



“The cost of sales meetings – more than just money”

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For the sales professional, face-to-face meetings are a way of life. There’s still no substitute for shaking the hand of a client or prospective customer. It’s engrained in British business culture, however in the current climate we need to question the practicality and costs – both obvious and hidden.

In pure monetary terms, the costs of face-to-face meetings are huge. Whichever method of transport is used – trains, planes or automobiles – when added to wage costs, it will be a significant expenditure for the company. No problem during a bull market, however in lean times, businesses need to constantly evaluate these costs, and in most cases, are cutting back.

However, there are also the “hidden” costs of meetings that are often overlooked. Consider the amount of travel time, the unproductive hours spent travelling to meetings, as well as the preparation and follow-up time. These can significantly boost the meeting cost, leading to a pragmatic evaluation of what is effective use of your time, and what isn’t.

However, as a sales professional you know the lonely, stressful routine of trying to get to meetings on time, and to fit as many appointments in as possible. Searching for the fastest lane, avoiding the accident hotspots, and scurrying through the rat runs takes its toll, and the cost associated with this is immeasurable, not to mention the negative impact on family life.

Fortunately, there are alternatives to consider, all cost-effective, efficient and proven. Imagine sitting at your desk talking to your entire sales team on Monday morning, while all inputting into the latest tracking document. Also imagine sitting in front of a video camera in your office with that all important prospect at the other end – in the comfort of their office looking at and talking to you. Lower costs, less hassle, no additional travel and increased morale.



Enter conferencing, a practical and workable alternative to business travel.

Conferencing has become a way of business life, especially in countries where transport is expensive, in industries where deadlines are tight and in businesses where protecting the bottom line is the number one priority. With the current economic situation and the events of September 11th still affecting us, people have started to think twice about taking business trips, or attending meetings out of their local area. In addition, working patterns have changed, alternatives to the traditional business meeting were sought, and businesses needed to adjust their interactions with customers and prospects.

There are three main means of conferencing. Traditional phone conferencing is the most widely used and most popular. BT's Meet Me service is a leader in this field. Users have a dial in number always available to them and up to 20 people can join the call. It's like an open all hours virtual boardroom.

Another method is videoconferencing. An increasingly popular service in that it fulfills the 'face-to-face' aspect which human nature craves, whilst eliminating the concept of place – and thus the effort of travel.

The third choice is webconferencing – inevitably booming in the current netcentric climate. All you need is a telephone and a PC with Internet access. Users log on to a web site whilst simultaneously listening to a phone conference. People in multiple locations can simply sit at their desk and have the same document, say a PowerPoint presentation, open on their own PC. Simultaneously all participants are connected so they can hear the presenter and see the slides at the same time.

We're not trying to change human nature. There will always be a need to meet face-to-face, especially for the initial contact. We're simply trying to help people make the most of their time by working smarter in finding an alternative. It's your job to consider all the factors, and make a practical and efficient decision.