

Member's Quarterly

Spring 2018 Edition

Feature

Making Meeting Minutes Count

Follow the plan to ensure success

In spite of the fact that people dislike meetings, they are necessary. According to a Ziggy Cartoon from the *Toronto Star*, "Many of us are more capable than some of us, but none of us is as capable as all of us." It is through our combined efforts that we are able to clearly define issues, create better strategies for solutions, determine our team goals, distribute work fairly and keep people informed and on the same page as we go about creating success in our business.

The key to changing the feelings about meetings in your workplace is to be well-organized. You need to make meeting minutes count. While we as managers are familiar with these concepts, it is always a good idea to review these best practices with your teams so everyone follows the same process.

What to do Before the Meeting:

The first step is to determine the purpose of the meeting and decide on the best method. Should you have people in a room together; is it possible to Skype; will a conference call work, or do you need a Webinar. Whichever you choose, the preparations are the same.

Create the Agenda and send it out at least three business days in advance. It should state the following: date and day (people need to picture the day of the week); show both start and end times (people are more willing to commit when they know the time commitment); method or location with directions, room number or telephone number. Clearly state the purpose of the meeting and list the names of the people who are to attend. The agenda should include the issues that you will discuss (in order) with the name of the person presenting them and time allowances for all. In addition to distributing the agenda, contact the people with key roles. Identify your expectations, give them a time limit and explain the importance of staying on track.

How to Conduct the Meeting

Arrive early and be well-prepared with copies of the agenda, equipment needed, water, name tags and extra pens.

Start on time regardless of missing people. If they are on the agenda first, move them down the list. Next time they will be on time. Appoint a secretary, so that you can concentrate on being an attentive and active chair. Start with the rules regarding cell phones. Follow the agenda, keeping track of your time and making sure that everyone stays focused. Have a positive attitude, encouraging participation. My mother always said, "People who plan the journey will not rock the boat." Everyone needs to have an opportunity to contribute.

Ensure that everyone contributes respectfully. Confront conflict immediately, if necessary, repeating phrases to lighten the tone. Encourage everyone to talk about the issues, not the person. Using the no name, no blame theory keeps things civil and comfortable. Summarize along the way to ensure everyone agrees. During longer meetings, often so much is said that people are confused. Before the meeting ends, summarize everything: review the decisions, remind people of action items with names and deadlines. Decide on the date and time for the next meeting.



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Feature continued

Things to do After the Meeting

Within 24 hours (or one business day) distribute concise and complete minutes. These would include the names of the attendees, the major points of discussion with results, and the list of actions to be taken (by whom, by when). If there is a next meeting scheduled, provide the date, times and location.

To ensure that your people have a better attitude towards meetings, put careful thought into the purpose of the meeting. Do you really need to hold one? Who must attend? Only invite the people who are involved in the project. Ask yourself, "Will it be valuable to all of the attendees?" Then have everyone well-informed and prepared before they arrive.

Remember that meetings are necessary and when handled well, will contribute to the success of your business or event. You can use the information above to create a checklist that will ensure that you follow the steps that will make your meeting minutes count.

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