



## Conference Tips - Conference room configuration

For the communication to be effective, the style or configuration of the room will be dependant on the number of delegates and the preferred style of the presenter. But there are certain limitations to some of the room configurations.

To have open and active interaction between all delegates and the presenter Boardroom, U-shape and Clusters are the most commonly used or even just a circle of chairs with no desks. All are ideal for groups up to about 60. Above 60, the communication style changes because no matter what style of seating you use some delegates can no longer see or communicate with some of the other delegates.

Now the communication is between the presenter and the delegates, with very little effective communication between delegates as a group. For groups over 60 Classroom, Theatre and Cluster configurations are the most common.

One of the hot topics of discussion from time to time in our office is the claims made by some venues on how many delegates they can seat in a specific conference room. One of the main considerations we look at, and so should you when conducting your site inspections, is to ensure there is enough room in the conference room you have been allocated to configure your delegate seating style with comfort.

Seeing the room set up is great but sometimes you need to see if the venue can set up just a portion, like one table or mark out the floor where the tables and chairs will be placed. This will allow you to see that the room is not jammed up and delegates have easy access into and out of their seats at all times.

The sorts of seat available and how comfortable your delegates will be after 5 or 6 hours of sitting is critical. Fidgeting delegates are not good listeners or willing participants. Where possible avoid banquet chairs for conferences or meetings that go for more than an hour or two. Most conference centres and auditoriums have the appropriate seating but do check.

In terms of surface top, I prefer a hard surface not clothed. Tablecloths on conference tables do offer modesty skirt protection if the conference table does not have that feature.

You need to remember the conference room set up style you choose is based upon the communication needs of your group and your presenter.