

SECTION THREE

WRITING & PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To acquaint participants with the concept of minutes – what it is & what it is not.
- To explore the essence of minutes & its relevance to business communications.
- To familiarise participants with minuting techniques.
- To acquaint participants with the various types & formats of minutes.

COURSE OUTLINE

- Minuting – what it is
 - what it is not
- The Importance of Minutes.
- Types of Minutes
- Minuting Format
- Steps to Effective Minuting.
- Qualities of Good Minutes.
- Do's & Dont's of Minuting.

- **Minuting – What It Is**
 - Record of meeting proceedings showing – attendance, agenda, etc.
 - Record of issues discussed, decisions, expected actions and those assigned.

- **What Minuting Is Not**
 - Not a verbatim record.
 - Not a line-by-line attribution of participants' views.
 - Not a fancy essay.

- **What Minuting Does**
 - Captures the essential information of a meeting.
 - Records decisions & assigned actions.
 - Keeps all concerned persons on course by reminding them of respective roles.

- **Important Note on Meetings**

“Meetings are really review and planning sessions – not places to complain or grandstand about issues that individuals want to discuss.”

Attention must be paid to the agenda and timing of meetings.

- **The Importance of Minutes**

Minutes are important for many reasons including the following:-

- Confirmation of decisions made.
- Recording of agreed actions and those assigned.
- Recording of agreed time frames and ensuring prompt actions.
- Information to relevant persons not in attendance.
- Documentation of important organisational activities.

- **Types of Minutes**

There are two main types:

- *Action Points* – record of decided actions and persons assigned.
- *Summaries* – a summary of discussions including action points.

- **Pre-Meeting Preparation**

- Ascertain all the relevant details pertaining to the meeting; viz:
 - Date & time
 - Venue
 - Purpose/Agenda
 - Names & designations of attendees.
- Obtain minutes of previous meeting and circulate copies if necessary.
- Decide recording format: tape recording or shorthand.

- **At the Meeting**
 - Take attendance and, if required, get attendees to sign against their names.
 - Maintain utmost alertness.
 - Follow the arguments but record only decisions & actions.
 - Don't get emotionally involved.
- **Post-Meeting Activities**
 - Develop draft soon after meeting.
 - Review draft (& edit)
 - Clear draft with presiding officer before production & circulation of final copy.

- **TYPE A: Summaries (Excerpts)**

Following a point of information about unauthorised public comments by some members of the organisation, the issue was extensively discussed. Some members observed that it was a dangerous trend while others felt there was nothing unusual about such comments in a democratic setting. The meeting, however, resolved that only the CEO should henceforth speak to the Press. It was further resolved that the Head of Admin should notify all staff of this decision through a circular within 24 hours of the meeting.

S/N	ITEM	MINUTES	ACTION BY
3.0	Public comments	<p>After a detailed deliberation on the issue of unauthorised comments on public issues by the organisation's functionaries, it was resolved that henceforth, only the CEO should speak to the Press. Consequently, the Head of Admin was directed to inform the staff of this decision through a circular within 24 hours of this meeting.</p>	Head of Admin

- **Steps to Effective Minuting**

A well-known authority recommends a 10-step approach to recording of minutes:

Step I: Obtain meeting agenda, past minutes and other relevant documents.

Step II: Sit beside the chairman for prompt clarification as and when necessary.

Step III: Enter the correct heading of minutes (name)

Step IV: Record date, time and place of meeting.

Step V: Circulate a sheet of paper for attendees to sign.

Step VI: Note late arrivals or early departures to enable you brief on whatever is missed.

Step VII: Write down discussed items in chronological order.

Step VIII: Record the motions made and their movers.

Step IX: Record outcome of motions.

Step X: Record decisions and proposed actions, not details of discussion.

- **Note on Public Minutes**

- Minutes of some organisations are important legal documents.
- Some public institutions (e.g. courts & parliaments) require verbatim reports.
- Investigative or disciplinary panels may also warrant verbatim reports.

The writer of the minutes should ascertain the rules of the organisation and the preferred format as part of the pre-meeting preparation.

- **QUALITIES OF GOOD MINUTES**

- Must contain basic information about the meeting, viz: date, time, venue, attendance, agenda.
- Concisely and correctly written.
- Records summary of proceedings, decisions and actions (& those assigned).
- Must be an objective record of proceedings & decisions – not personalised or emotionalised.
- Must be presented in an orderly, logical and accurate manner.
- Appropriate language must be employed.

- **Dos & Dont's of Minuting**

- Writer of minutes must recognise that attendance of meeting is a privilege.
- No divulgence of confidential information.
- Issues must not be personalised or emotionalised.
- Record issues dispassionately.

- Focus on issues & decisions, not persons.
- Seek understanding of issues when in doubt.
- Clear draft with convener/chairman before circulation.
- Develop draft immediately after meeting while the issues are still fresh in the memory.
- Shred waste paper that may contain draft minutes or other sensitive documents.

- **EXERCISES/CASE STUDIES**

I: “WE SHALL SEE” – ANGRY MANAGER

A manager whose alleged misconduct was discussed at a meeting confronted one of the attendees.

“We shall see. You championed the move to dismiss me. I heard all what you said at yesterday’s meeting”.

- a) What may have gone wrong?
- b) How could the angry manager have known who said what at the meeting?
- c) How can a minute taker safeguard against such an occurrence?

II: “ABOLISH THE PROGRAMME”

Excerpts from the report of a Committee on how to streamline the organisation’s CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) efforts read thus:
“We should not bother at all about CSR. We are well perceived in this community and everyone is well aware of the

prevailing economic crunch. The CSR programme should be abolished and the savings used for more productive purposes.”

- a) What was the mandate of the Committee?
- b) Is its report, as reflected in the above excerpts, in line with its mandate?
- c) What may have gone wrong with the work of the committee?

- **EXERCISE/CASE STUDIES III**

Critique the minutes below:

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRADERS' ASSOCIATION

Attendance: See the attached list.

Opening: The meeting opened at 2.30 p.m. with the association's Chairman presiding.

Minutes of Last Meeting: The minutes of the last meeting was read and, there being no amendments, was adopted on a motion moved by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mallam Ibrahim.

Matters Arising: The meeting resolved to defer the matters arising from the previous meeting to allow for the discussion of the main business of the day.

Report of Misconduct Against Mr. Bayo Musa Nna : The meeting deliberated on the Disciplinary Committee's report on the alleged misconduct against Mr. Nna.

Mr. Uba who deals in the same products as Mr. Nna vigorously canvassed the view that Mr. Nna should be expelled by the Association and his shop sealed off. Another member, Mr. Jumbo challenged Mr. Uba accusing him of bad faith. Other members expressed milder views on the reported misconduct and were of the opinion that expulsion was an extreme action, to be used sparingly.

At the end of the day, however, Mr. Uba had his way and the meeting reluctantly resolved to expel Mr. Nna.

Closing: The meeting adjourned at 4.30 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Uba, seconded by Mr. Balogun.

Chairman

Secretary