LECTURE NOTES
Professionalism & Corporate Ethics (303193304)

TITLE: Agenda and Minutes of Meetings

1. **Content**

   This topic covers the importance, structure, and effective strategies for conducting productive meetings through well-prepared agendas and accurately recorded minutes. It also includes practical tips, tools, and templates for professional communication during meetings.

2. **Learning Objectives**
   - To understand the purpose and structure of a meeting agenda.
   - To learn how to prepare and distribute minutes of meetings.
   - To identify roles and responsibilities before, during, and after a meeting.
   - To implement strategies that enhance meeting productivity and communication.

3. **Introduction**

   Meetings can be efficient, goal-oriented discussions or time-wasting events. The key to effectiveness lies in planning, through a clear agenda and detailed minutes. An agenda ensures structure; minutes ensure accountability and continuity.

4. **Key Concepts/Definitions**

- **Agenda**: A list of topics and processes to be covered during a meeting.
- **Minutes of Meeting (MoM)**: Written documentation of what was discussed, decided, and assigned during a meeting.
- **Meeting Owner**: The person responsible for leading or organizing the meeting.
- **Action Items**: Tasks assigned during a meeting, with responsible persons and deadlines.

5. **Detailed Explanation:**

AGENDA OF MEETING
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We've all been in meetings where participants are unprepared, people veer off-track, and the topics discussed are a waste of the team's time. These problems — and others like it — stem from poor agenda design. An effective agenda sets clear expectations for what needs to occur before and during a meeting. It helps team members prepare, allocates time wisely, quickly gets everyone on the same topic, and identifies when the discussion is complete. If problems still occur during the meeting, a well-designed agenda increases the team's ability to effectively and quickly address them.

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Here are some tips for designing an effective agenda for your next meeting, with a sample agenda and template below. You can use these tips whether a meeting lasts an hour or three days and whether you're meeting with a group of five or forty:

Seek input from team members. If you want your team to be engaged in meetings, make sure the agenda includes items that reflect their needs. Ask team members to suggest agenda items along with a reason why each item needs to be addressed in a team setting. If you ultimately decide not to include an item, be accountable — explain your reasoning to the team member who suggested it.

Select topics that affect the entire team. Team meeting time is expensive and difficult to schedule. It should mainly be used to discuss and make decisions on issues that affect the whole team — and need the whole team to solve them. These are often ones in which individuals must coordinate their actions because their parts of the organization are interdependent. They are also likely to be issues for which people have different information and needs. Examples might include: How do we best allocate shared resources? How do we reduce response time? If the team isn't spending most of the meeting talking about interdependent issues, members will disengage and ultimately not attend.

List agenda topics as questions the team needs to answer. Most agenda topics are simply several words strung together to form a phrase, for example: "office space reallocation." This leaves meeting participants wondering, "What about office space reallocation?" When you list a topic as a question (or questions) to be answered, it instead reads like this: "Under what conditions, if any, should we reallocate office space?"
A question enables team members to better prepare for the discussion and to monitor whether their own and others' comments are on track. During the meeting, anyone who thinks a comment is off-track can say something like, "I'm not seeing how your comment relates to the question we're trying to answer. Can you help me understand the connection?" Finally, the team knows that when the question has been answered, the discussion is complete.

Note whether the purpose of the topic is to share information, seek input for a decision, or make a decision. It's difficult for team members to participate effectively if they don't know whether to simply listen, give their input, or be part of the decision-making process. If people think they are involved in making a decision, but you simply want their input, everyone is likely to feel frustrated by the end of the conversation. Updates are better distributed — and read — prior to the meeting, using a brief part of the meeting to answer participants' questions. If the purpose is to make a decision, state the decision-making rule. If you are the formal leader, at the beginning of the agenda item you might say, "If possible, I want us to make this decision by consensus. That means that everyone can support and implement the decision given their roles on the team. If we're not able to reach consensus after an hour of discussion, I'll reserve the right to make the decision based on the conversation we've had. I'll tell you my decision and my reasoning for making it."

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Estimate a realistic amount of time for each topic. This serves two purposes. First, it requires you to do the math — to calculate how much time the team will need for introducing the topic, answering questions, resolving different points of view, generating potential solutions, and agreeing on the action items that follow from discussion and decisions. Leaders typically underestimate the amount of time needed. If there are ten people in your meeting and you have allocated ten minutes to decide under what conditions, if any, you will reallocate office space, you have probably underestimated the time. By doing some simple math, you would realize that the team would have to reach a decision immediately after each of the ten members has spoken for a minute.
Second, the estimated time enables team members to either adapt their comments to fit within the allotted timeframe or to suggest that more time may be needed. The purpose of listing the time is not to stop discussion when the time has elapsed; that simply contributes to poor decision making and frustration. The purpose is to get better at allocating enough time for the team to effectively and efficiently answer the questions before it.

Propose a process for addressing each agenda item. The process identifies the steps through which the team will move together to complete the discussion or make a decision. Agreeing on a process significantly increases meeting effectiveness, yet leaders rarely do it. Unless the team has agreed on a process, members will, in good faith, participate based on their own process. You've probably seen this in action: some team members are trying to define the problem, other team members are wondering why the topic is on the agenda, and still other members are already identifying and evaluating solutions.
The process for addressing an item should appear on the written agenda. When you reach that item during the meeting, explain the process and seek agreement: "I suggest we use the following process. First, let's take about 10 minutes to get all the relevant information on the table. Second, let's take another 10 minutes to identify and agree on any assumptions we need to make. Third, we'll take another 10 minutes to identify and agree on the interests that should be met for any solution. Finally, we'll use about 15 minutes to craft a solution that ideally takes into account all the interests, and is consistent with our relevant information and assumptions. Any suggestions for improving this process?"

Specify how members should prepare for the meeting. Distribute the agenda with sufficient time before the meeting, so the team can read background materials and prepare their initial thoughts for each agenda item ahead of time.
Identify who is responsible for leading each topic. Someone other than the formal meeting leader is often responsible for leading the discussion of a particular agenda item. This person may be providing context for the topic, explaining data, or may have organizational responsibility for that area. Identifying this person next to the agenda item ensures that anyone who is responsible for leading part of the agenda knows it — and prepares for it — before the meeting.
Make the first topic "review and modify agenda as needed." Even if you and your team have jointly developed the agenda before the meeting, take a minute to see if anything needs to be changed due to late breaking events. I once had a meeting scheduled with a senior leadership team. As we reviewed the agenda, I asked if we needed to modify anything. The CEO stated that he had just told the board of directors that he planned to resign and that we probably needed to significantly change the

agenda. Not all agenda modifications are this dramatic, but by checking at the beginning of the meeting, you increase the chance that the team will use its meeting time most effectively.

End the meeting with a plus/delta. If your team meets regularly, two questions form a simple continuous improvement process: What did we do well? What do we want to do differently for the next meeting? Investing five or ten minutes will enable the team to improve performance, working relationships, and team member satisfaction. Here are some questions to consider when identifying what the team has done well and what it wants to do differently:

1. Was the agenda distributed in time for everyone to prepare?
2. How well did team members prepare for the meeting?
3. How well did we estimate the time needed for each agenda item?
4. How well did we allocate our time for decision making and discussion?
5. How well did everyone stay on-topic? How well did team members speak up when they thought someone was off-topic?
6. How effective was the process for each agenda item?

To ensure that your team follows through, review the results of the plus/delta at the beginning of the next meeting.

If you develop agendas using these tips, and the sample agenda and template below, your team will have an easier time getting — and staying — focused in meetings.

SOME TIPS FOR SETTING AGENDA OF MEETING

1. Create your agenda early. ...
2. Clearly define your meeting objective. ...
3. Prioritize agenda items. ...
4. Break down agenda topics into key points. ...
5. Allow adequate time for each agenda item. ...
6. Indicate whether agenda items require a decision. ...
7. Inform members on how to prepare for the meeting.

MINUTES OF MEETING
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Meeting minutes are the written or recorded documentation that is used to inform attendees and non-attendees about what was discussed or what happened during a particular meeting. Meeting minutes or notes are generally taken by a designated meeting minutes recorder during the proceedings so that an accurate record exists of what transpired during the meeting.

Taking meeting minutes is essential to a meeting: you have your project written with plenty of important details such as: who is responsible for what action, when, how, and so on.

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You may or may not be asking yourselves: “What are, and how to take **meeting minutes**?”
Meeting minutes can be defined as written or recorded documentation that is used to inform people of what happened during the meeting and define the next steps planned. **To write effective meeting minutes,** you should include:

- The names of the participants
- Agenda items
- Calendar or due dates
- Actions or tasks
- The main points
- Decisions made by the participants
- Record what is the most important points
- Future decisions
- Documents: images, attached files

During the meeting: meeting minutes are an effective contributor to successful meetings, yet they need to be appropriately written and distributed in time. The main problem with reports is that they take a long time to be written down properly, and that they must be sent quickly after the meetings to let everyone know their next projects or actions.
You need to build your notes as the meeting progresses: a good way of organizing your note-taking is to differentiate actions from remarks as well as noting the different actions per person with a deadline.

After the meeting: type out your notes in a logical manner and not chronologically. It needs to be organized to be sent out to your colleagues. Also, adding a short summary organized per person and per project at the end of the minutes helps your colleagues quickly glance at the minutes and spot the actions they need to realize within seconds.

Meeting Minutes as a Historical Document

As a historical document, minutes are useful for documenting the key ideas or discussion points that led to a decision. For example, effective meeting minutes may specify the five alternatives the team discussed and the key reason that one was selected over the others.
Minutes for the typical business meeting don't need to record every discussion or state in detail who said what.

Of course, this rule is different for other types of meetings such as court hearings and situations where legal action is being discussed. These types of meetings do require an exact record of the conversation and statements. But, unless human resources are discussing a lawsuit, the typical workplace meeting does not document every iota.

When and How to Share Meeting Minutes

Ideally, meeting minutes are recorded on an electronic device, such as a laptop or iPad, and following a quick review of spelling, grammar, and clarity, disseminated to meeting participants electronically at the end of the meeting.

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This way, the participants have immediate written notice of their commitments and deadlines and can raise questions or seek clarification. If this is not possible because the recorder wants to transcribe the minutes or check them for errors, the minute taker should disseminate them within 24 hours following the meeting.

Minutes also serve as a reminder of the commitments team members made during the meeting and help participants transfer these items to their calendars and daily task lists. This helps meeting participants avoid useless and time-wasting meetings in the future.
The recorder should always review the prior meeting's minutes at the start of the next meeting so that people can check them for accuracy, next steps, and commitments made.
How Organizations Handle Taking Meeting Minutes

Critical to a meeting's success, minutes provide a recorded history of the meeting for participants and for employees who were not able to attend. Without full meeting minutes, the meeting's prospects for success are diminished because people, on balance, cannot absorb and retain a wealth of information at one time.

The employee who takes the meeting minutes is usually a member of the team and takes notes while participating in the meeting.

In meetings that involve legal- or government-related proceedings or in corporate board meetings, a non-participating individual takes the official minutes and often records the proceedings. This individual has frequently received serious training in how to effectively record meeting minutes.

To record key information accurately, the meeting minutes recorder must have an ear for detail and the ability to stay focused. In most day-to-day meetings, this employee must also multitask effectively to be able to participate in the meeting while also recording the minutes.
In some organizations, the same employee takes the minutes at every meeting. Or the responsibility may pass from employee to employee. The role of a person who takes minutes often builds effective leadership and communication skills and can be a coveted job.

Requirements for a Meeting Minutes Recorder
The requirements for the recorder include the ability to:

- Record accurately the decisions, commitments, and major discussion points such as the solutions to a problem that were considered, made at a meeting
- Record the action items and due dates that meeting members committed to (action items have names attached, but the minutes don't state who said what in informal workplace meetings)
- Review the major decisions and assignments or voluntary commitments and action items at the end of the meeting so participants can agree on them before leaving
- Be a team player and be flexible because attendees can add or correct anything they disagree with in the minutes
- Work expediently to distribute copies of the meeting minutes immediately or within 24 hours following the meeting

How to prepare before the meeting?

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A great meeting starts before you actually start writing minutes.

To ensure maximum efficiency you should always clarify what is expected of you as the note-taker, especially if you are new to it.

It's also important to check with the meeting owner that the meeting agenda is set in advance. Not only is it the path to running effective team meetings but it's a great way to be more efficient:

- Use the agenda items to **prepare an outline** for your document and **pre-fill the list of meeting attendees**.
- If necessary, include a reference to items from the previous meeting that attendees would need to be aware of.
- And last but not least, if you're using a note-taking software, you can set-up meeting minutes templates for different meetings and pre-attach relevant documents to the note (meeting presentation, report to be discussed...).

That way, when you actually get to the meeting, you're ready to write down the important stuff.

Efficiency & pro tips:

- **Type directly on your laptop,** so you don't have to retype everything later.
- **If anything is unclear, speak up** and ask for clarification right away, so you won't have to poke around after the meeting. Don't leave room for ambiguity.
- **Capture essential points only.** Write down the main decisions and action items concisely, you don't want to miss any. You'll always have time to get back to it when wrapping-up after the meeting if you wish to add some more details.

8 tips to run effective team meetings: Most meetings suck. Not only is it a waste of time and money but can deeply impact your team motivation and overall performance.

8 critical tips to run effective team meetings

1. Prepare a meeting agenda in advance

2. Meeting are work sessions, not reporting

3. Identify a meeting owner

4. Always be on time

5. Cut down on attendees

6. Create accountability

7. Set up the right environment

8. Get feedback to improve

1. Prepare a meeting agenda in advance

The agenda is probably the most overlooked and crucial part of a meeting.

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Do you know that feeling, when you don't know the goal of a meeting and when the discussion gets off-topic? Blame the agenda.

The most effective agendas have few topics and are set with a realistic amount of time for each agenda item.

As much as possible, collaborate on the agenda with other participants: ask them for input on it. Once prepared, share the agenda in advance. And explicitly go through the agenda items at the beginning of the meeting.

It will give a chance for everyone to come prepared and be more focused and relevant during the meeting.

Your team meeting agenda should include at least:

- Meeting time (start and end time)
- Attendees
- Purpose of the meeting
- Clear agenda items with objectives

Last but not least, leave some room for open discussion/impro. Include it in the agenda items at the end. It'll help you capture any open questions and include them in follow-up tasks.

For the preparation part, you should ease your task with collaborative tools, such as Slite, which helps you run great team meetings.

2. Meetings are work sessions, not reporting

Have you ever been involved in a weekly meeting, held for the sole purpose of sharing information? Yes (we know).

Meetings must be dedicated to collaboration and work, not reporting.

Reporting, sharing information should be done before the meeting so everyone can reflect on it and bring solutions and questions.

So next time you want to schedule a meeting, ask yourself:

- Do I need to share information, or do I need a collaborative work session on a specific item?
- Could this item be resolved over Slack, emails, or any other asynchronous mean?

It will help you save time with fewer and more productive meetings.

Here is an example of a doc we share in advance. The reporting is included for support, the meeting isn't about it (check the agenda).

3. Identify a meeting owner

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You must identify one meeting owner.

This person is not the "team leader" but most often the one calling for the meeting. S/he should be in charge of the agenda and timing during the meeting but doesn't have to handle everything. Other persons can write meeting minutes, for instance.

For weekly team meetings, it's a good practice to rotate the meeting leader so that everyone can learn and participate actively in improving the meeting preparation and, thus, outcomes.

4. Always be on time

Sticking to the time you set for the meeting will help everyone to focus on relevant matters and cut through the noise. If anything else is left to be discussed, it can always be done in the next meeting.

Few tips to be on time:

- Have a timed-frame agenda prepared (see the previous point).
- Be explicit with your team members about it at the beginning.
- Figure out the technology in advance.
- Start with critical topics first, so you don't leave the most important ones on the table.

It's a habit to form within your team. The worse that can happen, as you show care for people's time, is everyone thanking you. True story.

5. Cut down on attendees

The fewer, the better. Only invite people relevant to the agenda items, not the entire team.

It will avoid the discussion to drift-off. Furthermore, your decision-making process will be more focused and relevant.

And you can always share the meeting minutes asynchronously with other people if needed.

One last thing, while some say you should never bring more than seven people to a meeting.

It is the ideal number to be sure you don't have two groups forming in parallel, which leads to information asymmetry between the participants, and people catching up during or after the meeting.

6. Create accountability

To leverage your team meetings, define for each action item, a clear owner, accountable for it. The meeting minutes should contain that information that you can share after the meeting with every participant.

The best way is to store your meeting notes in an easy to access online place so everyone can easily consult them and follow-up on their tasks.

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7. Set up the right environment

Consider if the meeting needs to be in person or not. Are there any remote team members that will need to join? If yes, make it friendly: everyone can participate remotely from their desk by using a video call conference tool such as Zoom. You'll have better-balanced participation with everyone using the same medium for communication.

For in-person meetings, laptops and phones shouldn't be present unless necessary (for instance, for the one taking the meeting notes). It will help everyone being more present, not distracting each other by browsing their emails or preparing their next slide deck.

8. Get feedback to improve

All of the previous points are general guidelines proven to be effective. Depending on your context, you might need to adapt them and iterate.

Check-in with other participants to get their feelings about your team meetings and gets their inputs.

You can directly ask them questions like:

- Was there the right team members attending?
- Were the meeting's purpose, agenda items, and outcomes clear and bringing value?
- Should we adjust the time, length, frequency of the meeting?

Based on your team feedbacks, you can go through the previous points and see how to make them even more useful for your case.

Finalizing the meeting minutes
You should wrap-up your notes right after the meeting, while the meeting's still fresh in your mind:

- Complete your meeting notes and clarify points if necessary.
- Double-check that decisions and actions are precisely noted.
- Keep things as concise and digestible as possible.
- Proofread with care. Nowadays you can use automated grammar checkers such as Grammarly to help you go faster.
- If needed send the draft to the meeting leader before sharing with other attendees. (Especially for most formal meetings such as "board of directors" or committee meetings.)

Share the meeting minutes
You made it! This last step is crucial: make sure to share your meeting minutes with all meeting attendees and relevant stakeholders.

Productive and effective team meetings are not only good meeting minutes: you'll need to ensure that the right people have access to the right knowledge before, during and after your meetings and can easily collaborate on it.

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- **Save time on team meeting preparation.** Prepare your own meeting templates and start taking beautiful notes in seconds.
- **Collaborate in real-time.** Every member of your team or external contributors can edit or comment on the same document automatically sync in real-time.
- **Share documents in seconds.** Decide who can access them, share it through email, slack or attach it to a calendar event on the fly.
- **Organize and centralize your team meeting documentation**. Slite provides a powerful yet simple workspace to act as a single source of truth for your team.

6. Diagrams/Tables:

Agenda Item	Purpose	Lead	Time (min)
Review Previous Minutes	Share info	Meeting Owner	5
Budget Allocation	Decision	Finance Lead	20
Upcoming Deadlines	Input	Project Lead	15
Open Discussion	Open-ended	All	10

7. Real-life Applications/Case Examples:

- **HR Meetings**: To document discussions about policy changes.
- **Project Meetings**: To track progress and assign tasks.
- **Board Meetings**: For legal compliance and archival.

8. Tips, Tricks, or Mnemonics :

Mnemonic for Meeting Planning: "POINTER"

Letter	Meaning	Description
P	Purpose	Define the meeting goal.
O	Objectives	List what should be achieved.
I	Invitees	Call only relevant people.
N	Notes/Agenda	Prepare detailed topics.
T	Time allocation	Assign time blocks for each item.
E	Engagement	Encourage input and collaboration.
R	Recap & Review	Summarize and evaluate at the end.

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9. Classroom Activity/Interaction:

- **Quick Quiz**: On the roles of meeting participants.
- **Role Play**: Students act out a meeting using a prepared agenda.
- **Think & Share**: Students draft a mock agenda.
- **Group Discussion**: Review ineffective meetings and suggest fixes.

10. Summary/Key Takeaways

- Agendas ensure structured and productive meetings.
- Minutes maintain continuity, accountability, and decision records.
- Effective meetings need preparation, focus, and follow-up.
- Role clarity and realistic time estimation enhance participation.
- Regular feedback improves the meeting process over time.

11. References/Resources

- Harvard Business Review on Effective Meetings.

Note:

Bonus: Recommended Videos

1. How to Write an Agenda
2. How to write MoM