS GOING MOBILE



THE HISTORY OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING



The defining medium of the twenty-first century is the [virtual world](#). A virtual world can be any space, described by words or illustrated through pictures, which is real enough in the imagination that one feels inside of it. However, the digital virtual world can be defined as “an automated, shared, persistent environment with and through which people can interact in real time by means of a virtual self.” ([Richard Bartle, 2010](#)).



The world today has entire social networks in virtual worlds. That is why, more and more, social interactions of all kinds are taking place within these virtual platforms. Although the initial foundation for virtual social interaction was laid in the late 1980s with the birth of real-time text chat facilities, the interfaces really started to come into their own in the mid-1990s. Internet-based chat and instant messaging software made its way into the market. From there, the systems continued to expand.

Virtual meetings saw an upswing around 2001. A recession, coupled with the 9/11 attacks, threw web meetings into the limelight, as companies were cutting budgets and people were reluctant to fly.

In a few short years, virtual conferences and meetings have grown from a nascent tool to an everyday reality and a daily convenience for working individuals.

EVOLUTION OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY



The convenience and reality of virtual meetings is possibly only due to the pervasive use of mobile technology all over the world now. Mobile technology truly started from the radio common carrier (RCC) in the 1960s and moved on to Motorola's pioneering "brick phone." Motorola engineer Marty Cooper made the first phone call with a real portable cell phone – to the head of Bell Labs, a rival research firm.

At the outset, mobile technology was priced highly and targeted almost exclusively at business users. However, businesses were initially reluctant to integrate the technology into their operations and unconvinced of the advantages it might provide. Instead, corporate individuals adopted the technology personally, and spread the word on its benefits.

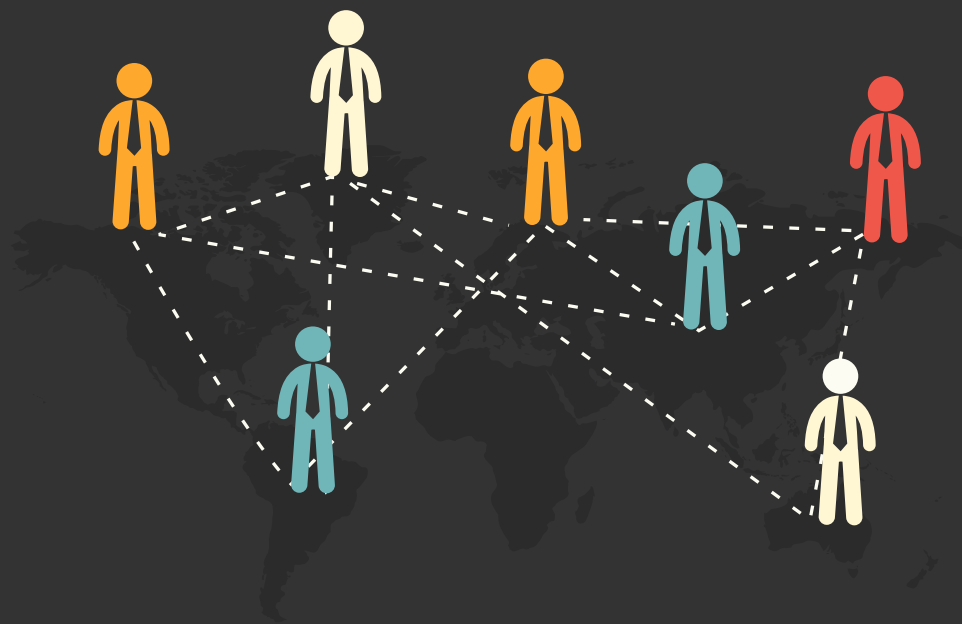
Eventually, mobile technology began to penetrate the corporate world as management started to see the benefits from using it, and became more willing to pay for it.

Once the technology became recognizable and widespread, consumer demand shot up. So strongly did it skyrocket, that the point soon arrived where owning a mobile phone was simply a given, especially in Western Europe and Japan.

The industry continued to improve its offerings, progressing from the original Nokia candy bar to the flip phone, the satellite phone, and PDAs, before evolving to BlackBerry, Sidekicks and finally to modern day iOS and Android devices. Phones had become more than a luxury or a convenience. They were now a necessity – a pull constant towards virtual socialization.

With the availability of data coverage and WiFi, mobile technology expanded to take advantage of these services. All kinds of apps and add-ons emerged to customize phones and make them extensions of the user's personality.

The essential accessory, phones are now used as everything, from calculators to communication devices to fitness trackers to movie screens.



The evolution of mobile technology has been fast and furious, as is the case with much of the technology in today's pace-driven world. It was initially a supplement, rather than a replacement for previously existing communications, but today, it has become the most prevalent and widely-used method of communication, reflecting the importance of the technology in the present and the future.

Consumer relationships have become much more personalized, with mobiles allowing businesses to tailor their message and use the technology as a tool to address the right people, at the right time, in the right place. It has also expanded consumer access in many arenas. For example, mobile technology is used in many developing countries as a mechanism to expand availability of financial services and microfinance. Brick-and-mortar establishments are increasingly and heavily supported by mobile technology, with some becoming altogether obsolete and simply maintaining a virtual presence.

To an extent, mobile technology has also created an emotional relationship between the user and the gadget. Arguably, this is because of the social connectivity that cell phones maintain for the user, and a relationship with the content of the phone rather than the device itself.

All this evolution, and the continuous and almost dependent relationship that individuals now have with their cell phones, has caused virtual meetings and mobile conferencing to be on the rise.

Over the past several years, mobile communications in the workplace, especially in the form of virtual meetings, video conferencing, and conference calls, have skyrocketed.

The industry has quickly become flooded with apps and technology striving to make these communications as simple and accessible as possible to the consumer.

MOBILE CONFERENCING

INDUSTRY



- ADDING VALUE TO THE ENTERPRISE



- MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE MOBILE SPACE

ADDING VALUE TO THE ENTERPRISE

Mobile technology and its usage as a tool in the workplace is an unavoidable reality in today's world, and this technology has been harnessed to bring countless advantages to its users around the globe.

Mobile meetings have revolutionized the office arena. Productivity has increased manifold in office environments, because employees and employers can be connected to the workplace, and to each other, from virtually anywhere in the world. This has opened up the path for telecommuting, flexible work arrangements, and countless other methods by which employees enjoy a better work-life balance. Not only does productivity increase because of accessibility, but it also increases because workers are happier.

MOBILE CONFERENCING

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ADDING VALUE TO THE ENTERPRISE

Moreover, mobile technology allows for more flexible and environmentally friendly content delivery. No longer do we need snail mail, or even the energy used by a huge office space. Minimalism is afforded a prime position in businesses today due to the usage of mobile technology. Today, less is more and smaller is better, because all the enormity of the content and infrastructure of the bygone days has been condensed to fit into a single pocket.

The advent and expansion of mobile technology has allowed people who have never even met to come into closer contact than ever before and to share ideas and collaborate remotely. This has allowed for much greater cooperation and integration of ideas, allowing people halfway round the world to combine ideas and solutions and deliver them to the world.

The workplace is also becoming increasingly global. With companies regularly outsourcing sections of their process, often to different parts of the world, there is no wholly independent workplace devoid of global contact. No man is an island, and neither is any business. Companies are regularly required to be in frequent communication with individuals outside of their workplace as a part of their operations, whether these individuals are clients, employees, vendors, or some other part of the supply chain altogether. Mobile technology is the glue that holds this global workplace together. Without the ability to connect efficiently with the required individuals, businesses would be far less specialized.

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ADDING VALUE TO THE ENTERPRISE

One of the biggest corporate advantages of mobile technology is the cost savings. Virtual meetings, video conferencing, conference calls, and other uses of mobile technology to converse face-to-face with important individuals in other locations are a hugely frugal move. It eliminates the need to fly people in, arrange transportation, pay per diems and cuts back a whole host of other expenses, which is a great way of saving earnings, especially for a new or smaller business.

It also saves time, which, as everyone knows, is money. Virtual meetings can be arranged and executed anywhere and anytime, even while employees are on the go or not in the office, if necessary. This will naturally increase productivity and efficiency, because accessibility to solutions increases.

Additionally, virtual meetings mean virtual agendas, minutes and meeting notes, which are shared with all participants. This means material is preserved, archived, and can be easily found later, which improves accountability.


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As a result of a drastic increase in professional mobile communications, several companies have developed services for professionals to hold virtual meetings and conference calls. These services are a great tool for managers who are short on time but still need to interact with a lot of people and make sure that issues are sorted out.

Here, we compare 10 of the top conference service providers and applications currently available.

	01	-----●	FREE CONFERENCE CALL
	02	-----●	OPENVOICE
	03	-----●	SPEEK
	04	-----●	WEBEX
	05	-----●	SKYPE FOR BUSINESS
	06	-----●	GOTOMEETING
	07	-----●	GOOGLE HANGOUTS
	08	-----●	JOIN.ME
	09	-----●	UBERCONFERENCE
	10	-----●	MEETINGMOGUL

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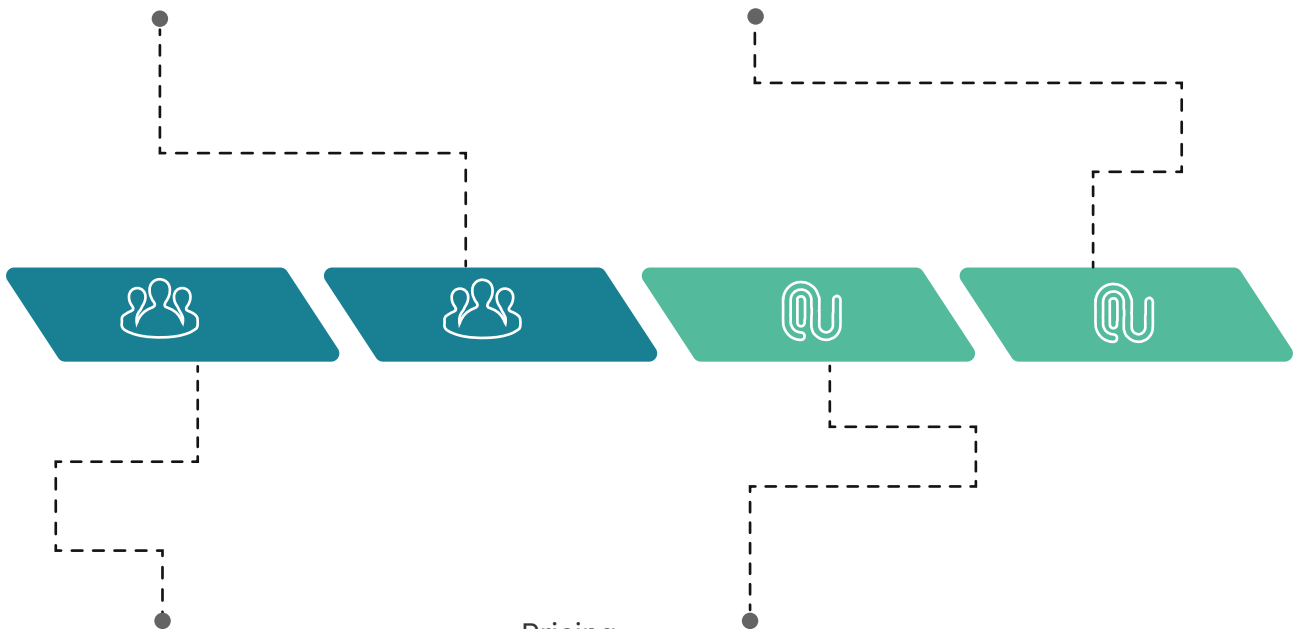
MJOR PLAYERS IN THE MOBILE SPACE

Features

This service allows users to avail free international access numbers. Up to 1,000 callers can be accommodated on a single call, and calls can last for up to 6 hours. An unlimited number of free calls can be made, plus conference calls can be recorded and archived. Free Conference Call is accessible by phone and computer.

Features

OpenVoice is an audio conferencing service that allows administrators to manage groups online. It allows users to schedule calls from their Outlook calendars in addition to providing a free call recording facility. OpenVoice mobile apps are available.



Pricing

No charges are applicable from Free Conference Call, but long distance charges may apply.

Pricing

The service charges \$0.08/minute on calls.



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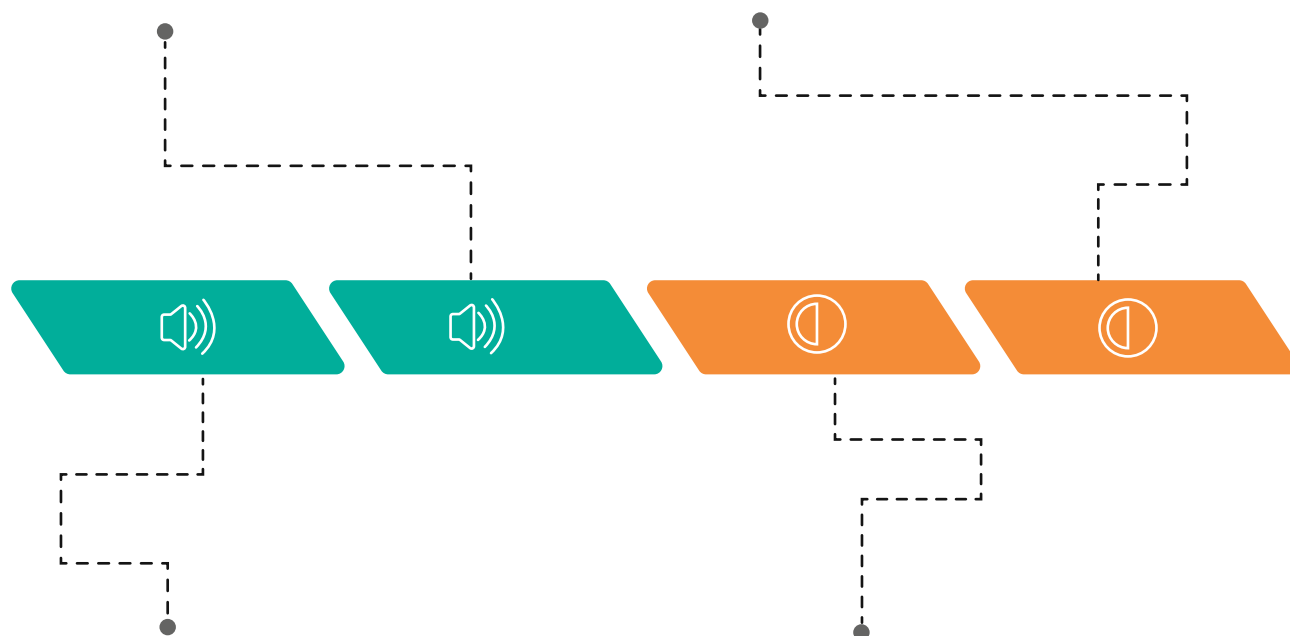
MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE MOBILE SPACE

Features

Another conference calling tool, Speek allows users to share screens, record conference calls, conduct in-conference chats, and allows unlimited calls and international calling. File sharing is integrated with Dropbox and Google Drive. Speek mobile apps are available.

Features

WebEx allows video conferencing with up to 7 video feeds. Users are free to share individual applications or their whole screen, as well as being able to use marking tools and a whiteboard. Calls can be conducted through VoIP or phone call-in. Meetings, including video, can be recorded, and the role of presenter can be shared, so several individuals can share their perspectives. Meetings can be scheduled in Outlook and can be password-protected for confidentiality. WebEx mobile apps are available.



Pricing

Speek charges \$19/month per user, if the service is purchased on an annual basis. On a month-to-month basis, the same service costs \$24/month per user. This plan accommodates up to 100 callers per conference, but expansion plans for more participants are available upon request.

Pricing

- Premium 8 – allows up to 8 participants for \$24/month on a month-to-month basis or \$19/month annually
- Premium 25 – allows up to 25 participants for \$49/month on a month-to-month basis or \$39/month annually
- Premium 100 – allows up to 100 participants for \$69/month on a month-to-month basis or \$49/month annually

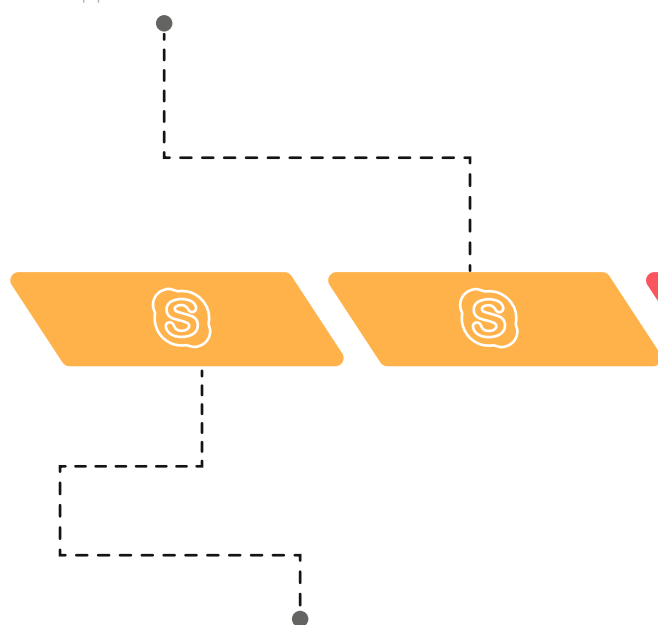
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Features

With Skype for Business you get everything you need for conversations in one app – IM, audio and video calls, online meetings and sharing. And because Skype for Business and Office work together, it's simple to collaborate right from your office apps. The service also offers advanced integration features including: availability of contacts, collaborative working on Office, Whiteboard documents and desktop sharing. Skype mobile apps are available.

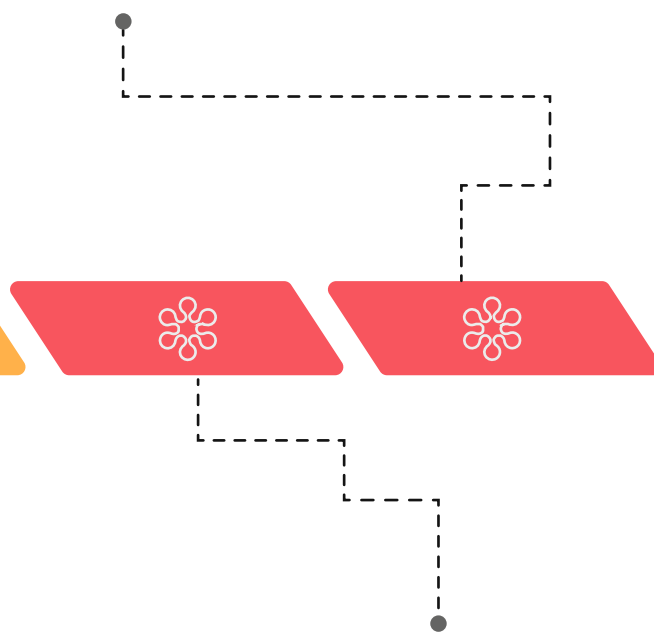


Pricing

- Speek charges \$19/month per user, iOnline Plan 2 – allows up to 250 participants for \$5.50/month, annual commitment is required
- Office 365 Business Essentials – allows up to 250 participants for \$5/month, annual commitment is required, \$6/month on a month-to-month basis. Includes online versions of Office, Email with 50GB mailbox per users and 1TB file storage and sharing per user.
- Office 365 Business Premium - allows up to 250 participants for \$12.50/month, annual commitment is required, \$15/month on a month-to-month basis. Includes fully installed Office applications on PC/Mac, Email with 50GB mailbox per users and 1TB file storage and sharing per user.

Features

GoToMeeting allows users a personal meeting room with a custom URL. Calls can be conducted through VoIP, phone, or toll-free numbers, and HD video is available. Meetings can be scheduled from Outlook or Google Calendar, and can be recorded. The presenter role can be shared to allow multiple individuals to present, and screens can be shared as well. GoToMeeting mobile apps are available.



Pricing

- Starter – allows up to five attendees for \$24/month per organizer on an annual basis
- Pro – allows up to 25 attendees for \$39/month per organizer on an annual basis
- Plus – allows up to 100 attendees for \$49/month per organizer on an annual basis

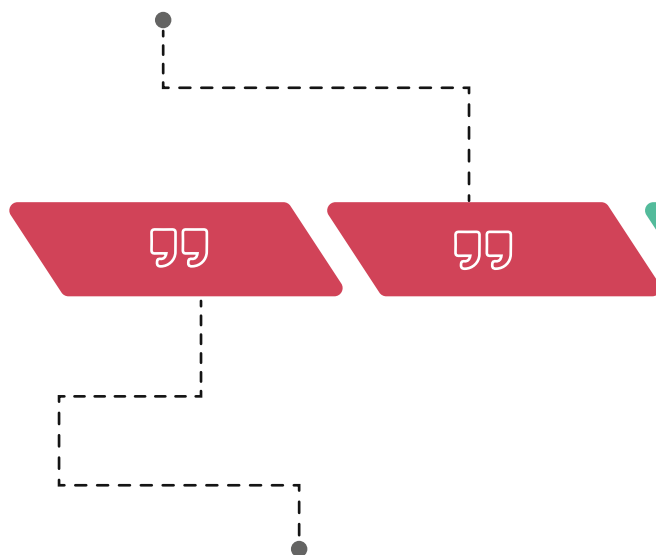
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Features

Google Hangouts allows up to 15 participants and HD video. The service can be operated on a range of devices, from the phone to the computer. Screen sharing is supported. A built-in chat function and custom admin controls are also provided. The most useful feature is integration with other Google platforms. Hangouts is integrated with Google Calendar, plus, it can be used to make important announcements by using Hangout On Air, which saves video to the company's YouTube channel as well. Google Hangouts mobile apps are available.

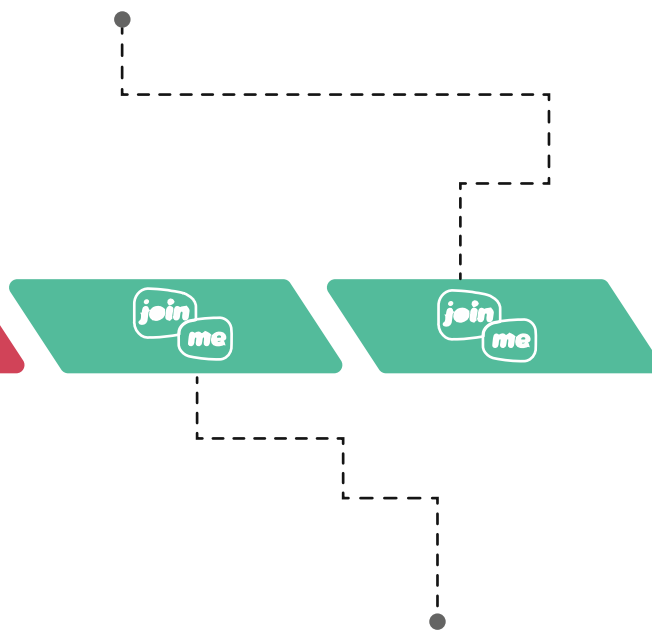


Pricing

Hangouts charges \$5/month per user, or \$50/year.

Features

Join Me is a video conferencing service. It also allows free audio conferencing. Meetings can be scheduled in Outlook or Google Calendar, and custom meeting links can be provided. The presenter role can be shared so that participants can collaborate freely. Join Me mobile apps are available.



Pricing

- Free – allows up to 10 participants, free of charge
- Pro – allows up to 50 participants, and added features such as conference recording and cloud storage, for \$19.99/month on an annual basis
- Enterprise – allows up to 250 participants and features such as increased cloud storage space, for \$24.99/month on an annual basis

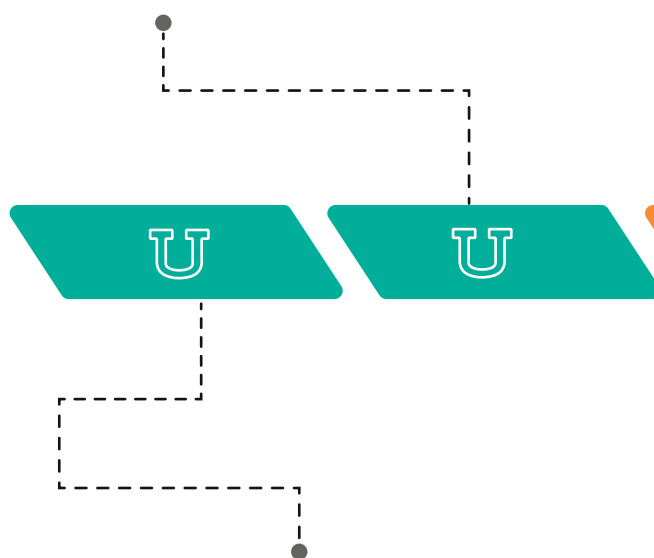
MOBILE CONFERENCING

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Features

UberConference allows international calling, free recording and screen-sharing. In addition, it allows users to mute a participant, dial in another participant mid-call and even view participants' social profiles (LinkedIn & Google+) during calls. Document sharing is integrated with Google Drive, Dropbox and Evernote. UberConference mobile apps are available.

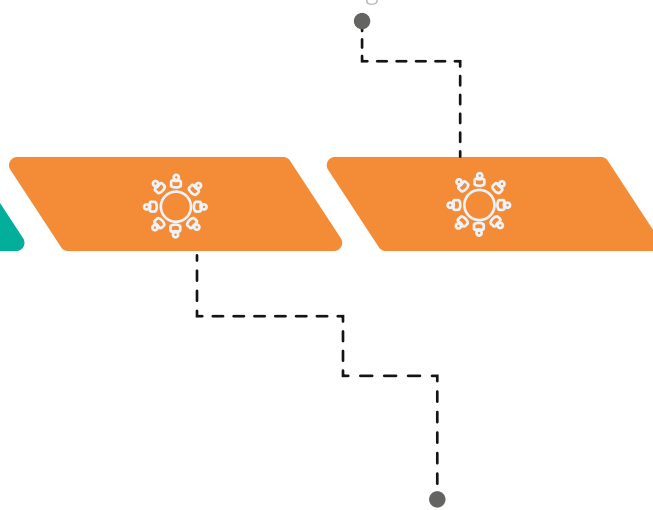


Pricing

- Free for up to 10 participants
- \$15/month per line on a month-to-month basis and \$10/month per line on an annual basis for up to 100 participants

Features

MeetingMogul lets you connect to any conference call with one-touch on your smartphone. The app reduces or eliminates the costs of calling and provides essential meeting management tools that make it simple to message or text participants, get meeting reminders, take notes, set agendas, favoriting frequently used bridges, editing dialing sequences and many other cool features. Additionally, the Enterprise version helps businesses save big on conference call costs by using local dialing rules and VoIP. The Enterprise app offers other features such as pre-configured team bridges and a self-service dashboard for valuable insights.



Pricing

- FApp Store Version – The consumer app is available as a free download through the App Store or Google Play
- Enterprise Version – The Enterprise app has a nominal per user per year fee, starting at \$20/year.

CONCLUSION

The integration of mobile technology and meetings is a boon to the workplace. Businesses can really take advantage of the available tools to improve productivity and efficiency. It opens up a whole world of opportunities for companies. Collaborative exchange can skyrocket, employees can feel more included and valued, and employee work-life balance can improve, which just makes them that much happier and better workers.

The opportunities are truly endless, especially in an area that is growing at such a swift pace. New ideas and services are coming up all the time to increase convenience and interaction.

Shifting to mobile conferencing is a smart idea, in terms of time and cost savings, as well as to avail many of the other advantages that facility offers. A little research on the Internet and any business can be well on its way to adopting mobile conferencing. The costs incurred in purchasing a conference call or virtual meeting service are nominal, compared to the cost of inefficiency and employee travel and transport, among other expenses.

As a mechanism that is built solely to connect people, it is unsurprising that mobile technology is making waves in the marketplace and linking people not just socially, but professionally. Like groundbreaking technology that has come before, mobile technology in the corporate world is here to stay. Channeling it in the right direction for your business and leading the bandwagon instead of jumping on it could help your business get a great start on the right track.

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