

### Meetings Structure and Roles

A meeting is a formal gathering of a small group to discuss the issues relevant to their group or team. Meetings are useful to give information, make decisions, review group performance and record the outcome.

In a meeting there are some specific roles that people can perform these are:

**Chairperson** (sometimes just called the Chair) - a chairperson is nominated for each meeting and their job is to lead the meeting. It may be the same person each meeting, or the task may be rotated. The chairperson's job is to introduce the agenda, lead and guide the discussion and ensure balanced representation from all the members.

**Secretary** (sometimes called the Scribe) - one person at each meeting is given the task of writing the *minutes* which are a record of what happened during the meeting. It may be the same person each meeting, or the task may be rotated.

**Timekeeper** – the timekeeper makes sure that the meeting doesn't overrun the allotted time. They can give a countdown to the end of the meeting ie, half an hour left, fifteen minutes left, five minutes left. This helps the meeting stay on the important issues.

**Proposer** – during the meeting the members may come up with new ideas, for the idea (called the *motion*) to be accepted officially by the group someone has to *propose the motion*. Anyone in the meeting can propose a motion by saying:

*“I propose a motion that we should...”*

**Secunder** – for a motion or idea to be accepted it has to be *seconded*. Anyone can *second the motion*. Anyone in the meeting can second a motion by saying:

*“I second that motion.”*

If someone seconds a motion then the idea is written down in the minutes by the secretary. By proposing and seconding a motion it means that only the final ideas need to be recorded in the minutes.

**Voters** - it is usual for people in a meeting to vote by show of hands, voice or other method whether motions are adopted or rejected. Anyone can vote for or against the motion. People can also abstain, or not vote.

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### Meeting Components:

#### Agenda

- Defines what the meeting is about
- Identify specific decisions that have to be made
- Specify areas in which ideas must be generated

#### Minutes

- Who said what?
- What was decided?
- What must be done by the next meeting?
- Who is responsible?
- Documenting Teamwork

### How to Write Meeting Minutes

#### What is the purpose of minutes?

Minutes are written as an accurate record of a group's meetings, and a record decisions taken. They are useful because people can forget what was decided at a meeting if there is no written record of the proceedings. Minutes can also inform people who were not at the meeting about what took place.

#### What do the minutes contain?

Before each meeting an agenda should be drawn up, detailing the matters to be discussed at the meeting. A set of minutes should normally include the following information:

- time, date and place of meeting;
- list of people attending;
- list of absent members of the group;
- approval of the previous meeting's minutes, and any matters arising from those minutes;
- for each item in the agenda, a record of the principal points discussed and decisions taken;
- time, date and place of next meeting;
- name of person taking the minutes.

### Taking Minutes:

1. Obtain the meeting agenda, minutes from the last meeting, and any background documents to be discussed.
2. Sit beside the chairperson for convenient clarification or help as the meeting proceeds.
3. Record the date, time and place of the meeting.
4. Circulate a sheet of paper for attendees to sign. (This sheet can also help identify

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- speakers by seating arrangement later in the meeting.)
5. Note who arrives late or leaves early so that these people can be briefed on what they missed.
  6. Write down items in the order in which they are discussed.
  7. Record the motions made and the names of people who proposed them.
  8. Record whether motions are adopted or rejected, how the vote is taken (by show of hands, voice or other method) and whether the vote is unanimous. For small meetings, write the names of the attendees who approve, oppose and abstain from each motion.
  9. Focus on recording actions taken by the group. Avoid writing down the details of each discussion.

### Tips for taking minutes

- You do not need to record topics which are irrelevant. Taking minutes is not the same as taking dictation.
- Consult only the chairperson or executive officer, not the attendees, if you have questions.
- See Appendix A for an example template for taking minutes
- After the meeting you **MUST** type up the minutes and make a copy for the next meeting.

### Chairing a meeting

Chairing a meeting means ensuring that a meeting achieves its aims. The meeting should have been called for a specific purpose and all discussion at the meeting must be steered to this end. This may sound simple in theory but in practice it is a very demanding task.

The skills required include:

#### **Impartiality**

A chairman is like a judge in a court. He should ensure that all participants have an opportunity to express their point of view. It can be difficult to leave your own opinions at home, but if you should remain impartial.

#### **Assertiveness**

Ensuring that everyone gets a hearing will almost certainly involve stopping someone from dominating the proceedings. The more contentious the issue the more likely you are to require firmness. You don't need to be rude or dogmatic. Phrases such as "I think we should hear from Ms. Smith on this" or "can we have some comments from the engineering department on this" should be sufficient in most cases. Once you provide this opening, however, you need to ensure that there are no interruptions while the next speaker has their say.

#### **Staying on course**

Often agendas are left totally aside. The meeting starts off well but becomes embroiled in

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a particular topic (perhaps the first item on the agenda) and ends when time runs out. A Chairman must assess the importance of each item on the agenda. If one issue begins to dominate the chairman must take control. You might suggest a further meeting to discuss the issue at a later date, or that the main parties concerned could continue the discussion at the end of the meeting. Sometimes it will be necessary to call for a decision and then move on to the next topic. You need to stay alert and make sure that the issue has been given an adequate and impartial hearing within the allotted time.

### **Summarizing**

Summarizing can be used to end a topic, to end a discussion, to limit the need for discussion and at the end of a meeting to ensure that everyone has a clear overview of what took place or what action is now required. It is an invaluable skill for a chairman. Summarizing requires active listening. You have to state concisely what was said in an impartial way and end with a clear statement about what is expected to happen next. It takes practice to summarize well, but it is a skill well worth developing.

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### Minutes Example Template

*[INSERT NAME OF TEAM]*

#### **MINUTES OF A MEETING**

*[Insert Date]*

A meeting of *[Insert name of team]*, was held on *[Insert date of meeting]* at *[Insert building and room]*.

#### **Members Present Were:**

*[Insert names of people present]*

#### **Call to Order**

*[Insert name of chairperson]* called the meeting to order at *[Insert start time of meeting]* and *[Insert name of secretary]* recorded the minutes.

#### **Approval of Previous Minutes**

*[Insert name]* presented to the Board the minutes of the *[insert date of previous board meeting]* meeting of the Board for approval, whereupon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously adopted, the minutes were approved as presented.

#### **Topics to be Discussed**

*[reports from committees, any old business]*

*[List of new topics on the agenda]*

#### **Decisions**

*[include description of what was decided and who proposed the idea, who objected to the idea etc.]*

#### **Action items**

*[who was assigned to do what; date due, etc.]*

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the meeting, the meeting was adjourned at *[Insert time the meeting finished]*.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*[Insert name of secretary]*, Recording Secretary