

## Conduct a technical practitioners meeting 114051

### PURPOSE OF THE UNIT STANDARD

This unit standard is a fundamental standard towards the qualification National Diploma in Retail / Wholesale management at NQF 5.

It provides the fundamental competence to write business reports in preparation for the core and elective standards at this level.

### LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Communication at NQF Level 4.

### UNIT STANDARD RANGE

Reports including Board Reports, Proposals, Budgets, Flash reports, Strategic Plans?

Techniques for compiling reports including structure and style of business reports, format and layout, use of business terminology,

### UNIT STANDARD OUTCOME HEADER

The demonstrated ability to make decisions and con

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Once you have completed all the questions after being facilitated, you need to check the progress you have made. If you feel that you are competent in the areas mentioned, you may tick the blocks, if however you feel that you require additional knowledge, you need to indicate so in the block below. Show this to your facilitator and make the necessary arrangements to assist you to become competent.	83

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<b>SPECIFIC OUTCOMES AND RELATED ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</b>	
<b>SO 1</b>	<b>Demonstrate knowledge of different types of technical practitioners meetings</b>
<b>AC 1</b>	The demonstration describes the types of technical meetings and their uses. (One of Contract meetings, technical review meetings, project review meetings)
<b>AC 2</b>	The demonstration identifies leadership styles used in meeting procedures. (Democratic, Autocratic, Facilitative)
<b>AC 3</b>	The demonstration identifies decision making processes used in meetings. (Voting, Consensus, Criteria-based rating, Ranking, Paired comparisons)
<b>AC 4</b>	The demonstration describes meeting conventions relevant to the type of meeting chosen. (Moving; Seconding; Amending; Voting Procedures)
<b>AC 5</b>	The demonstration identifies that the note taker should have technical background knowledge.
<b>SO 2</b>	<b>Prepare for a technical practitioners meeting.</b>
<b>AC 1</b>	The preparation ensures physical arrangements for the meeting is done, relevant to the type of meeting. (Venue selection, Facilities, Technology required, Relevant supporting information)
<b>AC 2</b>	The preparation ensures that meeting outcomes are clear, concise and well documented.
<b>AC 3</b>	The preparation ensures that meeting invitations are extended to relevant participants timelyously
<b>AC 4</b>	The preparation completes and distribute the meeting agenda and other supporting documentation needed for the type of meeting
<b>SO 3</b>	<b>Chair a technical practitioners meeting</b>
<b>AC 1</b>	The chair and members agree on rules and guidelines on behaviour
<b>AC 2</b>	The chair applies agreed meeting conventions throughout the meeting, according to the type of meeting and in accordance with the standing procedures of the organisation(s) involved
<b>AC 3</b>	The chair ensures that the published agenda is followed
<b>AC 4</b>	The chair provides for active participation by all members to avoid/ minimize conflict
<b>AC 5</b>	The chair ensures that meeting topics are prioritised and that discussion times are allocated according to importance, urgency, complexity and agenda
<b>AC 6</b>	The chair ensures that agreed decisions are clear, accurate, includes a time frame for action and are within the mandate of the type of meeting conducted
<b>SO 4</b>	<b>Conduct post meeting follow up for a technical meeting. (Circulation of Minutes; Recommendations; Motions passed; Feedback)</b>
<b>AC 1</b>	The follow up ensures minutes of the meeting is produced accurately and in line with the policy of the organisation
<b>AC 2</b>	The follow up communicates agreed records of discussion to interested parties in a format and time frame that meet requirements of the type of meeting and of the organisation(s) involved. (One of Contractual, technical review or project specific)
<b>AC 3</b>	The follow up includes a summary of discussions and actions, and meet format requirements

CRITICAL CROSS FIELD OUTCOMES	
UNIT STANDARD CCFO WORKING	Work effectively with others as a member of an organisation
UNIT STANDARD CCFO ORGANISING	Organise and manage him/her self and his/her activities responsibly and effectively
UNIT STANDARD CCFO COLLECTING	Collect, analyse, organise, and critically evaluate information
UNIT STANDARD CCFO DEMONSTRATING	Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exists in isolation
UNIT STANDARD CCFO CONTRIBUTING	Contribute to his/her full personal development and the social and economic development of the society at large by being aware of the importance of: reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively, exploring education and career opportunities and developing entrepreneurial opportunities
ESSENTIAL EMBEDDED KNOWLEDGE	



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### SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

#### REGISTERED UNIT STANDARD:

##### Conduct a technical practitioners meeting

SAQA ID	UNIT STANDARD TITLE					
114051	Conduct a technical practitioners meeting					
<b>ORIGINATOR</b>						
SGB Information Systems and Technology						
FIELD	SUBFIELD					
Field 10 - Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences	Information Technology and Computer Sciences					
ABET BAND	UNIT STANDARD TYPE	PRE-2009 NQF LEVEL	NQF LEVEL			
Undefined	Regular	Level 5	Level TBA: Pre-2009 was L5			
REGISTRATION STATUS	REGISTRATION START DATE	REGISTRATION END DATE	SAQA DECISION NUMBER			
Reregistered	2018-07-01	2023-06-30	SAQA 06120/18			
LAST DATE FOR ENROLMENT	LAST DATE FOR ACHIEVEMENT					
2024-06-30	2027-06-30					

*In all of the tables in this document, both the pre-2009 NQF Level and the NQF Level is shown. In the text (purpose statements, qualification rules, etc), any references to NQF Levels are to the pre-2009 levels unless specifically stated otherwise.*

#### PURPOSE OF THE UNIT STANDARD

This unit standard is intended:

- To provide proficient knowledge of the areas covered
- For those working in the workplace in the area of Information Technology
- As additional knowledge for those wanting to understand the areas covered

People credited with this unit standard are able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of different types of meetings and their procedures
- Prepare for a technical practitioners meeting
- Chair a technical practitioners meeting
- Conduct post-meeting follow up for a technical meeting

The performance of all elements is to a standard that allows for further learning in this area.

#### LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The credit value of this unit is based on a person having prior knowledge and skills to:

- Communicate and write in English, at least at NQF level 4.
- Participate in formal meetings.
- Conduct formal meetings.

#### UNIT STANDARD RANGE

1. Outcomes being assessed must be in accordance with the relevant type of meeting that the student elects to be assessed on, which can include but is not be limited to a technical contractual meeting, technical project meeting or a technical review meeting.
2. If a technical review meeting is being assessed, the appropriate technical people should be involved as identified by the learner, to ensure the assumed technical knowledge resides with the participants. For eg. the note taker must have the necessary technical background to be able to follow the meeting and produce appropriate notes.

**Specific Outcomes and Assessment Criteria:****SPECIFIC OUTCOME 1**

Demonstrate knowledge of different types of technical practitioners meetings.

**OUTCOME RANGE**

Relevant to the type of meeting chosen.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA****ASSESSMENT CRITERION 1**

1. The demonstration describes the types of technical meetings and their uses.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION RANGE**

One of Contract meetings, technical review meetings, project review meetings.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 2**

2. The demonstration identifies leadership styles used in meeting procedures.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION RANGE**

Democratic, Autocratic, Facilitative.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 3**

3. The demonstration identifies decision making processes used in meetings.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION RANGE**

Voting, Consensus, Criteria-based rating, Ranking, Paired comparisons.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 4**

4. The demonstration describes meeting conventions relevant to the type of meeting chosen.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION RANGE**

Moving; Seconding; Amending; Voting Procedures.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 5**

5. The demonstration identifies that the note taker should have technical background knowledge.

**SPECIFIC OUTCOME 2**

Prepare for a technical practitioners meeting.

**OUTCOME RANGE**

Relevant to the type of meeting preparing for.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA****ASSESSMENT CRITERION 1**

1. The preparation ensures physical arrangements for the meeting is done, relevant to the type of meeting.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION RANGE**

Venue selection, Facilities, Technology required, Relevant supporting information.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 2**

2. The preparation ensures that meeting outcomes are clear, concise and well documented.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 3**

3. The preparation ensures that meeting invitations are extended to relevant participants timeously.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 4**

4. The preparation completes and distribute the meeting agenda and other supporting documentation needed for the type of meeting.

**SPECIFIC OUTCOME 3**

Chair a technical practitioners meeting.

**OUTCOME RANGE**

Relevant to the type of meeting preparing for.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA****ASSESSMENT CRITERION 1**

1. The chair and members agree on rules and guidelines on behavior.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 2**

2. The chair applies agreed meeting conventions throughout the meeting, according to the type of meeting and in accordance with the standing procedures of the organisation(s) involved.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 3**

3. The chair ensures that the published agenda is followed.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 4**

4. The chair provides for active participation by all members to avoid/ minimize conflict.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 5**

5. The chair ensures that meeting topics are prioritised and that discussion times are allocated according to importance, urgency, complexity and agenda.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 6**

6. The chair ensures that agreed decisions are clear, accurate, includes a time frame for action and are within the mandate of the type of meeting conducted.

**SPECIFIC OUTCOME 4**

Conduct post meeting follow up for a technical meeting.

**OUTCOME RANGE**

Circulation of Minutes; Recommendations; Motions passed; Feedback.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA****ASSESSMENT CRITERION 1**

1. The follow up ensures minutes of the meeting is produced accurately and in line with the policy of the organisation.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 2**

2. The follow up communicates agreed records of discussion to interested parties in a format and time frame that meet requirements of the type of meeting and of the organisation(s) involved.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION RANGE**

One of Contractual, technical review or project specific.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 3**

3. The follow up includes a summary of discussions and actions, and meet format requirements.

**UNIT STANDARD ACCREDITATION AND MODERATION OPTIONS**

The relevant Education and Training Quality Authority (ETQA) must accredit providers before they can offer programs of education and training assessed against unit standards.

Moderation Process:

Moderation of assessment will be overseen by the relevant ETQA according to the moderation guidelines in the relevant qualification and the agreed ETQA procedures.

**UNIT STANDARD ESSENTIAL EMBEDDED KNOWLEDGE**

1. Performance of all elements is to be carried out in accordance with organisation standards and procedures, unless otherwise stated. Organisation standards and procedures may cover: quality assurance, documentation, security, communication, health and safety, and personal behaviour. An example of the standards expected is the standards found in ISO 9000 Certified Organisations.
2. Performance of all elements complies with the laws of South Africa, especially with regard to copyright, privacy, health and safety, and consumer rights.
3. All activities must comply with any policies, procedures and requirements of the organisations involved, the ethical codes of relevant professional bodies and any relevant legislative and/ or regulatory requirements.

**UNIT STANDARD DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOME**

N/A

**UNIT STANDARD LINKAGES**

N/A

**Critical Cross-field Outcomes (CCFO):****UNIT STANDARD CCFO WORKING**

Work effectively with others as a member of an organisation.

**UNIT STANDARD CCFO ORGANISING**

Organise and manage him/her self and his/her activities responsibly and effectively.

**UNIT STANDARD CCFO COLLECTING**

Collect, analyse, organise, and critically evaluate information.

**UNIT STANDARD CCFO DEMONSTRATING**

Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exists in isolation.

**UNIT STANDARD CCFO CONTRIBUTING**

Contribute to his/her full personal development and the social and economic development of the society at large by being aware of the importance of: reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively, exploring education and career opportunities and developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

**UNIT STANDARD ASSESSOR CRITERIA**

N/A

**REREGRISTRATION HISTORY**

As per the SAQA Board decision/s at that time, this unit standard was Reregistered in 2012; 2015.

**UNIT STANDARD NOTES**

Sub-Sub-Field (Domain):  
Information Systems and Technology Management

# Different types of technical practitioners meetings

Time: 180 minutes

Activity: Self and Group

**AC 1**

## **T**he demonstration describes the types of technical meetings and their uses

The principal activities of a Technical Committee are the development and maintenance of its associated standards, technical reports, and data files in accordance with the purpose of the organisation.

### **1. What do we use meetings for?**

Meetings are very important for the work of any organisation. Good meetings are important for collective decision-making, planning and follow-up, accountability, democracy, and other practices that will help you to build a good organisation. If meetings are used in the correct way, they can help an organisation to be efficient. However, like all organising tools, meetings can be used badly and end up not serving the purpose that they are supposed to.



Sometimes we seem to attend too many long meetings, which discuss the same thing over and over again without seeming to move forward. Meetings can become places where conflict is played out. Some people can also see attending meetings as working for the organisation instead of seeing it as a tool for getting work done. We should try to make our meetings places where we get democratic and constructive participation and involvement from our members.

### **2. Important things to know about meetings**

#### ***The purpose of meetings***

Most people do not like attending meetings – especially if they are not sure what the purpose of the meeting is, or if it goes on too long and achieves too little. Meetings must not be too frequent or held just for the sake of it. There must be a need for a meeting. There should be decisions about the different types of meetings needed. For example, some meetings could be to discuss policy and others to discuss organisation (practical work).

Wherever possible the members must know what type of meeting they are going to and what the meeting is for – in other words, the PURPOSE of the meeting. Sometimes an organisation might call a special or extraordinary meeting. There are different types of meetings and planning and it should take account of this.

### **Different types of meetings**

Most organisations will hold the following types of meetings:

#### **1. The general members meeting:**

This is the most common meeting, which usually happens once a month or once every two weeks. The general members meeting should be the place where members are informed of developments, involved in decisions and given education and information that will help them to become more active in the organisation. General meetings are usually the places where decisions are made and where the executive reports on work they and other sub-committees have done.

#### **2. Special meetings:**

These can be called to discuss specific issues, for example preparing for a national conference or work on planning activities for the year. Any members who are interested should be invited to attend special meetings. They should not be run like general members meetings (with minutes, reports etc) but should only focus on the issues they've been called to discuss.

#### **3. Executive meetings:**

The executive should meet more regularly than the general members, and executive meetings should have a more business-like focus. The executive has to plan implementation for the organisation, monitor the work that has been done, deal with problems, and often (if you're part of a larger organisation) relate to other levels of the organisation.

They should discuss correspondence in detail and address problems as they come up. The executive should also keep an eye on the finances of the organisation and monitor income and expenditure. Every executive meeting should have an item on the agenda that plans for the next general members meeting. They should provide both leadership and administration to the organisation.

#### **4. Annual General Meeting:**

Most organisations have an Annual General Meeting laid down in their constitution.

The AGM is the place where the executive accounts to all members about the activities of the year as well as the finances of the organisation. The AGM is also the place where new leaders are elected and are given a mandate to run the organisation for another year. Most AGM's need at least the following two detailed reports to the members:

- The secretary's report that lists plans of the organisation, the actual activities that took place that year, the achievements of the year, and the problems experienced.
- The treasurer's report: a detailed financial report that lists all income from subscriptions, grants, donations, fundraising; and all expenditure. This report should also clearly state what the balance is and where that balance is held. It is important to have a written financial report at your AGM but very often members find financial reports difficult to understand and you should try and make it simpler by putting the main headings on news-prints and explaining it to people in less financial language.

#### **3. Planning a meeting**

Planning should improve participation by ensuring that discussion is on a single topic and that the members are well prepared for the meeting. This is the responsibility of the Chairperson, Secretary and Executive, depending on the type of organisation. Planning does not mean controlling and directing the meeting in such a way that it restricts participation

Planning should include the following:

**Notification:** It is the executive's responsibility to ensure that everyone has been notified of the date, time and venue of the meeting, as well as the main issues to be discussed. For many organisations it is a useful practice to always have their meetings on the same day at the same time in the same place – for example on the first Saturday of every month at the local church hall. If you do not money to always inform your members of meetings then over time this will help you to cut costs, and to make sure that everyone knows where they can find the meeting.

**Preparing the agenda:** The agenda is a list of the most important issues for the members to discuss. It is drawn from the Matters Arising from the previous meeting and from the discussions of the Executive or Secretariat.

The agenda is the responsibility of the Chairperson and the Secretary. The chairperson should read the minutes of the previous meeting to familiarise him/herself with the issues. This will form the basis of a list of matter arising from these minutes.

Matters arising include:

- ▶ Tasks – a report back must be given
- ▶ Matters for which further information was required for discussion
- ▶ Matters that were deferred to this meeting

There are standard items for any agenda. These items should be arranged in order of priority and time should be allocated for each discussion. Where possible, try to familiarise yourself with each area of discussion.

An agenda should include a last item known as General or Any Other Business to allow individuals to raise short items not included on the agenda.

#### **4. How to run a meeting**

##### **a. The agenda**

**Open** the meeting and welcome everyone. Then go through the agenda step by step.

**Those present and apologies:** The apologies of those members not able to attend the meeting are recorded as part of the minutes. Send round an attendance register if there are too many people to just record it in the minutes. Ask if there are any apologies from people who are not there.

**Minutes:** Minutes are accurate notes of what is discussed and decided on at meetings. Make sure that the minutes of the previous meeting are circulated to everyone or at least read at the beginning of the meeting. (See section on writing minutes) Minutes must be adopted at the beginning of a meeting. Give people a chance to read the minutes or read them out aloud. Everyone must agree that they are an accurate record of the last meeting. Members must be given the chance to add where item/points might have been left out.

**Matters arising** from the minutes: This covers points that were discussed at the last meeting, when perhaps someone was asked to do some work or there have been subsequent developments, which now need discussion. A list of these points is drawn from the previous meeting's minutes.

**Correspondence:** This means all the letters that have been received by the organisation since the last meeting. They can be dealt with in different ways. If your group does not receive many letters, they could be read out and then discussed. Another way is for the secretary to list them with a brief explanation. The chairperson then goes through the list and suggests action. If the issue raised in the letter needs decisive action it can be more fully discussed.

**Other items on the agenda:** Someone must introduce each item on the agenda. The item introduced could be either a discussion or a report. If it is a discussion someone is given the job of leading the discussion and making proposals on that particular item. If it is a report, the person who is reporting should comment on the following:

Was it a task that was completed, what were the problems and what still needs to be done? (issue, facts, options, proposal – see guide on inputs and verbal reports)

Discussion should be to examine a problem or discuss an issue in more detail – get everyone's ideas and points of view on it, arrive at a decision, delegate responsibility for the completion of the task, and follow-up to ensure that it is completed.

### **b. Meeting Procedures**

All members should know meeting procedures. There are a number of points that people use in meetings to ensure that the meetings run smoothly. Often members use these points to assist the chairperson.

The following are procedural points most used in meetings:

#### **Point of Order:**

It should be used when a member feels that the meeting procedure is not being stuck to and s/he wants the meeting to return to the correct procedure or order. For example, when an individual is speaking totally off the point, another member might ask on a point of order for the speaker to stick to the agenda.

#### **Point of Information:**

A member may raise their hand and ask to make point of information (or request information) when it is not his or her turn to speak. This can enable a member to speak (by putting up his/her hand and asking to speak) when it is not his/her turn to request more information on the matter being discussed, or to give more information on a point being discussed.

**Out of Order:**

When an individual is not sticking to meeting procedure, being rude, interjecting or misbehaving in some way, the chairperson might rule him/her out of order.

**Protection:**

A speaker who is being harassed when he/she is speaking can ask for the protection of the Chairperson.

**Quorums:**

This is the minimum number of people who must be present for the meeting to conduct business and take decisions. This minimum number is stated in the organisations constitution. The meeting cannot start until there is a quorum. Always ensure that you have this minimum number of people at a meeting, especially when decisions must be taken.

If you do not, and decisions are taken, members who were not present can request that it is re-discussed, meaning that time was wasted. All these points are called meeting rules or procedures, which are there to try to make meetings more efficient and effective. They should not be over-used just for the sake of it.

**c. How to take decisions in meetings**

Decisions are usually reached through two main ways:

- **Consensus**

This means reaching decisions by discussion and general agreement.

- **Voting**

People vote for a particular proposal. Usually one person will put forward a proposal, someone else will second it and then people will vote. If the majority of people accept the proposal, it then becomes binding on the organisation. Voting can either be done by a show of hands or secret ballot.

**Show of hand** - The Chairperson would call for a show of hand when there is a difference of opinion amongst members when a decision needs to be reached. S/he will call on members to raise their hands to show their support for or against a proposal. These votes are then counted – majority would then ensure that the proposal stands or falls away.

**Secret ballot** - Each person would be given a piece of paper where s/he would write whether s/he supports a particular proposal or not. The votes would be counted and the majority would ensure that the proposal stands or falls away.

It is usually better to reach consensus than to vote. Reaching consensus often means that there are compromises from everyone but it ensures that most people feel part of the decision. Sometimes a vote does need to be taken, for example in elections or when the meeting cannot reach a decision through consensus.

### **Resolutions**

These are formal proposals put forward to the meeting, for people to agree or disagree with. If some disagree, they are voted on. If passed, they become resolutions and therefore policy of the organisation. There should be a proposer and seconder of each resolution. Resolutions are a clear way to set out the policies and decisions of an organisation. Usually a resolution has three parts to it:

We start the resolution by saying that, e.g.: "The AGM of the Natalspruit Women's Organisation, meeting on (give date) notes that: and then you list the main issues that you are concerned about, for example:

Noting:

1. the rapid increase in crime in this area,
2. the devastating effects it has on the lives of people in this area,
3. etc.

The second part of the resolution will then list the points that show your understanding of the issue and its causes, for example:

Believing:

1. that the increase in crime is due to the failure of police to effectively service our community
2. that the high unemployment rate is forcing many of our young people to take up crime as a way of life
3. etc

The third part lists exactly what your organisation has decided to do or what its policy should be on the issue, for example:

Therefore resolves:

1. to actively participate in the community police forum
2. to use all means possible to pressurise the police to perform their duty
3. to work with the local council to ensure that facilities and clubs are supplied to keep our youth off the street

Amendments may need to be made to resolutions, and these should be accepted by everyone present. If there is not total agreement on an amendment, a vote should be held and the chairperson should record the votes of those for, and those against, the amendment, as well as those abstaining. If the majority support the amendment it stands and the original section of the resolution falls away.

The Chairperson and members must study the constitution of the organisation to make sure they know and understand all these procedures.

#### **d. How to chair the meeting**

The chairperson is the most important person in the meeting. He or she will set the pace for the meeting, make sure that people stick to the topics, ensure that democratic decisions are taken, and that everyone is on board with these decisions. Chairing is a great skill and it is important to teach members to chair meetings and rotate the job where possible so that more people can practise this skill. However, it is always good to have an experienced chairperson for important meetings.

A good chairperson is an active chairperson; it is not the chairperson's job to simply keep a list of speakers and to let them speak one after the other. The chairperson should introduce the topic clearly and guide the discussion especially when people start repeating points. When a discussion throws up opposing views, the chairperson should also try to summarise the different positions and where possible, propose a way forward.

The way forward can involve taking a vote on an issue, having a further discussion at another date, or making a compromise that most people may agree with. The chairperson should ask for agreement from the meeting on the way forward, and apologise to those who still wanted to speak.

Here are the basic steps for chairing a meeting:

- The Chairperson opens the meeting and presents the agenda.
- S/he should start a meeting by setting a cut-off time when everyone agrees that the meeting should end. This helps to encourage people to be brief.
- S/he calls on individuals to introduce or lead the discussion of points on the agenda and gives everyone a chance to speak.
- S/he also ensures that no one dominates discussion.
- S/he should try to summarise the discussion clearly restating ideas and proposals put forward. However, there is no need to repeat everything that has been said.
- S/he must be able to get agreement on what the decision is – s/he must ensure that everyone understands the decision, delegates to someone the duty of carrying out the decision, ensures that the person given the responsibility knows what s/he has to do and when it should be done and reported on.
- S/he ensures that everyone takes part in the discussions and decision-making.
- S/he ensures that the date for the next meeting is always set at the meeting.

#### **e. How to write minutes in the meeting**

It is essential that minutes are recorded accurately. This not only serves as a reminder of issues that need to be followed up but also prevents arguments about previous decisions.

Minutes are also a guide for the secretary and chairperson when drawing up the agenda for the next meeting. Minutes help the organisation to learn from its past failures and successes. This is done when the secretary reflects on the minutes of the past year when drawing up an annual report. There are three aspects to taking good minutes:

#### **1. Listening**

This is a very important skill to develop. You must not only listen to what is being said but you have to ensure that you understand as well.

#### **2. Taking notes**

Write down only the main points and the decisions taken. It is impossible to write down everything that is being said.

- Always try to identify the main points

What is the main aim of the discussion?

What information is important?

Use your own words. If you do this you will find that your minutes are more accurate and complete than if you try to jot down everything a speaker says.

- Pay special attention to decisions. If necessary, ask for the decisions to be repeated.
- Ask for clarification. Do not hesitate to stop the meeting if you are not clear about any decisions or issues being discussed.

### 3. Writing the minutes

The following information should be included:

- Nature of meeting, date, time, venue
- Names of those present
- Names of visitors
- Apologies
- Summaries of decisions and discussions

This includes work to be followed up and who have taken responsibility for certain tasks. The minutes should be written neatly in a special minute book or file; avoid jotting down minutes on scraps of paper. The book or file should be kept safely and always available for consultation at any time.

## AC 2

### **T**he demonstration identifies leadership styles used in meeting procedures

In meetings, there are various styles which are used to ensure that the outcome of the meeting is achieved. Various outcomes require various types of commitment and involvement from the participants.

**Democratic** meetings are those held with appointed or nominated delegates from departments, organisations or areas. These delegates will then be given the information and the meeting will be conducted in this manner.



**Autocratic** meetings are hosted and lead by a chair person who will run the entire meeting and will give most of the input in the meeting. The other attendees will be required to give input only when instructed.

**Facilitative** meetings are group efforts and the leader of the meeting will set a trend of ensuring that all members are actively participating in the meeting to achieve the outcome or goal.

### More leadership styles

## 1. Democratic Leadership

Commonly Effective

Democratic leadership is exactly what it sounds like -- the leader makes decisions based on the input of each team member. Although he or she makes the final call, each employee has an equal say on a project's direction.

Democratic leadership is one of the most effective leadership styles because it allows lower-level employees to exercise authority they'll need to use wisely in future positions they might hold. It also resembles how decisions can be made in company board meetings.

For example, in a company board meeting, a democratic leader might give the team a few decision-related options. They could then open a discussion about each option. After a discussion, this leader might take the board's thoughts and feedback into consideration, or they might open this decision up to a vote.

## 2. Autocratic Leadership

Rarely Effective

Autocratic leadership is the inverse of democratic leadership. In this leadership style, the leader makes decisions without taking input from anyone who reports to them. Employees are neither considered nor consulted prior to a direction, and are expected to adhere to the decision at a time and pace stipulated by the leader.

An example of this could be when a manager changes the hours of work shifts for multiple employees without consulting anyone -- especially the effected employees. Frankly, this leadership style stinks. Most organizations today can't sustain such a hegemonic culture without losing employees. It's best to keep leadership more open to the intellect and perspective of the rest of the team.

### 3. Laissez-Faire Leadership

Sometimes Effective

If you remember your high-school French, you'll accurately assume that laissez-faire leadership is the least intrusive form of leadership. The French term "laissez faire" literally translates to "let them do," and leaders who embrace it afford nearly all authority to their employees.

In a young start up, for example, you might see a laissez-faire company founder who makes no major office policies around work hours or deadlines. They might put full trust into their employees while they focus on the overall workings of running the company. Although laissez-faire leadership can empower employees by trusting them to work however they'd like, it can limit their development and overlook critical company growth opportunities. Therefore, it's important that this leadership style is kept in check.

### 4. Strategic Leadership

Commonly Effective

Strategic leaders sit at the intersection between a company's main operations and its growth opportunities. He or she accepts the burden of executive interests while ensuring that current working conditions remain stable for everyone else.

This is a desirable leadership style in many companies because strategic thinking supports multiple types of employees at once. However, leaders who operate this way can set a dangerous precedent with respect to how many people they can support at once, and what the best direction for the company really is if everyone is getting their way at all times.

### 5. Transformational Leadership

Sometimes Effective

Transformational leadership is always "transforming" and improving upon the company's conventions. Employees might have a basic set of tasks and goals that they complete every week or month, but the leader is constantly pushing them outside of their comfort zone.

When starting a job with this type of leader, all employees might get a list of goals to reach, as well as deadlines for reaching them. While the goals might seem simple at first, this manager might pick up the pace of deadlines or give you more and more challenging goals as you grow with the company.

This is a highly encouraged form of leadership among growth-minded companies because it motivates employees to see what they're capable of. But transformational leaders can risk losing sight of everyone's individual learning curves if direct reports don't receive the right coaching to guide them through new responsibilities.

## **6. Transactional Leadership**

Sometimes Effective

Transactional leaders are fairly common today. These managers reward their employees for precisely the work they do. A marketing team that receives a scheduled bonus for helping generate a certain number of leads by the end of the quarter is a common example of transactional leadership.

When starting a job with a transactional boss, you might receive an incentive plan that motivates you to quickly master your regular job duties. For example, if you work in marketing, you might receive a bonus for sending 10 marketing emails. On the other hand, a transformational leader might only offer you a bonus if your work results in a large amount of newsletter subscriptions.

Transactional leadership helps establish roles and responsibilities for each employee, but it can also encourage bare-minimum work if employees know how much their effort is worth all the time. This leadership style can use incentive programs to motivate employees, but they should be consistent with the company's goals and used in addition to unscheduled gestures of appreciation.

## **7. Coach-Style Leadership**

Commonly Effective

Similarly to a sports team's coach, this leader focuses on identifying and nurturing the individual strengths of each member on his or her team. They also focus on strategies that will enable their team work better together. This style offers strong similarities to strategic and democratic leadership, but puts more emphasis on the growth and success of individual employees.

Rather than forcing all employees to focus on similar skills and goals, this leader might build a team where each employee has an expertise or skillset in something different.

In the long run, this leader focuses on creating strong teams that can communicate well and embrace each other's unique skillsets in order to get work done. A manager with this leadership style might help employees improve on their strengths by giving them new tasks to try, offering them guidance, or meeting to discuss constructive feedback. They might also encourage one or more team members to expand on their strengths by learning new skills from other teammates.

## **8. Bureaucratic Leadership**

Rarely Effective

Bureaucratic leaders go by the books. This style of leadership might listen and consider the input of employees unlike autocratic leadership but the leader tends to reject an employee's input if it conflicts with company policy or past practices. You may run into a bureaucratic leader at a larger, older, or traditional company. At these companies, when a colleague or employee proposes a strong strategy that seems new or non-traditional, bureaucratic leaders may reject it. Their resistance might be because the company has already been successful with current processes and trying something new could waste time or resources if it doesn't work.

Employees under this leadership style might not feel as controlled as they would under autocratic leadership, but there is still a lack of freedom in how much people are able to do in their roles. This can quickly shut down innovation, and is definitely not encouraged for companies who are chasing ambitious goals and quick growth.

**AC 3**

**T**he demonstration identifies decision making processes used in meetings.

The vast majority of business decisions are made in meetings.

While small decisions are made in all kinds of meetings, the more important decisions often get their own dedicated meetings.



There are different types of group decision making processes, and care should be taken to choose a process that best matches the situation. A decision making process can include group activities like information gathering and sharing, brainstorming solutions, evaluating options, ranking preferences, and voting on the final options. Below are the most effective ways of running decision making meetings.

## Primary Goals for Decision Making Meetings

Goals for a decision-oriented meeting can vary a little based on the type of decision being made, but they are always centred on coming to a consensus about a future plan. It is important to remember that the goal of these meetings also includes planning how to best execute the decision that has been made.

### Make the best possible decision

If a decision making process is flawed and dysfunctional, the decisions will be bad. By involving a group in making a decision you can rely on collective intelligence; knowledge beyond what is possible with individual decision makers. Because each participant has unique information and perspectives, combining group information leads to more informed decisions.

However, it is important to use meetings designed specifically for group decisions efficiently, to not waste the group members' time. If all planning decisions were made by one person, not only would the choices be uninformed, there would also be little unity around team goals and direction.

### Planning for execution

When individuals feel that their opinion has been considered in the group planning, they are more likely to embrace the decisions and work to carry out those goals. Most discussions of decision making assume that only senior executives make decisions or that only senior executives' decisions matter. This is a dangerous mistake.

Participatory decision making leads to increased team productivity and likelihood of goal execution, because team members feel ownership and responsibility for the decisions made. Addressing both short term and long term goals at your decision making meetings is a great way to make sure team members leave with a direction and know the next steps.

The short term plan can be as simple as outlining action items and assigning tasks. In the long term it could mean setting a timeline of general dates and milestones. Initial planning can be an effective way of aligning the group and cementing the decision that was made.

## Key Roles in Decision Making Meetings

The participants in decision making meetings may play different roles. Understanding the distinctions between these levels of involvement is a useful way of holding members accountable for their role in implementing decisions.

### Meeting leader

In order to avoid getting off topic it is recommended that one person be in charge of guiding the direction of team negotiation. In addition, it can be helpful to use some elements of status update meetings in order to have meeting attendees present and be held accountable for research into the decision being made.

AC 4

**T**he demonstration describes meeting conventions relevant to the type of meeting chosen

### Different Types of Meetings

Within the meeting and convention market, there are many different types of events.

Understanding the different types of events can help you determine what will be the best fit for your needs or support your customers in developing their own event. We will discuss types of meetings, conventions, expositions, and special events. There are four basic types of meetings: information focused, decision-making, brainstorming, and training.



Information focused is a gathering where facts are reviewed, budgets are analysed, or specific information is discussed. This type of meeting is common with upper or executive management, who meet to understand information and to understand what has happened in the business or organization.

Decision-making is a meeting with the intention to come up with solutions and plans to move forward. For instance, if you are running a decision-making meeting to improve customer service, you may focus on developing new services and a customer loyalty program that will encourage clients to continue to do business with your company. The goal of the meeting is to make decisions about what new policies will be introduced to your customers.

Brainstorming is the function of meeting together to discuss potential ideas and plans to respond to a problem or improve a situation. You may plan a brainstorming meeting with your team to talk about ideas to attract new customers. Everyone is encouraged to share their thoughts and discuss different options that the company can pursue.

Training is an important type of meeting that allows participants to improve their skills, gain greater abilities, and expand their knowledge. This meeting may be held internally with only employees of a company or may be offered to the public, involving individuals from various industries and markets.

### **Types of Conventions**

Imagine you are in the insurance industry and have a chance to attend your company's annual convention. At last year's convention, you were able to attend a variety of classes from getting new customers to keeping your customers long-term. You enjoyed getting to know other agents from around the nation, see friends from past conventions, and attend a variety of networking events. The convention was a great way to learn about your industry, interact with others, and gain greater skills to improve your career.

There are numerous types of conventions, including corporate conventions and consumer conventions. Conventions typically focus on education and knowledge, such as workshops and classes. The conventions often include speakers and teachers who have expertise in the various topics addressed at the convention.

**T**he demonstration identifies that the note taker should have technical background knowledge.

### Effective Note Taking Skills: 4 Techniques To Use At Meetings

Taking notes effectively is a skill you can bring with you as you climb up from an entry-level job to the dream executive position. Even if you have a secretary or an assistant to push pencil for you, at some point, you will need to take notes. For example, when you're abroad attending an important conference or in an impromptu meeting with a client outside of the office.

#### Importance of taking notes

Taking notes helps you remember

Unless you have the memory bank of a super computer, you need to take down notes to remember things. Even if you're good at memorizing stuff, taking notes will relieve the mind of that extra task of recalling things at the office. This is useful especially if you have other important things to juggle that are on your mind, such as the housing repair or your child's schooling.



#### Taking notes sharpens your focus

If someone is already taking the minutes for the meeting, shouldn't you just sit down and talk and listen? Not really. Taking notes helps sharpens your focus on the key points of the meeting. Besides, while the minutes include more details of the discussion, your personal notes can focus on the most pressing issues that directly concern you.

#### Taking notes is your document of proof

Your notes can back you in case your co-worker or boss raises doubts or questions about the items you've discussed a week ago. If you've taken down notes properly, you can even show enough details about the agreement or discussion that is sure to silence the doubts.

#### Pinpoint side issues

Take note of issues afflicting other departments that can affect your work; issues that you might forget—it's not happening in your department, after all—or missed had you been listening passively. For example, you heard that the advertising team has just lost a copywriter; you could take note of this as a possible cause for delay to deliver your sales team's promotional materials next month.

## **4 Tips to Take Notes Effectively**

Now that you know how your notes can help you, here are some points to remember if you are to take down notes effectively:

### **1. Use pen and paper**

Using pen and paper is less intrusive and easier to use. Using a tablet, notepad or laptop while taking notes can create a wall between you and the person talking. These devices make it look like you're working on something else or chatting with someone even if you're not.

And it's easier to get distracted with all those browsing and other files in your device. It may be a generational thing, but outside of tech companies, using pen and paper is still the accepted corporate practice when taking down notes. Call it nostalgia, but there is more eye contact when you use pen and paper. Incidentally, about using your phone to take down notes, it's recommended to turn it off to avoid receiving calls or texts during the meeting.

### **2. Learn shorthand**

It's not just for court clerks or secretaries. Shorthand is still relevant especially when you're listening to a speaker who talks fast (try using a tablet for that). It may appear daunting at first, but like learning typewriting skill, shorthand is easy to learn with enough commitment. Here's a good advice on how to start learning shorthand fast.

If you don't have the patience or time to learn shorthand (meeting is on three days) you can also practice mnemonics or visual note-taking. It doesn't have much rules in it, just a good dash of creativity. For example, instead of writing "task A is assigned to Rob," you can just use an arrow pointing task A to Rob. Instead of writing "important" just use an exclamation mark. Visualizing or drawing thoughts instead of writing them is faster; just make sure the illustration makes sense to you.

### **3. Just highlight the key points**

Plot the outline of your notes even before the meeting starts. A good starting point is to check the meeting's agenda. Ask the secretary or your boss for a copy so you can already divide your notes according to the agenda's main points even before the meeting starts. As the meeting rolls on, just fill in the important notes under each of the main points.

### **4. Prepare a written report immediately after the meeting**

Don't wait for the day to pass after the meeting. Prepare a written report based on your notes right away while everything is still fresh in your mind. Even if you're not tasked to submit a formal report, you can use this document for your personal archive or as a proof in case a conflict arises about the discussion.

Besides, while the visual notes are practical during the meeting, you might forget what those mnemonics and drawings stand for soon. Taking notes effectively is a basic skill that you should learn whatever level your career is in now. Learn it and you'll find it useful wherever your career takes you

# Prepare for a technical practitioners meeting

Time: 120 minutes

Activity: Self and Group

**AC 1**

## **T**he preparation ensures physical arrangements for the meeting is done, relevant to the type of meeting

When meetings are arranged, the outcome of such meetings is heavily dependant on the preparation and input into the meetings. The following sections are the main focus points of such preparations:

### **Venue Selection:**

The size and interactive capabilities of the venue will heavily affect the outcome of the meeting. When the participants are required to move between groups and sections, and the venue is too small to accommodate this, the participants will not be able to fulfil the requirements.



Thus, the outcome of the meeting will not be obtained. If the venue is situated in an area which is not accessible for the participants, the turnout at the venue will also be affected. Selecting the correct venue is of utmost importance. If the venue is situated in the organisation, it must be in such a location where the participants will not be distracted from their intended attendance.

### **Facilities:**

The facilities for the venue will be reliant on the meeting type, the outcome required as well as the resources used. When the resources in the centre require additional facilities, the availability of such facilities must be arranged to ensure the successful outcome of the meeting.

**Technology:**

When the meeting requires the candidates or delegates to do online work, it will be a requirement for the venue to have such internet access. Should the candidates be required to make use of equipment, these items must also be made available for their use.

**Support Information:**

With the use of resources, support information must be made available for the users.

Whether it is user guides or additional user information gathered by the organisation, the presenter of the meeting or the group which is hosting the meeting must have such support information readily available.

The preparation of the meeting must be clear in order to ensure that the participants understand what is expected of them and in which format the presenter requires it returned. The outcomes of the meetings must be outlined in the invitation and the requirements of the meeting. These items should be sent out in timeous fashion before the commencement of the meeting to ensure that the participants can prepare themselves accordingly.

**AC 2**

## **T**he preparation ensures that meeting outcomes are clear, concise and well documented

Meeting minutes are written, accurate accounts of the proceedings that take place at meetings. They should record important details, decisions and assignments. Meeting minutes provide references for future meetings and clarification of previous meeting details. Written minutes can help prevent disagreements and misunderstandings because people can review the minutes to determine exactly what occurred at the meetings.



It is important for administrative assistants to provide clear information that attendees can refer to when questions arise later. Concise, understandable minutes can help resolve issues about details that people may forget soon after the meetings.

Administrative assistants can be effective minute takers by following these guidelines:

### **Advance Preparation**

Gather the tools needed for efficient minute taking, but verify that rules do not prohibit the use of recording devices or laptops before bringing those instruments to the meeting. Having multiple minute taking devices will give you the ability to have a backup in the event that your primary device fails on you.

### **Tape Recorder**

Although a tape recorder can verify accuracy, do not rely on it completely. Even if you tape the meeting, take notes as well. A tape recorder can malfunction, or it may not pick up every conversation clearly. Having an audio recorder can also be a distraction if attention is brought to it. Make sure you have a audio recorder that can be used discretely while still picking up clear and concise audio.

### **Laptop Computer/Tablet/Mobile**

If you can type rapidly, you may find it easier to use a laptop than to use a pen and paper. Do not be concerned about spelling and punctuation as you type; you can correct all those details after the meeting. Using a tablet with a pen is another great alternative to paper as it allows for great written notes and can often translate right into text. Using your mobile device can also be a great way for recording or note taking although it can be limiting based on the speed of the meeting or the notes required to be taken.

### **Paper, Pens, Pencils and Clipboard**

Even when you plan to use a laptop to take minutes, it is a good idea to be prepared for any contingency. The battery in your laptop could run down, and you may not be near an electrical outlet, so it is best to have an alternate plan for taking notes. Bring plenty of paper and at least two pens and pencils.

A clipboard can hold the paper if you do not have a table available or if the table is at an uncomfortable height for writing. When you can read your writing, it does not have to be neat. Your notes serve only as a reminder from which to type the minutes that will be a permanent record of the meeting.

## Clock or Watch

Use a timepiece to document the time the meeting begins and the time of adjournment. In addition, record the times that any latecomers arrive as well as when anyone leaves early along with the times that votes or decisions occur. Those records will indicate who may have missed important information even though they attended the meeting.

## The Agenda

If possible, obtain information about the meeting several days in advance of the event. Ask for a copy of the agenda and a list of those expected to attend the meeting. If there will be discussions about topics with which you are unfamiliar, learn what you can about those matters before the meeting takes place. It is easier to take notes when you understand the subjects about which you are writing. If the agenda does not include items tabled at the previous meeting, notify the leader about the oversight before the meeting begins.

## Create a Template

Make a template before the time of the meeting at which you will take minutes. The template should include the organization's name, meeting date, location, time, purpose, leader's name and title, attendees' names and titles and any other pertinent information known in advance of the meeting. You can then concentrate on recording details as the meeting progresses. When you have more than one page of notes, number each page as you write. That will help you to avoid confusion when making your final copy.

As attendees arrive, check their names off your list, and after the meeting, cross off the names of those who did not appear. Add additional names to your list if unexpected people attend the meeting. When time allows, sketch a rough map of where attendees are sitting to help you record their names accurately when necessary.

If it makes your job easier, you may opt to ask attendees to sign an attendance sheet as they arrive at the meeting.

## Outline Style of Taking Minutes

You may prefer to take minutes using an outline style instead of a template. For that method, list each item of the agenda along with the name of the person presenting the information. Under each topic, summarize the information presented, decisions made and the results of any votes taken.

## Be Punctual

Arrive well ahead of time to ensure that you are ready to take minutes when the meeting begins. Locate an electrical outlet if you will need electricity for your laptop or recorder, and get your supplies organized. When you do not feel rushed, you will be more efficient at your job.

### **During the Meeting**

One of the first things you record should be the approval of minutes from the last meeting. Note any corrections made to those minutes. When participants make announcements, report important details of the announcements along with the presenters' names.

### **Ensure Accuracy**

During the meeting, sit near the front of the room where you can hear the speakers plainly. Ask participants to repeat anything that you do not hear clearly and to explain anything that you do not understand. If you do not know some of the speakers' names, ask them to identify themselves either before they begin speaking or immediately afterward.

Record each discussion and decision in the order in which they occur rather than according to their locations on the agenda. Leaders may change the sequence of some items to accommodate participants or attendees concerned with particular items who must arrive late or leave early.

Include the action necessary to implement the decisions and who is responsible for accomplishing the action along with the time allowed for completion. Record the result of any vote that takes place along with whether it was by ballot, voice or a show of hands. You may also need to report the names of those who voted yes or no and include the names of those who abstained as well.

If possible, ask the meeting leader to give a brief summary at the conclusion of each item on the agenda to clarify the issues. Record a list of any materials distributed to attendees at the meeting, and attach copies of those materials to your typed minutes, or note where people can find the materials if you do not attach them to your minutes. Include the next meeting's location, date and time along with the proposed agenda items.

### **Remain Neutral and Concise**

Report the facts in a concise, clear manner, and avoid using adverbs and adjectives or recording your own observations and opinions about the issues discussed at the meeting. It is not necessary to record every detail or the name of every person who speaks.

However, include the names of those who make motions, second motions or who will be responsible for acting on the decisions made. Always remain neutral, and never record the emotions displayed by presenters and attendees. If you have a personal interest in the issues discussed, do not let the minutes reveal your concern.

The amount of information to include in your minutes may vary according to the type of meeting and how officials will use the minutes. You may need to produce a concise summary and paraphrase lengthy discussions, or you may have to provide a word-for-word transcript of the proceedings. Detailed reporting is sometimes easier because you do not have to decide what to include and what to omit in your minutes.

However, most minutes should consist of brief summaries of the discussions but each word of the motions. If you have any questions about your assignment, ask the leader about the depth of reporting expected before you begin. Effective meeting minutes have a good balance between brief summaries of ordinary subjects and in-depth reporting on complex issues.

### **Do Not Enter into the Discussions**

You can be more efficient at taking minutes by not participating actively in discussions at the meeting. It is difficult to concentrate on taking effective minutes while talking about various issues as well.

### **After the Meeting**

If you have any uncertainties or questions, speak to the leader immediately after the meeting to clarify anything of which you are unsure. Review your notes directly after the meeting while it remains fresh in your mind.

Correct any errors you may find, and make additions if necessary. Type the minutes from your informal notes, watching for automatic word processor corrections, which may actually be inaccurate interpretations of your intended words. Proofread your work, and ask someone to be an editor for you.

The editor should be a skilled writer with an eye for detail who can check your work for accuracy. When you both agree that the minutes are correct, sign and date your completed minutes, and distribute them to attendees and others concerned as soon as possible after the meeting.

Organize your meeting minutes in chronological order in a notebook or binder so others can easily review them when necessary, and do not destroy old minutes without permission from your superiors.

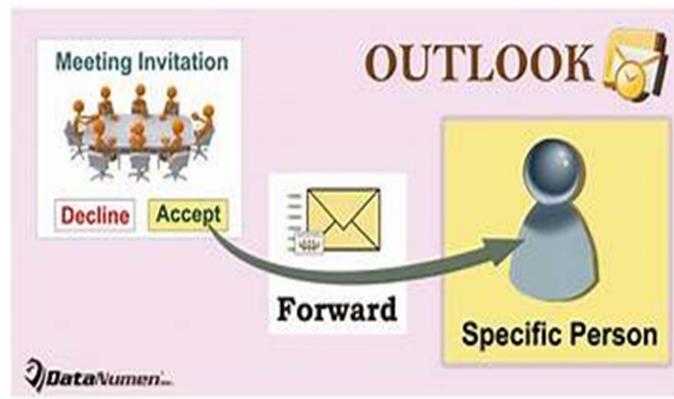
If you need clarification about a discussion or motion, do not be afraid to interrupt and ask for an explanation. However, when you cannot interrupt the meeting, make a note to yourself at that spot on your page reminding you to ask the leader about the matter after the meeting.

### AC 3

**T**he preparation ensures that meeting invitations are extended to relevant participants timelyously  
**8 parts of an excellent meeting invitation email**

Four required and four optional, these elements make for informative and professional email invitation messages.

- Succinct Subject Line (required)
- Personal Introduction
- Required Preparation
- Meeting Date and Time (required)
- Location (required)
- Meeting Purpose (required)
- Agenda
- Invitee List



#### 1. Succinct Subject line (Required!)

Just the facts, ma'am.

Follow best practices for any email by keeping your invitation subject line short and easy to scan. Include the meeting name, date, and an indication of what kind of invitation you're sending. We use this pattern for the email invitation subject lines in Meetings.

Type of request + Meeting Date + Meeting Name

#### Example

Meeting invite for October 4th: Project Status Update

Of course, you don't always know when the meeting will happen, and scheduled meetings get moved. In those situations, we use variations on the basic pattern:

Meeting request from Elise Keith: Project Kickoff

Scheduled: Project Kickoff for September 23rd

Rescheduled: Project Kickoff moved to September 24th

Canceled: Project Kickoff on September 24th

### **Why this format works**

People instantly know when you're requesting their time and the main topic of your meeting without even opening the email.

COMMON MISTAKE TO AVOID:

ABBREVIATIONS IN THE SUBJECT LINE

Many groups develop subject line abbreviations to aid a quick scan of meeting email, using subject lines such as:

[PM-MTG] check in

This can work great with a team that knows the abbreviation and who will get the meeting on their calendars automatically. When you invite someone outside your group, though, this shorthand falls apart. Believe it or not, not everyone uses Outlook or Google Calendar, so you need to actually include the meeting date in your subject line. And while your team knows that "PM" means "program manager" and "mtg" means "meeting", people from outside your group may not.

Recommendation: Use full words in your email subject line.

### **2. Personal Introduction (optional)**

If you're meeting with a group that doesn't meet regularly, add a short personal note to the top of your meeting invite email to provide much needed context.

Something like "Hello everyone, looking forward to seeing you all at the big project kick-off!" or "As we discussed on the phone last Tuesday, here's the invitation email for our upcoming demo." These quick notes help busy people remember who you are and why they're receiving this invitation.

### **3. Required Preparation (optional)**

Do people need to prepare reports, review a design, or gather facts to contribute to the meeting? Do you need people to RSVP so you can plan?

If you need people to come prepared, make sure you clearly provide these instructions right at the top of your message. Otherwise they will get missed.

### **4. Meeting Date and Time (Required!)**

Make sure to include the full date and time of the meeting, including the time zone, in the text of your invitation email. Spelling out month names helps avoid confusion for people from other countries who are used to seeing different date formats.

Example: September 15, 3:00 - 3:45PM

If you're inviting people who live in other time zones, use TimeandDate.com to figure out the correct time and date for your invitees. When you use a calendar or meeting management software to send your invite, the recipients' calendars will also automatically translate the date and time in the attached calendar file to their preferred time zone.

### **5. Location: Physical or Online (Required!)**

A meeting location may be either a physical place like a conference room, instructions for joining a virtual meeting, or both. For virtual meetings, the location field should include a link to join the online meeting, audio instructions or phone numbers, and any system requirements. For in-person meetings, the location should include enough detail that those invited can find the meeting on a map.

TIP: If you are sending invitations using a calendar program like Outlook, make sure to include the meeting phone number in the location field of the event. This makes it easy for people joining the meeting while traveling to dial in from a cell phone. Screenshot: The meeting audio and link appear in the location field on my calendar.

### **6. Meeting Purpose (Required!)**

Why are you holding this meeting? What will it accomplish? Ideally, you can state the purpose of the meeting in a single sentence. The best purpose statements will describe the desired result for the meeting.

**Examples:**

- Get a demo and answer questions
- Share project status updates
- Create a list of issues with the invoicing process
- Develop a high-level strategy for the upcoming conference
- Compare offers from vendors and make a selection
- Review completed development and approve the work

**7. Agenda (optional)**

Include the meeting agenda when you want participants to prepare in advance. The agenda needs to include the order in which you plan to discuss key topics and any instructions or material people should read before the meeting. Invitation emails sent using meeting productivity software will take care of this automatically.

**AC 4**

**T**he preparation completes and distribute the meeting agenda and other supporting documentation needed for the type of meeting.

**What is an Agenda?**

In its simplest form, an agenda sets out the list of items to be discussed at a meeting.

It should include:

The purpose of the meeting; and

The order in which items are to be discussed, so that the meeting achieves its purpose. This will later shape the minutes of the meeting.

The agenda may include more or less detail, and will often contain timings for each item.

An agenda is a tool for attendees including, but not limited to, the chairperson and secretary. It serves several functions, before, during and after a meeting.

**These functions include:**

It helps potential attendees decide whether they need to attend. By setting out what will be discussed, and for how long, it shows potential attendees whether they are crucial to the discussion and whether it is crucial to them. They can then make an informed decision about whether they attend or make their contribution in writing or via another attendee.

It helps invitees to prepare for the meeting. Along with any papers, it allows them to understand what will be discussed and to think about the issues in advance. They can also prepare any facts or figures so that they have the necessary information to hand to make an effective contribution.

It provides a structure for the meeting. It means that anyone diverting from the topic can be brought back to the matter in hand quickly and easily. Similarly, it allows the chair to control the meeting. A timed agenda is especially helpful for this, since the chair can move onto the next item when the time is up, asking attendees to continue the discussion elsewhere if necessary.

Finally, it gives a way in which the meeting's success can be judged. Because the agenda includes the purpose, attendees can see whether the meeting has achieved its aim or not. This makes it clear whether future meetings are necessary on the same subject.

### **How to Set an Agenda**

There are, in general, five or six broad areas to be covered in an agenda:

#### **Logistics**

This includes date, time and place of meeting, its title, and a list of invited attendees.

#### **Objective**

The purpose of the meeting, and any background information such as whether this is the first in a series of meetings.

#### **Housekeeping**

This should include welcome and introductions and any apologies for absence. It should also cover approval of previous minutes, and any matters arising from them that are not dealt with elsewhere in the agenda. In a formal meeting, housekeeping will also cover any amendments that are necessary to the last set of minutes, which should be formally documented in the minutes of this meeting.

**Items**

This is the ‘meat’ of the agenda. Each item should have a number, a title, and a presenter/lead. It should also have a suggested time limit on the discussion. Timing can be hard to ascertain without previous experience of the meeting.

The secretary may need to ask the presenter/lead how long they think a particular item will take, and then discuss it with the chair. The final allocation should be based on the item’s importance to the objective of the meeting, and its level of controversy. A very controversial item that is incidental to the objective of the meeting should be postponed for discussion elsewhere

# Chair a technical practitioners meeting

Time: 120 minutes

Activity: Self and Group

**AC 1**

## **T**he chair and members agree on rules and guidelines on behaviour

In meetings, as the chair, you are bound to experience some indifferent behaviour.

Below, you will find some examples to these, as well as methods that can be used to rectify such situations.

### **The heckler**

One of the most common behaviours, the heckler is often aggressive, argumentative and gets satisfaction from provoking others. First off don't let him or her upset you - stay calm. Try to find merit in one of his/her points; express your agreement, and then move on to something else.



### **The one who won't shut up**

Overly talkative often fall into one of four categories: an "eager-beaver"; a show-off; someone very well-informed who is eager to use their knowledge; someone just plain talkative. Some ideas to try and deal with this kind of person include, waiting until he/she takes a breath; then thank him/her and say something like "Lets hear from someone else."

Try slowing the person down with a difficult question. If he/she makes an obvious misstatement of facts, toss the comment back to the group and let them correct the person. In general, let the group take care of him/her as much as possible, but often as a facilitator you will need to cut the talkative person short in their ramblings and move the discussion on.

### **The cynic**

The cynic may have a particular problem with a certain issue, or may just gripe at random, for the sake of complaining. In some cases they may have a legitimate complaint. To try and make the meeting more useful try to point out that the purpose of the meeting is to find better ways to do things by constructive cooperation. In some cases, it may help to have a member of the group answer instead of you.

### **The silent one**

People who don't talk in meetings may be bored, feel themselves superior to what's being

discussed or maybe timid, shy or uncertain. While obviously it's more productive if everyone chips in their opinion its worth remembering that if someone doesn't want to speak (for example at their first meeting) you shouldn't force them.

Some things you could do to get quiet people talking are: arousing interest by asking directly for his/her opinion, asking for his/her view after indicating respect for his/her experience (but don't overdo this!) or compliment or encourage him/her the first time he/she talks. But most importantly work to foster a non-intimidating atmosphere in meetings where everyone feels equal and valued.

### **The egos**

It's not always that debates get to heated or the people are egoists, sometimes people's personality's just clash and they don't get along. To calm things down try to compliment the individuals on their enthusiasm and participation, but ask them to focus on constructive solutions. Emphasise points they agree on. Work to bring the rest of the group back into discussion, by throwing them a question to balance things out.

### **The chatty couple**

People having side conversations can sometimes be a problem in meetings, they may be commenting on the discussion, or may be having a personal conversation. Try reminding the person what you are meant to be doing, pointing out that there is a debate going on etc. You could try drawing them back into the meeting by asking an easy question and recapping what has just been discussed.

### **The one who is defiantly wrong**

If what someone is saying is totally incorrect they may be confused about the issue or could have been misinformed. Tactfully restate what they were saying to try and show how it may be incorrect, or acknowledge their contribution but leave the debate open so as someone else in the group can provide correct information.

**T**he chair applies agreed meeting conventions throughout the meeting, according to the type of meeting and in accordance with the standing procedures of the organisation(s) involved

**Advice and tips on how to organise meetings which fulfil their purpose efficiently.**

One thing central to any functional group is regular meetings. In a healthy organisation almost all decisions will be made at these meetings and there will be a sufficient level of discussion to ensure all those attending have a good idea of the activity and arguments in the different struggles the organisation is involved in. Meetings might also have some time given over to education.



### **Before the meeting**

#### **Make sure everyone knows the time and place**

A new group or one engaged in a lot of activity should meet at least once a week, at the same time and day. It helps to establish a consistent meeting day, time and location, as soon as possible so people can make it a habit. If they have to search for you or keep track of an ever-changing meeting time, they're far more likely to forget or not to bother.

You'll want a space that's private enough for you to have strong disagreements in and where only the members of the group will be while you are using it. This could mean a private room in a quiet pub that would be glad for the additional customers on quiet nights!

### **The chair ensures that the published agenda is followed**

#### **Develop an agenda**

An agenda gives people time to plan, to think over things that will be discussed, to do assignments and bring necessary information and materials. It doesn't have to be set in stone - you can always add and adjust as needed, even during the meeting.

The agenda can be printed and distributed, either in advance or at the meeting. Or, it can be written on a chalkboard or whiteboard where everyone can see it. This helps keep people on topic and lets them know what will be covered and when.

If it's known who is chairing the meeting in advance it may be a good idea for that person to start the meeting with a suggested agenda. An agenda should include all of the following items that apply to your group:

1. Additions and approval of the agenda,
2. Reading, corrections, and approval of the previous meeting's minutes,
3. Announcements and correspondence to be dealt with,
4. Treasurer's report,
5. Committee reports,
6. Unfinished business (issues left over from previous meetings),
7. New business.

If there is any disagreement over the order of the agenda then this should be quickly discussed and voted on at the start of the meeting. If the chair thinks there is a lot to get through it may make sense to set a maximum amount of time that can be spent discussing particular topics right at the start of the meeting.

### **Make sure the room is open and set up properly**

Have you ever arrived at a meeting only to find the door locked, and everyone had to stand around waiting while the facilitator scrambled to find the key? Or have you ever been in a meeting where there weren't enough chairs, and each time a latecomer arrived, they had to interrupt and search for one and move it in? Not especially effective ways of inspiring confidence and credibility or getting things done efficiently, are they? Try and arrange the room so that everyone sits in a circle and make sure you are seated where you can see everyone.

### **During the meeting**

#### **Start as you mean to continue**

Make sure you start on time. This is especially important for newcomers, who can get a bit put-off by the meeting start time being increasingly pushed back while people chat or wander around. First thing to do is make sure everyone knows who everyone else is.

As clichéd as it may be - have a 'go-round' and get people to say their names and maybe a bit of other info about themselves. Next up make sure someone has volunteered to facilitate the meeting (who will have the agenda, and make sure the meeting flows smoothly) and someone else is taking decent notes of the meeting.

It's important that the same people don't end up doing these tasks every meeting, perhaps the best way to tackle this is to have a list of everyone willing to chair and each week take the next person on the list.

### **Minute taking**

Someone should be responsible every week for keeping minutes of the meeting and preparing these to be read at or distributed before the next meeting. Minutes need not be very detailed (you don't need to write down what everyone says). They should aim to include:

1. Who attended the meeting,
2. Topics discussed,
3. Decisions reached for each topic,
4. Who has volunteered to do what,
5. Items to be discussed at next meeting (and when that will be).

### **AC 4**

**T**he chair provides for active participation by all members to avoid/ minimize conflict.

#### **Encourage group discussion to get all points of view**

Turn questions back to the group for their input. Ask people to comment on something just said.

Compliment people on their ideas and thank them for their input.



Ask open-ended questions. You may need to ask the more quiet people for their thoughts, and tactfully interrupt the longwinded ones to move the discussion along. Encourage people who just want to agree with a previous speaker to say "ditto" rather than taking the time to repeat her/his point.

#### **Stay on top of things**

It's part of your job as facilitator to manage the traffic and help the discussion move along. If several people are trying to talk at once, ask them to take turns. It helps to have a pen and paper to hand for when things get busy- jot down people's names in the order they raised their hands.

It can be a good idea to let people who have not spoken yet to skip the queue and put them at the top of your list. Make sure everyone gets their turn and things keep moving - you might have to start asking some people to keep it short! Often a discussion can become dominated by a couple of speakers, try and avoid this situation by inviting the rest of the people to contribute (going round in a circle and asking for people's views can help).

If the discussion is getting off-topic (i.e. it strays from the agenda), point this out and redirect it back on course. If someone is getting hostile, argumentative, or needlessly negative, tactfully intervene and try to turn the discussion in a more constructive direction. If necessary, ask the group to agree to a time limit on a discussion that might take too long. You might want to agree to limit each speaker's time, or say that no one can speak a second time until everyone has spoken once.

If the group is spinning its wheels and people are only repeating themselves, restate and summarise the issues and ask if people are near ready to make a decision on the subject. If it just doesn't seem that the group can make a good decision right now, suggest tabling the matter until another time. You may want to ask someone to bring back more information, or form a committee to work on the issue.

**Don't use your position as  
facilitator to impose your  
personal ideas and opinions  
on the group**

If you have strong feelings on a particular issue, you may want to step aside and let someone else facilitate that discussion. At the very least, keep your own comments to a minimum, try to let others speak first, and identify them as your personal beliefs, outside of your role as facilitator. Avoid criticising the ideas of others - your position gives your comments undue extra weight.



### **Non-verbal's are important, too**

Be attentive to people who are speaking - look at them, lean forward, smile, nod. Make eye contact with people who may need encouragement to speak. Pay attention - people who are less confident about speaking will often indicate that they want to speak in minor way (e.g. briefly half put up their hand). A good chair will spot this and encourage them to speak

### **Don't be afraid of silence**

It's a very useful tool. It gives people a chance to consider and collect their thoughts. It may encourage someone to voice a comment they've been thinking about but hesitant to say.

### **Guide the discussion toward closure**

Restate people's comments to make sure everyone understands their point. Ask for clarification. Summarise what has been accomplished or agreed and what is left to resolve. Suggest when it's time to wrap up and make decisions or take action.

### **Decision making**

Arguments about how best to reach decisions are fundamental to anarchism. You may wish to leave time for discussion in the hope of being able to reach consensus, only then moving to a vote, or you may wish to go straight to the vote. If time permits it may make sense to postpone making a contentious decision to the next meeting to give people a chance to think things over (and calm down!).

### **Take time at the end of the meeting to process**

Reflect on what went well and what people appreciate about others' input and actions. Check out assumptions. Encourage people to share any lingering concerns or things that just don't sit right.

### **End on time**

Nothing makes people dread and avoid meetings more than knowing they're likely to go on and on and consume far more of their time than they want to give. Set a time to end the meeting at the very beginning and stick to it!

### **After the meeting**

#### **Minutes**

Make sure the minutes will be written up, organised and then distributed among those who attended within a reasonable time scale.

### **Follow up with people.**

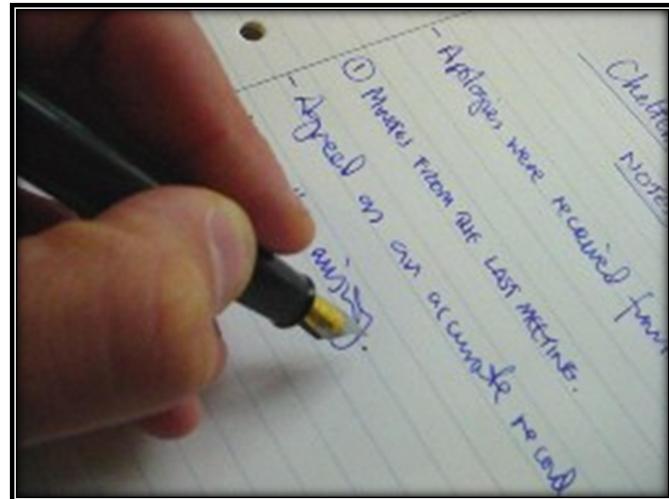
Thank them for their input. Make sure they understand assignments and have what they need to do them.

Now you're done you can start getting ready for the next meeting!

The chair ensures that agreed decisions are clear, accurate, includes a time frame for action and are within the mandate of the type of meeting conducted

A guide to taking minutes of meetings effectively, to record and monitor your decisions and activities and keep people informed. Minutes of meetings form a historical record of a group's work.

They serve as a record of decisions and details when people's memories fail or when they disagree. They remind people of assignments they've taken on and deadlines they need to meet. They inform those not present of what happened at the meeting. They give future members of the organisation a way to build on past successes and avoid reinventing the wheel.



Some groups designate one person to take the minutes at every meeting; others rotate the job. Do what works best for your group, as long as the information gets recorded and preserved somewhere.

The minutes of a meeting should include the following (if they apply to your particular group and your meetings):

- ▶ Date, time and place of meeting.
- ▶ List of people attending, and any members who were absent.
- ▶ Time the meeting was called to order.
- ▶ Approval of the previous meeting's minutes, and any amendments.
- ▶ Summary of reports, announcements, and other information shared.
- ▶ Proposals, resolutions, motions, amendments, a summary of the discussion, and final disposition (if you are using formal parliamentary procedure, record who made the motion and who seconded it).

- ➡ Time of adjournment.
- ➡ Next meeting date, time and location.
- ➡ Name of person taking the minutes.
- ➡ Motions and resolutions should be recorded verbatim and should be read back during the meeting to make sure they have been accurately transcribed.
- ➡ Summarise the discussion, capturing key points and decisions reached. When someone takes on an assignment, a deadline is set, or other important agreements are reached, make sure to record them. This will serve as a reminder when the minutes are read later on.
- ➡ Separate fact from opinion. Facts are objective and indisputable; opinions are personal views. Take this sentence: "The low turnout for the event could be due to poor advertising." Whose idea is this? Attribute opinions to their source (e.g. "Jane suggested that..." or "The group concluded that...")

Sometimes, it can be helpful to distribute the minutes before the next meeting. This gives people a reminder of assignments and deadlines, as well as when and where the next meeting is. Distribute copies and read the minutes near the beginning of the next meeting. Any corrections or additions should be recorded in the minutes of that meeting. The group should then approve the minutes, meaning that they agree that they are accurate and complete, either as read or as amended

# Conduct post meeting follow up for a technical meeting

Time: 120 minutes

Activity: Self and Group

**AC 1**

**T**he follow up ensures minutes of the meeting is produced accurately and in line with the policy of the organisation

## 1. Introduction

There has been much emphasis on group decision support systems but little attention has been paid to the implementation stage that follows a decision meeting. The gap between the end of a meeting and its post-meeting activities may, in fact, turn the decision inconsequential, due to the inappropriate support to the implementation stage. Often, decisions that are implemented without the necessary follow-up may generate outcomes, different from those planned at the time of the decision. Cultural barriers and lack of appropriate tools induce just informal links. As a result, important decisions are not properly or timely implemented.



This section addresses the issue of post-meeting support. It discusses why supporting post decision activities and linking them to the corresponding decision meeting are essential to make the meeting cycle fully successful. We claim that supporting such link with a computer system is more efficient and effective.

We identify four aspects of post-meeting support: the decision implementation plan; the follow-up of implementation activities; the support for interaction between decision makers and implementers; and the awareness support to external members. Each of these five aspects is supported by the system we propose.

The approach we chose for the proposed solution is the use of a library of process patterns common to several decision implementations. The process patterns are adapted to the specifics of each decision and converted into an implementation plan. The plan is then the input to the workflow engine and the process instance is enacted. Monitoring and interaction tools are also part of the environment.

The paper is divided into 5 sections. Section 2 discusses the decision meeting life cycle and the motivation for the proposed solution. Section 3 describes the requirements for the link between the decision meeting and its corresponding implementation. Next we present the architecture and functionality of the proposed solution. In Section 5 we discuss how the solution can be implemented and assessed.

## 2. Decision Meetings Life Cycle

Decision meetings are not isolated events. They are part of a continuous cycle of pre-meeting, meeting and post-meeting activities. Of course, the meeting itself is the most visible part of this cycle, but the other components are always present. Making pre-meeting and post-meeting activities explicit may be the first step

to enhance the whole cycle and thus, to obtain better decisions as a final result. As pointed by Russo (1989), it is not enough to simply make a decision and move on. We must periodically review our decisions; otherwise we are wasting good opportunities for improvement.

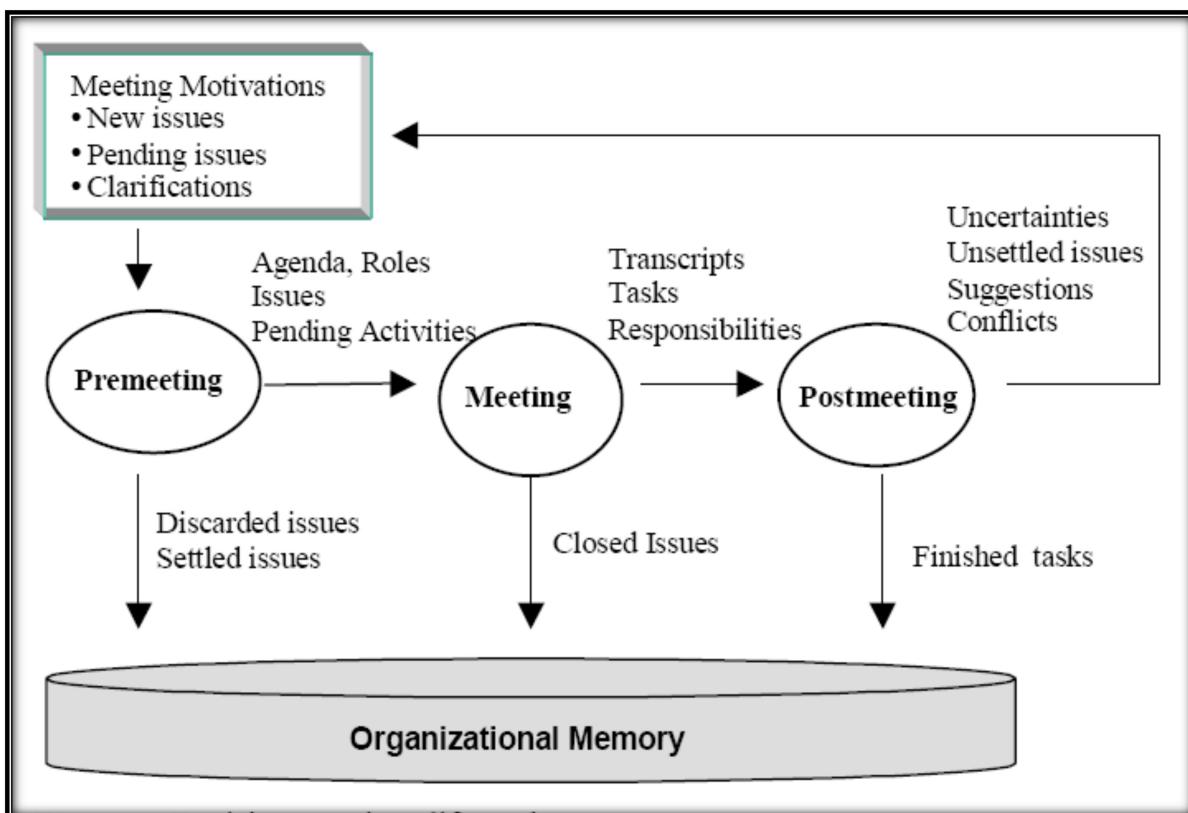


Figure 1 illustrates a simplified Decision Meeting Cycle with explicit components. The need for a meeting brings to life its preparation. Thus the pre-meeting can include activities such as the creation of an agenda, the identification of people to be invited and their roles, the preparation of each participant for the meeting, the inclusion of background information, etc (Borges et al., 1999).

Then, the meeting itself takes place. During this stage, interactions among participants may conclude with one or more decisions to be implemented afterwards. The post-meeting stage concerns activities to be carried out by people not necessarily present in the meeting. These post-meeting activities include dissemination, monitoring implementation of the decisions and clarification of ambiguous decision details.

Most of the support for the post-meeting is done with general tools, such as electronic mail. This may be satisfactory in simple situations, but in others there might be several activities requiring support.

Such activities include to-do lists - which also need to be monitored - details to be worked out, doubts from the persons who are responsible for the tasks to be answered, and conflicts to be solved. Our proposal is for developing a comprehensive system. Such system should give users a payoff justifying the burden they might have while interacting with it.

The three stages presented in Figure 1 can be carried on in any combination of space/time arrangements. Space options are face-to face (like in traditional meetings) or distributed (e.g., people in their offices using computers connected to a network). Time options are synchronous (all people present at the same time) or asynchronous (people participate whenever they have time for it).

Probably, most pre-meeting and post-meeting activities are distributed and asynchronous. People participating in the first two stages will probably be the same (except perhaps for a few advisors or observers who may participate just in one of the pre- meeting or meeting phases). On the other hand, people working in the post-meeting stage are implementers, most probably different from the decision makers participating in the pre-meeting and meeting stages.

Finally, during post-meeting, the facilitator role should guide and monitor the activities being carried out, forward doubts and queries to the people who can appropriately answer them, inform and remind persons about their promises and responsibilities, etc.

### 3. Post-meeting support requirements

If we assume the actual meeting is part of a cycle of activities aimed to discuss, decide, plan, execute and evaluate organizational policies and procedures, which are the requirements for the post-meeting stage of this cycle? The post-meeting stage and the transition between meeting and post-meeting are presented in this section. We describe four requirements we believe are the most relevant to support the post-meeting phase. For each requirement we discuss the problem motivating it, the proposed solution, the foreseen benefits and the required functionality.

#### **AC 3.1. Implementation Plan**



After a decision is reached, the implementation plan is usually left to the team in charge of implementing it. In spite of the details discussed during the decision process, it is uncommon that a specific implementation plan comes out from a decision meeting. Decision evaluation criteria are seldom generated either. As a result, relevant information is dealt outside the meeting and in most cases is not made available to meeting participants. The information exists but there is no mechanism to generate a connection between these two stages.

The implementation plan, the resource allocation and their corresponding enactment should all be considered as part of the decision process. The information generated as a result of a decision should not only be made available but also kept up-to-date in conformity with the actual execution plan. Besides, there should be a link with operations under execution and their corresponding evaluation criteria.

If the execution plan is formally required, potential problems can be promptly detected, increasing the efficiency of the process. The execution plan will permit the decision team to

closely follow the implementation operations, identifying and correcting any undesirable changes or shortcuts. Besides, if the evaluation is linked to the execution plan, it facilitates the future assessment.

Post-meeting support should provide means to rapidly draft an execution plan and publish it. In addition, it should allow changes to the plan even while it is being accomplished. The system should provide means to generate tasks to the implementation team, based on the proposed execution plan. Finally, the system should record the completed tasks and their reports.

### **AC 3.2. Follow-up activities**

In many situations a meeting results in decisions, which generate actions to be executed outside the context of the meeting. Sometimes, the main outcome is not a decision, but the resulting action. What occurs in many cases is the lack of continuity between the end of the meeting and the implementation stage. As a



result, many decisions get lost or forgotten in the way to the implementation procedure.

To solve this problem it is necessary to establish a formal link between each meeting outcome and the result of its implementation. Moreover, if the implementation procedure is detailed into working steps, it should be possible to control its execution and to correct eventual misunderstandings.

There are several benefits of this formal link between the meeting outcomes and their corresponding implementation procedures. First, it would allow a formal definition of responsibilities and expected results. Second, if an automated system were provided, it would allow a better control of the outcome implementation. Finally, it may make the meeting cycle more efficient by avoiding less time spent during the meetings for follow-up activities.

A system supporting the post-meeting should be prepared to receive the meeting outcomes in the form of well-defined processes where working steps, their corresponding flow, outcomes and responsibilities are initially determined. Then, it should be able to register or even better,

to control the execution of these steps, allowing people directly involved in the execution to track its progress. People with some interest in the process but not directly executing the steps could also have access to the tracking information.

### **AC 3.3. Means of Interaction**

When people make a decision, they often do it under some time pressure. In most cases there is no time to go into implementation details. It is left to the implementation group to solve eventual problems and ambiguities.

However, the chosen options might sometimes change the essence of the decision.



Thus, some interaction between decision-making and implementation groups is desired. If this possibility is not readily available, then either the implementation work is postponed until another meeting is scheduled, or the implementation group takes upon themselves the decision about the option to be followed.

Both situations described above should be avoided. Ideally, a direct communication channel between the involved parts should be formally created, encompassing each outcome implementation. This channel should work as an extension of the meeting that originated the decision, allowing the task to be adapted in conformity with the basics of the decision. Complex decisions benefit most from this approach.

One may argue that e-mail and/or telephone could solve this problem, but hierarchical barriers, informality and absence of context may impose restrictions to communication. The main requirement is to create a communication channel within the context of each outcome and involved people.

The interaction through this channel should be structured and persistent. The nature of this type of communication is typically asynchronous, but real time interaction should also be provided for rapid problem solving. Ideally these interactions should also be documented contributing to future recovery, if it is necessary.

## Awareness

A decision can affect many people besides those directly involved in its conception and implementation. It may be of peripheral interest, for example, to high-level management. On the contrary, a decision will be of direct interest to people affected by it. Most meetings do not provide appropriate information to outsiders. This is also true during the implementation period. The lack of awareness information generates informal demands, which are time consuming.

Additionally, these requests are not appropriately answered in many cases. Simply preventing people from accessing the information is not a solution: people will use their informal channels creating some extra burden to the decision-making or implementation group.

The straightforward solution to this problem is to provide some awareness information to outsiders. Considering that not all details are relevant and open to outsiders, an awareness mechanism should somehow filter the information. The organization can avoid misunderstandings and anxiety by organizing information dissemination about meeting decisions.

A system supporting the follow-up information should also take care of outsiders' requests. People should be able to track the execution steps as well as to have a view of the general plan. The system should also automatically inform interested persons about previously selected items of their interest.

## Designing post-meeting support

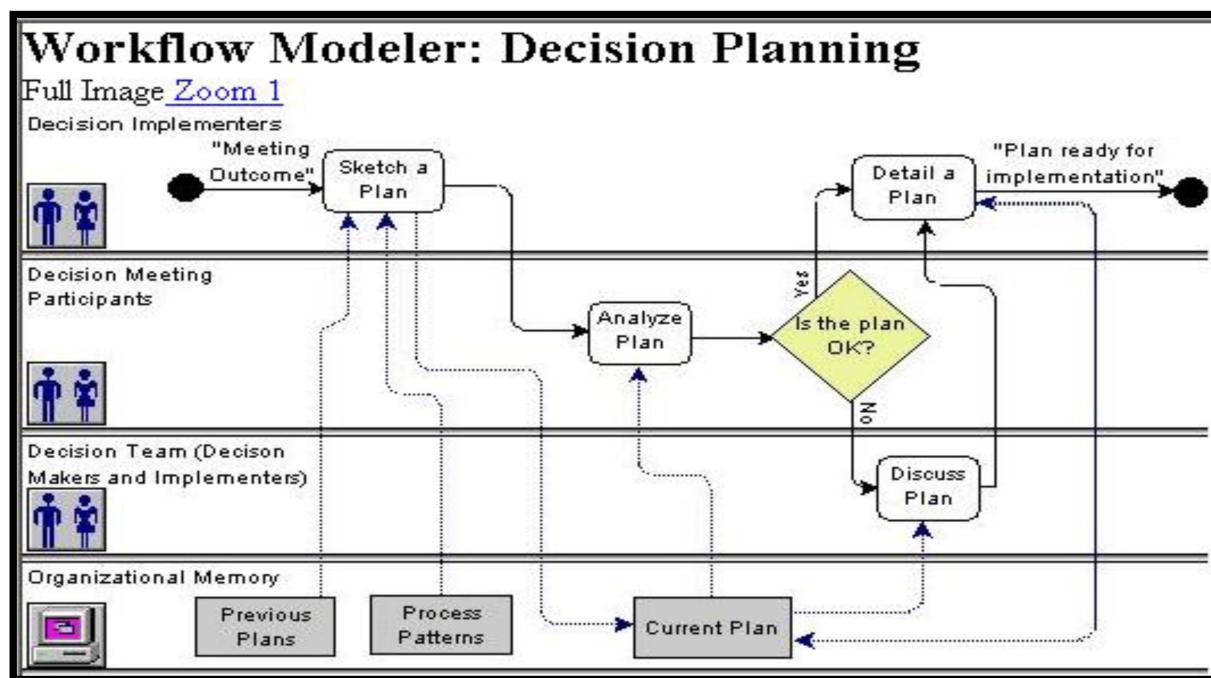
Our approach calls for structuring the activities to be performed in the Post-meeting phase. However, it should be noted that research has shown that plans, procedures and process models in office work play a weaker role in providing guidance for situated action than was assumed by the proponents of workflow automation. It also suggests that the procedural structure of such protocols can be thought of as the result of orderly work rather than its determinant. This could warn us about the difficulties to structure activities.

Nevertheless, in our case, the activities to be carried out in the Post-meeting phase have been already decided in the Meeting phase; that means, the decision makers envision what should be done after the meeting.

This does not imply the specification of the decisions and responsible persons to implement them is complete and unambiguous. On the contrary, implementers will probably have equivocality and uncertainty concerning the decisions made in the previous phase. From our viewpoint, post-meeting activities should be explicitly defined and assessed by decision meeting participants.

The requirements described in the previous section suggest a workflow-like solution where working plans can be described and enacted. The proposed solution is a system combining a process design tool with a workflow enactment tool.

However, given the ad-hoc nature of the processes, it will be difficult to use a commercial Workflow Management System (WfMS) alone. Even with the adoption of a WfMS for process enactment, additional monitoring tools will be necessary. In this section we describe how the solutions proposed in the previous section can be implemented.



**Figure 2** - Design process of post-meeting implementation plan.

To generate a decision implementation plan we need a process design tool. Most WfMS provide such tools, but their approach is directed towards production processes, when you plan once and enact many instances. Another typical WfMS limitation is that although one can use previous models to generate a new one, the WfMS provides little support for reuse.

The design process is usually time consuming and complex. To overcome these difficulties we suggest the adoption of a process pattern approach. In this approach, a number of process patterns are made available to the designer based on the characteristics of the domain, in our case, the post-meeting processes.

A pattern is defined as a generalized description of a set of recurring rules that can be associated with a workflow schema. Following this approach, designers can reuse previous experiences to improve the speed and the quality of the schema design process (Casati, 2000). The decision planning process of our solution is shown in Figure 2.

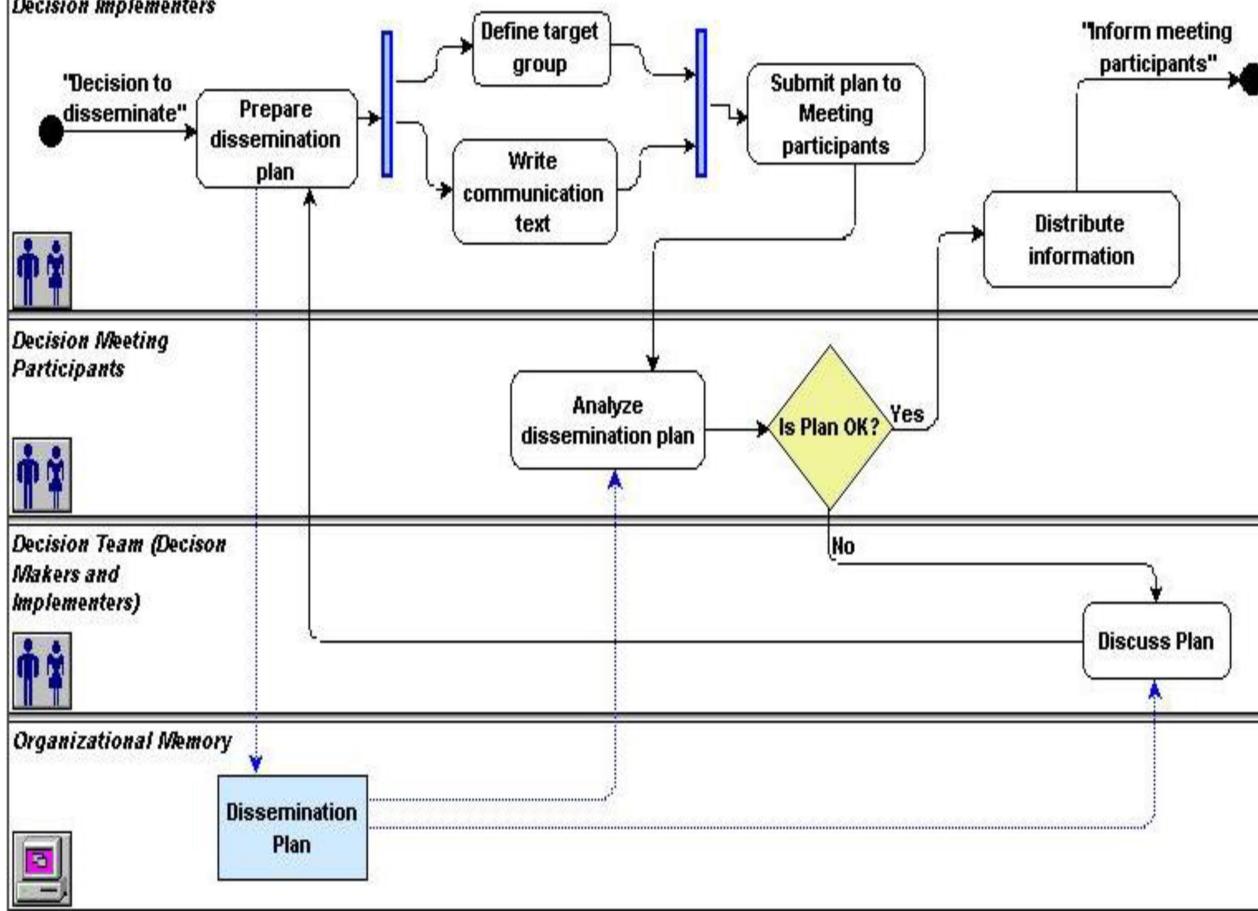
Very often, the implementers of a decision are not members of the group who made the decision. In our solution we propose explicit and formal links between the decision made during the meeting and its corresponding implementation plan. This is achieved by enforcing activities to promote awareness and interaction between these groups in the implementation plan. This occurs on two occasions in the implementation decision planning described in Figure 2: when analysing the plan and when a problem is detected while both groups are discussing.

A process plan associated with each decision is our preferred approach. Unlike traditional business processes, we assume that each plan will have only one instance. Therefore, we can make changes to the plan as needed during the process execution. We need to provide a different strategy to facilitate the design of process plans.

## Workflow Modeler: Disseminate information without feedback

[Full Image](#) [Zoom 1](#) [Zoom 2](#)

*Decision Implementers*



**Figure 3.** An example of a process pattern for decision implementation.

The use of process patterns on the decision implementation domain is the suggested approach. The process patterns would work as a guide to implementers when dealing with decision implementation plans. We start with a library of typical decision implementation plans that can be executed as it is or used to generate a new plan. Plans can also be transferred to the library after a successful adjustment during enactment. An example of a process pattern is shown in Figure 3.

The simple adoption of a decision plan and its corresponding workflow enactment does not guarantee that interaction will occur among decision makers and decision implementers. Nevertheless, it does not only provide the means for this interaction to happen but also brings transparency to the decision implementation. Without this explicit representation, informal interactions are the only way to promote formal awareness.

Management and other people affected by the decision can also benefit from this explicit awareness. Unfortunately, most WfMS do not provide access by people not directly involved in the process. Awareness can then be provided by a notification mechanism (such as an e-mail message sent when a process reaches a subscribed activity) or through an application allowing access to the workflow database. In Figure 3, for instance, a manager can subscribe to the “Discuss Plan” activity. He will then be notified if and when a process goes through this activity.

The full awareness of the process plan and its enactment provide means to correct the decision implementation or its adjustment. While the decision implementation plan provides a full view of the process activities, the process enactment through a workflow system provides the follow-up of its realization. If the workflow system interface were built for Web usage, it would also allow the decision implementation to be remotely monitored.

## **Discussion**

The first issue is the effectiveness of the proposed approach. Is it worth to make visible the activities concerned with the post-meeting? When comparing with traditional meetings we may notice there are several gains. First, there is a structured follow-up of the decisions made at the meeting.

Secondly, there is explicit awareness of task progress for all involved roles. Third, there is Organizational Memory capture of potentially valuable information. Finally, there is easier identification of several items after the meeting: issues for the next cycle, unclear details of the decisions just made, and unsettled issues after some tasks have been done.

The evaluation of these gains will have to be compared with the additional effort to deal with a computer system intended to support the post-meeting stage. The concept of post-meeting support can be carried on with traditional tools, such as Project Management Systems (PMS), electronic mail, telephone, to-do lists and others.

Nevertheless, these tools fall short of providing the complete support needed. For instance, a PMS provides timetables, alarms when time scheduled for a task is exceeded, Gantt charts, etc, but it deals with projects, not decisions. On the other hand, the feasibility of consulting at any time the information generated during a decision implementation can be useful from several points of view.

From the management perspective, this can help to avoid recurrent mistakes. From the social and organizational perspective, this technological approach can provide opportunities of collaboration and exchanges that traditional tools would be very limited to support, like asynchronous interaction, for example.

Concerning the system implementation, the main components of the proposed solution are: the process pattern library, created from the initial analysis of meeting decisions; the process model tool, which uses the process pattern library and the past process definitions; a data driven WfMS which allows applications to access the process data; and a subscription mechanism to allow organization members to be kept informed of the decision implementation.

The implementation of a workflow to support the post-meeting stage should be done in agreement with the operational environment of the users. This means the same operating system and network they are currently using.

Moreover, it is desirable the workflow be a part of or function tightly coupled with the software systems people are using. In particular, if people are using computer-based tools to support pre-meetings and/or meetings, it seems reasonable the post-meeting tool should have a direct relationship with them, easing its adoption and use.

You are now ready to go through a check list. Be honest with yourself

Tick the box with either a √ or an X to indicate your response

- I understand types of technical practitioners meetings
- I am able to prepare for a technical practitioners meeting.
- I am able to chair a technical practitioners meeting.
- I am able to conduct post meeting follow up for a technical meeting.



You must think about any point you could not tick. Write this down as a goal.  
Decide on a plan of action to achieve these goals. Regularly review these goals.

**My Goals and Planning:**

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