



# Why Toll-Free Conferencing Doesn't Pay

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## Conferencing Is Big Business

Conferencing and collaboration services are big business and a growing trend. The global market forecast for audio conferencing is expected to reach \$4.3B by 2015 (Statista 2014). As the sophistication and availability of smartphones, mobile apps, VoIP services and wireless plans improve, the means by which employees join conferences is rapidly changing and has a dramatic effect on the value of toll-free phone numbers. By 2015, there will be an estimated 1.3 billion mobile workers worldwide. As mobile conferencing apps increase in availability and sophistication, the effortless "tap to launch" usability will dramatically disrupt the traditional conference call. With monthly flat rates for unlimited mobile, VoIP calling, and unlimited long-distance plans, toll numbers have become the smarter choice for companies, with toll-free rates ranging from 20% - 50% more expensive per caller (Joshua Erwin, April 20, 2013 "The Future of Business Collaboration").

Meetings dominate business life in America today. According to the National Statistics Council, 37% of employee time is spent in meetings. There are 11 million business meetings each and every day. A five-person meeting conducted in-person (involving plane travel for four of the attendees) is seven times more expensive than a meeting conducted by audio conferencing (Verizon Wireless – Meetings In America by InfoCom 2014). Organizations continue to use conferencing technologies to meet more often, saving time, money, and the wear and tear caused by travel. Enterprises using conferencing technologies can expedite problem solving and get products to market at a faster rate.

## Free Conference Calling

Conference calling services, like most telecommunications offerings, have become a commodity; but enterprises continue to pay billions of dollars a year for toll-free audio conferencing services. Now is the time to save your business money with free conference calling options. There is no longer a cost-saving advantage to using toll-free conferencing or the stigma of providing your conferencecalling participants a toll number. Businesses need to recognize that even though free conferencing has

been around for years, because of the commoditization of the industry, "all-you-can-eat" long-distance plans, and how participants access conference calls, free conference calling is the new disruptive service in the market.

Free conference calling is different from traditional conference calling in that it has no organizer fees and no per-minute charges, but allows for multiple people to meet for the price of their long distance connection. Today, most users' toll long distance charges are part of a flat-rate bundled monthly payment and no longer charged on a per minute per call basis. Toll-free dial-in is also less relevant due to an increased usage of mobile phones, which typically include "unlimited nationwide" dialing plans and the use of softphones, which circumvent the phone network by riding over a data network (Wainhouse Research, "Re-Evaluating the Role of "Traditional Audio Conferencing, October 2014).



In addition, automatic dial-out click-to-call has become a common feature in audio conferencing services and, combined with VoIP and mobile providers charging a flat fee for unlimited calling, toll-free conferencing is no longer a necessity for businesses. Replacing toll-free conferencing with free conference calling services that are equally secure and feature rich will save businesses significant sums of money without the typical per-minute charges, minimums or hidden connection and service fees.

While some people may argue the value of "free" and are skeptical about hidden charges and lack of quality, free conference calling has very high value and the firms providing this service are dedicated to offering high quality conferencing and collaboration services. Free conferencing providers are customer-service oriented, with value being placed on ease of use, services offered, and dramatic decreases in cost. Cost savings from using free conferencing

often run approximately 75% - 80% of the current enterprise conferencing spend.

Free conference calling service providers already have end user customers in practically every Fortune 1000 company. For example, when an employee needs to make a conference call, but is not provided with a company-sponsored account, he/she can go online and sign up for free conference-calling services.

So why is free conference calling good enough for certain employees organizing conference calls on behalf of the enterprise and not good enough for all of the employee account holders? Why would the decision makers of these corporations not switch to free services?

If the service is there, it offers something useful and it's not illegal, there's no reason to pay a premium because the services are being priced and used at a level that is advantageous to the corporate (or individual) user...Take the rules, the services and the prices as they exist, and build the best possible network for your company. "

(Free services: When rules work to your advantage. Steve Taylor and Jim Metzler, Network World, May 15, 2007).

## Toll-Free Conference Calling versus Free Conference Calling

Competitors want customers to believe that free conference calling services offer poor audio quality (echoes, humming, crackling, disconnected calls), limit the number of participants per call, offer limited collaboration services and have poor support. Those claims are hard to substantiate, especially since those companies are bringing in large profits by charging high prices for toll-free conference calling. These companies are typically large public enterprises. Doing away with such profits by transitioning to direct-dial toll conferencing would impact their bottom lines. Rather than do what is best for the customer, some large corporations often choose to do what is best for the stock price and Wall Street projections.

Competitors also want you to believe that you are sending a message of being cheap if you use a free conference call service provider; yet, these same firms continue to bundle their services and offer them for one flat rate, labeling these offerings as "free".

- AT&T Rolls Out Free Mobile-to-Mobile Calling  
– Computerworld, Feb. 9, 2011
- 7 Free iPad Business Apps To Get You Started  
– Network World, March 27, 2014
- New Web App Allows Free Conference Calls

## How Free Conference Calling

- IDG News Service, Nov. 11, 2008
- AT&T, Verizon Launch Unlimited Wireless Calling Plans  
– Network World, Feb. 19, 2008
- Logitech Vid Offers Free & Easy Video Calling  
– PCWorld, July 7, 2009.

carrier. They also offer premium "for pay" services as well, but the high-quality, reservationless toll audio conferencing is always free.

While free conference calling services were initially geared to the consumer, SOHO and SMB, that is no longer the case. All of the enterprise-grade features offered by the larger

## Providers Make Money

Companies that provide free conference calling services are usually compensated through a revenue sharing arrangement with the local telephone company, sharing the terminating access charge for all incoming calls to the phone

carriers and conferencing service providers (screen sharing, video, security, recording, easy calendar integration, mobile applications, detailed reporting, muting, sub-conferencing, breakout sessions, etc.) are now available through the free conference-calling providers, often at a fraction of the cost. A typical toll-free audio conference call, on average, costs \$.03 - \$.04 per minute; however, most larger volume customers are typically paying closer to \$.02 per minute or less and the highest volume customers are paying closer to \$.01 per minute or slightly less. Although these low fees are attractive, they can add up to significant sums with so many employees conferencing on a daily basis.

Connections are equally as guaranteed with free conferencing service providers as they are with the big carriers and large service providers because each group is at the mercy of a disparate, global network. Gone are the days when one provider (think Ma Bell) handled all telecommunications services end-to-end. Even the large carriers and providers are at the mercy of other providers over whose network their calls are routed.

Free conference calling providers are also no longer limited in their ability to offer international calling. They offer room for growth, advanced services, and professionalism. Such providers are here to stay and their offerings and pricing

make them attractive alternatives to traditional telephone company and larger conferencing service provider offerings.

## Free Conferencing Corporation (FreeConferenceCall.com)

Free Conferencing Corporation, best known as FreeConferenceCall.com, is considered the leader in the free conference calling industry. Its mission is "to redefine one-to-many communications by providing quality, innovation, excellent customer service and the best pricing available."

Founded in 2001, FreeConferenceCall.com is the nation's largest privately owned conference calling service that serves a range of businesses, individuals, communities and organizations around the world. With greater than 30 million connections a month, more than 4 million registered users already depend on its services. In fact, the service is used today by employees in nearly all of the Fortune 500, Presidential and other political campaigns all over the country, and organizations all over the world often connecting thousands of people at a time, for many hours and days. With its obvious brand recognition, generating call volume has not been an issue, and the name is still

### Important To Know

- Advantages of toll-free conferencing have passed. • Free conference calling is equally feature rich compared to toll-free conferencing.
- With flat-rate fees for unlimited calling on mobile devices and home and office phones and a growing number of conference calls today being "click to meet", paying a premium for toll-free conferencing is not necessary.
- Free no longer means cheap.
- Companies can save 75% - 80% of their current conferencing spend by not using toll-free conferencing and using free conference

calling. responsible for almost 80% of its new customer sign-ups.

FreeConferenceCall.com is the most recognized retail conferencing brand in the world. Now the firm, which has almost grown solely by word of mouth and stands for "Freely Communicating For Free", is focused on expanding its reach from consumers, SMBs, start-ups, worldwide organizations and the employees of some of the largest companies in the world to being the designated primary or secondary provider to enterprise customers around the globe. Today, enterprises that are using FreeConferenceCall.com are very pleased with the service and its cost savings. One such customer is Bakkavor Foods, USA Inc., a leading manufacturer of freshly prepared foods. "I have been delighted with the service and functionality. It beat my expectations. I see FreeConferenceCall.com as more



of a business partner than a service” (John B. Gorman, President & CEO, Bakkavor Foods, USA Inc.).

FreeConferenceCall.com can provide direct, in region numbers internationally in more than 200 countries and offers its free HD-quality audio conferencing services in the

U.S., Canada, and 55 countries in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The company is continuing its steady growth trajectory. Within these countries, or between them, conference calls are available for the cost of a regular domestic (in-country) call which, as discussed previously, is often already part of an unlimited monthly plan, with no additional fees.

Free audio conferencing around the globe is clearly an industry differentiator, but FreeConferenceCall.com also offers other attractive enterprise-grade solutions, including web and video conferencing, voicemail and voice messaging solutions, toll-free conferencing, mobile phone applications, and event services. It further sets itself apart from other firms with its Conference Manager Web Interface. Conference Manager provides real-time statistics and allows the organizer to have control over the call.

## FreeConferenceCall.com

- The most recognized conferencing provider, free or not, in the industry today.
- Global HD audio conferencing is always 100% free.
- Global web conferencing and online meetings with up to 25 attendees is always 100% free.
- Year-round 24/7 live customer support
- Enterprise-grade security
- Recording, playback and streaming
- Site customization and white label branding
- Detailed reporting and analytics
- Premium services including toll-free conferencing,

Users can see how many callers are on the call, when they joined, and their mute status. The service offers features that can mute attendees individually or en masse, remove participants, turn on/off call recording, and manage announcements.

For companies not wanting to provide a “free” branded solution to their employee base, FreeConferenceCall.com can provide the same “free” audio and web conferencing service through a StartMeeting brand or offer white labeling to meet any customer’s enterprise branding needs.

## Conclusion

Free conference calling can dramatically cut typical conference calling costs, saving organizations a lot of money. It is time for large organizations to realize the value to their employee base and their bottom line through the use of free conference calling services. There is no longer a need to pay for conference calling when the free conference call offering is secure, robust, and free.

Traditional conference calling is morphing into a service that is web and mobile friendly. Firms are demonstrating to users the breadth of their offerings, ease of use, and customer service. Users need to get the benefit of quality technology that works flawlessly, is easy to use, and designed to meet their ongoing needs. Management wants to see how

voicemail, video conferencing, events, etc. and priced very competitively against competitors

- One-stop shop for most telecommunications needs. technology is positively impacting the bottom line.

Consider this, over the past 5 years, the average enterprise customer using 1.5M minutes of reservationless audio conferencing per month at an industry average of \$.04 per minute 5 years ago, experiencing industry averages of 7% yearly increases in minutes and 8% yearly rate declines would have saved about \$3.5M using free audio conferencing. The good news is that it’s not too late to start saving. Considering those same metrics and industry projections, an enterprise could still save about \$3.25M over the next 5 years using free conferencing, quantify cost

savings and feel the technology is positively impacting the bottom line. (See Figure 1 and 2).

Users, large and small, are advised to review the products and services free conference calling

companies offer, which can significantly lower costs to the end user firms and increase quality and customer service. Businesses should seriously consider adopting free conference calling services for easy, cost-effective ways to meet user needs and positively impact their bottom lines.

Charts based on 1.5M (Million) minutes per month beginning at \$.04 per minute with yearly minute increases of 7% per year and rate declines of 8% per year (both world-wide industry averages).

Figure 1 - Money Spent By Company 'X' On Conference Calls The Past 5 Years

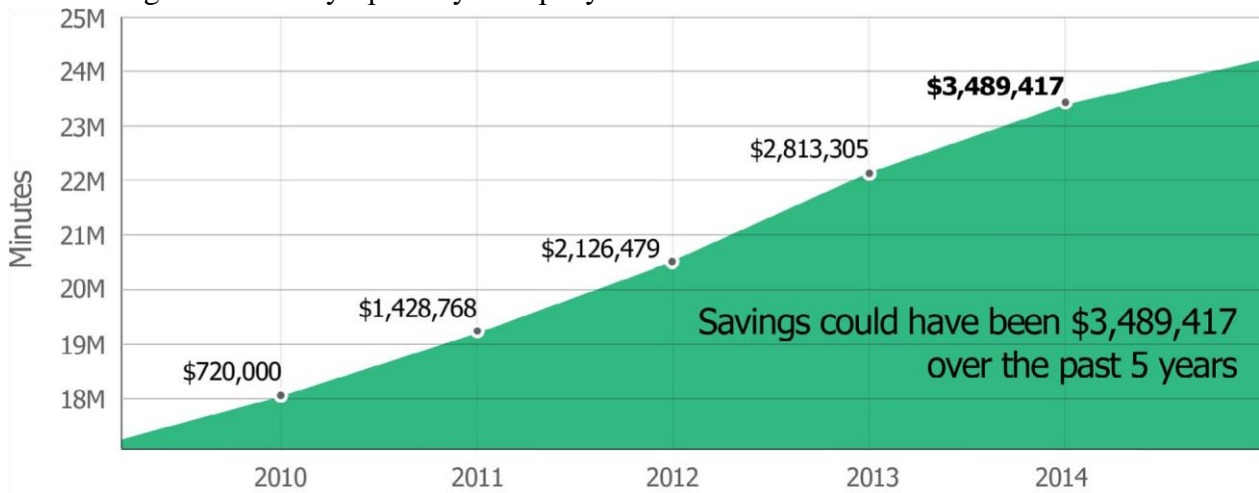


Figure 2 - Savings For Switching To Free Conferencing Over The Next 5 Years



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