Occupational Certificate: Grain Depot Manager

Curriculum Code 132408-000-00--00

KNOWLEDGE MODULE 2:

Communication Studies

NQF 5, 8 Credits

agbiz GRAIN
agricultural business chamber
the way to prosperity

TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

Occupational Curriculum: Grain Depot Manager

The Grain Depot Manager achieves operational efficiencies by monitoring, controlling and responding to operational variables, the utilisation of resources and the mechanical integrity of a bulk grain handling and storage unit.

Occupational tasks:

- Conduct grain and oilseed sampling and grading processes (NQF 4)
- Manage and control the achievement of operational targets (NQF 5)
- Lead and manage staff to ensure smooth business operations (NQF 5)
- Manage and control the utilization of operational resources (NQF 5)
- Achieve grain handling and storage efficiency and quality standards by controlling unit operations (NQF 5)

PURPOSE OF THE QUALIFICATION

The core competencies of grain operations have been defined as the basic understanding and practical application of the management of grain quality and grain handling equipment as well as the management of operational technology, facility operations and human resources.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Grade 12

Methodology

Knowledge Modules facilitated in classroom with a knowledge assessment.

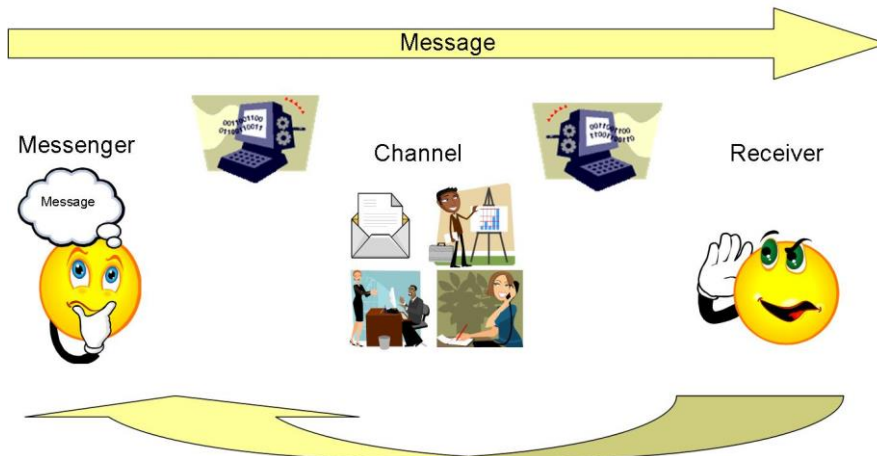Practical Activities in simulated environment with observation sheets

Prescribed workplace activities in a real work environment with logbook

Module 1: COMMUNICATION (KM02-KT01)

COMMUNICATION MODEL


Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of communication theory (including communication model, communication barriers, verbal and non-verbal communication, inter-cultural communication, reading, summarizing and note-taking, effective listening, confirming understanding)

- Demonstrate understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a supervisor in terms of workplace communication

- Demonstrate understanding of presentations (including target audience, principles of presentation)

- Demonstrate understanding of report writing (including writing styles and language use, production reporting formats, organizing and presenting information in production reports)

- Prepare a production report and develop a presentation using the standard format

- Demonstrate understanding of business correspondence (including written instructions, memoranda, electronic messages, completing of prescribed documents and records)

- Explain the importance of clarity in business correspondence

> **Communication is simply the act
> of transferring information from
> one place to another.**

Although this is a simple definition, when we think about how we may communicate the subject becomes a lot more complex. There are various categories of communication and more than one may occur at any time.

The different categories of communication are:

- Spoken or Verbal Communication: face-to-face, telephone, radio or television and other media.

- Non-Verbal Communication: body language, gestures, how we dress or act - even our scent.

- Written Communication: letters, e-mails, books, magazines, the Internet or via other media.

- Visualizations: graphs, charts, maps, logos and other visualizations can communicate messages.
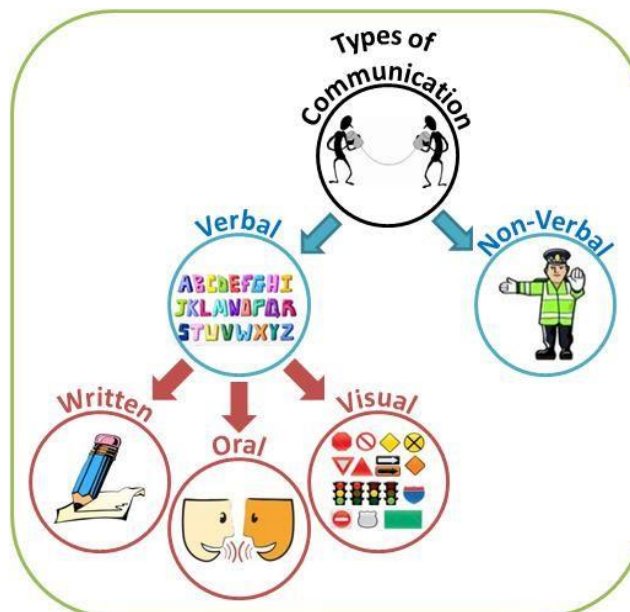
The desired outcome or goal of any communication process is understanding.

The Communication Process

A message or communication is sent by the sender through a communication channel to a receiver, or to multiple receivers. The sender must encode the message (the information being conveyed) into a form that is appropriate to the communication channel, and the receiver(s) then decodes the message to understand its meaning and significance. Misunderstanding can occur at any stage of the communication process.

Effective communication involves minimizing potential misunderstanding and overcoming any barriers to communication at each stage in the communication process.

An effective communicator understands their audience, chooses an appropriate communication channel, hones their message to this channel and encodes the message to reduce misunderstanding by the receiver(s). They will also seek out feedback from the receiver(s) as to how the message is understood and attempt to correct any misunderstanding or confusion as soon as possible.

Barriers to Effective Communication

There are many reasons why interpersonal communications may fail.   In many communications, the message (what is said) may not be received exactly the way the sender intended. It is, therefore, important that the communicator seeks feedback to check that their message is clearly understood.

There are many barriers to communication and these may occur at any stage in the communication process. Barriers may lead to your message becoming distorted and you therefore risk wasting both time and/or money by causing confusion and misunderstanding. Effective communication involves overcoming these barriers and conveying a clear and concise message.

Language Barriers

Language and linguistic ability may act as a barrier to communication. However, even when communicating in the same language, the terminology used in a message may act as a barrier if it is not fully understood by the receiver(s). For example, a message that includes a lot of specialist jargon and abbreviations will not be understood by a receiver who is not familiar with the terminology used.

Psychological Barriers

The psychological state of the communicators will influence how the message is sent, received and perceived. For example, if someone is stressed they may be preoccupied by personal concerns and not as receptive to the message as if they were not stressed.

Anger is another example of a psychological barrier to communication, when we are angry it is easy to say things that we may later regret and also to misinterpret what others are saying. More generally people with low self-esteem may be less assertive and therefore may not feel comfortable communicating - they may feel shy about saying how they really feel or read negative sub-texts into messages they hear.

Physiological Barriers

Physiological barriers may result from the receiver's physical state. For example, a receiver with reduced hearing may not grasp to entirety of a spoken conversation especially if there is significant background noise.

Physical Barriers

An example of a physical barrier to communication is geographic distance between the sender and receiver(s). Communication is generally easier over shorter distances as more communication channels are available and less technology is required. Although modern technology often serves to reduce the impact of physical barriers, the advantages and disadvantages of each communication channel should be understood so that an appropriate channel can be used to overcome the physical barriers.

Systematic Barriers

Systematic barriers to communication may exist in structures and organizations where there are inefficient or inappropriate information systems and communication channels, or where there is a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities for communication. In such organizations, individuals may be unclear of their role in the communication process and therefore not know what is expected of them.

Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers are behaviours or perceptions that prevent people from communicating effectively. Attitudinal barriers to communication may result from personality conflicts, poor management, resistance to change or a lack of motivation. Effective receivers of messages should attempt to overcome their own attitudinal barriers to facilitate effective communication.

Active Listening

Active listening is a skill that can be acquired and developed with practice. However, active listening can be difficult to master and will, therefore, take time and patience to develop.

'Active listening' means, as its name suggests, actively listening. That is fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just passively 'hearing' the message of the speaker.

Active listening involves listening with all senses. As well as giving full attention to the speaker, it is important that the 'active listener' is also 'seen' to be listening - otherwise the speaker may conclude that what they are talking about is uninteresting to the listener.

Interest can be conveyed to the speaker by using both verbal and non-verbal messages such as maintaining eye contact, nodding your head and smiling, agreeing by saying 'Yes' or simply 'Mmm hmm' to encourage them to continue. By providing this 'feedback' the person speaking will usually feel more at ease and therefore communicate more easily, openly and honestly.

Listening is the most fundamental component of interpersonal communication skills. Listening is not something that just happens (that is hearing), listening is an active process in which a conscious decision is made to listen to and understand the messages of the speaker. Listeners should remain neutral and non-judgmental, this means trying not to take sides or form opinions, especially early in the conversation. Active listening is also about patience - pauses and short periods of silence should be accepted. Listeners should not be tempted to jump in with questions or comments every time there are a few seconds of silence.

Active listening involves giving the other person time to explore their thoughts and feelings, they should, therefore, be given adequate time for that.
Active listening not only means focusing fully on the speaker but also actively showing verbal and non-verbal signs of listening. Generally speakers want listeners to demonstrate 'active listening' by responding appropriately to what they are saying. Appropriate responses to listening can be both verbal and non-verbal:

- Small smiles can be used to show that the listener is paying attention to what is being said or as a way of agreeing or being happy about the messages being received. Combined with nods of the head, smiles can be powerful in affirming that messages are being listened to and understood.

- Eye Contact

It is normal and usually encouraging for the listener to look at the speaker. Eye contact can however be intimidating, especially for more shy speakers – gauge how much eye contact is appropriate for any given situation. Combine eye contact with smiles and other non-verbal messages to encourage the speaker.

- Posture

Posture can tell a lot about the sender and receiver in interpersonal interactions. The attentive listener tends to lean slightly forward or sideways whilst sitting. Other signs of active listening may include a slight slant of the head or resting the head on one hand.

- Mirroring

Automatic reflection/mirroring of any facial expressions used by the speaker can be a sign of attentive listening. These reflective expressions can help to show sympathy and empathy in more emotional situations. Attempting to consciously mimic facial expressions (i.e. not automatic reflection of expressions) can be a sign of inattention.

- Distraction

The active listener will not be distracted and therefore will refrain from fidgeting, looking at a clock or watch, doodling, playing with their hair or picking their fingernails.
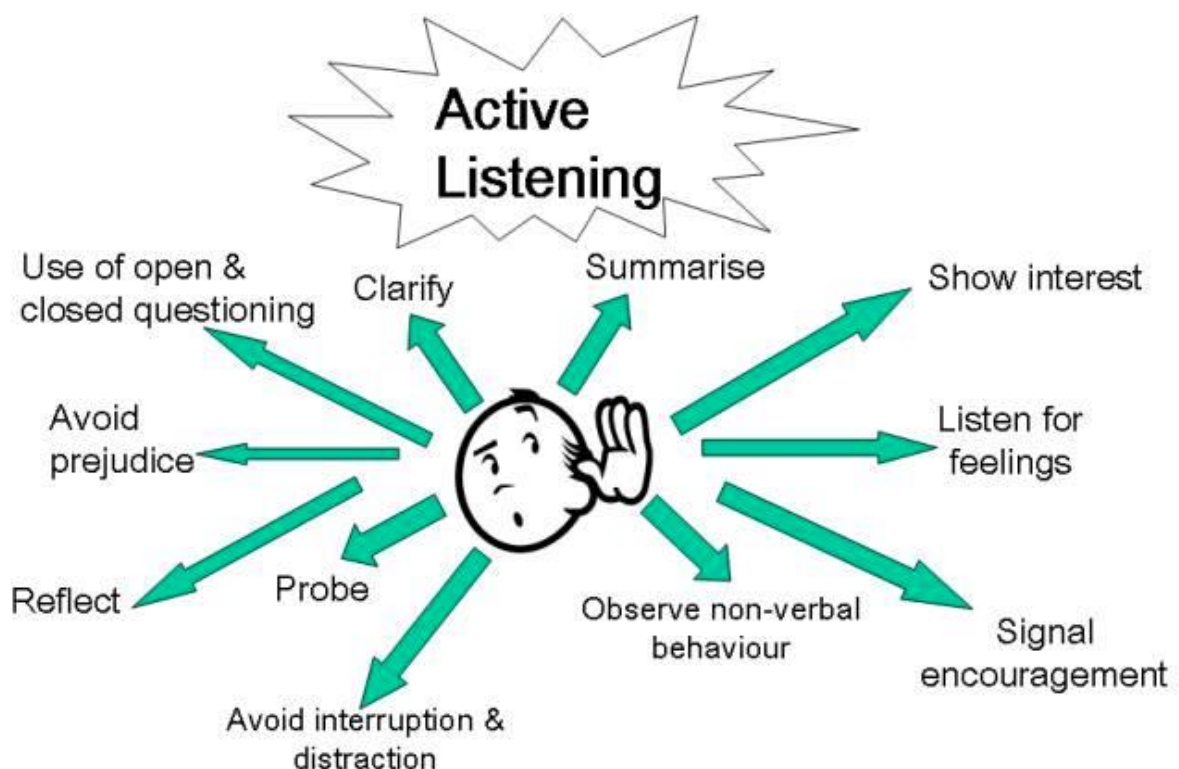
Questioning

The listener can demonstrate that they have been paying attention by asking relevant questions and/or making statements that build or help to clarify what the speaker has said. By asking relevant questions the listener also helps to reinforce that they have an interest in what the speaker has been saying.

Reflection

Reflecting is closely repeating or paraphrasing what the speaker has said in order to show comprehension. Reflection is a powerful skill that can reinforce the message of the speaker and demonstrate understanding.

Clarification

Clarifying involves asking questions of the speaker to ensure that the correct message has been received. Clarification usually involves the use of open questions which enables the speaker to expand on certain points as necessary.

- "I'm not quite sure I understand what you are saying."

- "I don't feel clear about the main issue here."

- "When you said .... what did you mean?"

- "Could you repeat ...?"

Summarization

Repeating a summary of what has been said back to the speaker is a technique used by the listener to repeat what has been said in their own words. Summarizing involves taking the main points of the received message and reiterating them in a logical and clear way, giving the speaker chance to correct if necessary.

Open Questions

If your role is to assist a speaker to talk about an issue, often the most effective questioning starts with 'when', 'where', 'how' or 'why'. These questions encourage speakers to be open and expand on their thoughts. For example:

- "When did you first start feeling like this?"

- "Why do you feel this way?"

Closed Questions

Closed questions usually elicit a 'yes' or 'no' response and do not encourage speakers to be open and expand on their thoughts. Such questions often begin with 'did you?' or 'were you?' For example:

- "Did you always feel like this?"

- "Were you aware of feeling this way?"

Presentations

When structuring the content of your presentation, there are three things that you need to remember:

- First, tell them what you are going to tell them. This sets up the presentation and manages the audience's expectations.
- Tell them. Present the ideas that you have just outlined.
- Finish by telling them what you have told them. Review and summarize the central message that you have put across.

Working with this formula will ensure that your presentation has a logical beginning, middle and end.

The five steps to good writing

Step 1: The big idea

Do not be intimidated by the blank sheet of paper, or screen, in front of you! Start with the "big idea". Sometimes it is given to you as the subject of a speech; on other occasions, you will be expected to come up with it yourself.

Step 2: Three main points

This is one of the oldest of all the presentation techniques – known about since the time of Aristotle. People tend to remember lists of three things. Structure your presentation around threes and it will become more memorable.

Step 3: Brainstorming the main points

Now that you have decided on the important areas you want to cover, you need to be thinking of sub-points that you wish to make about each.

Three   Key   Points

Step 4: Developing the headings

Using the brainstormed ideas that you have generated in Step 3; think about what you will say on each sub-point. It doesn't matter too much if there are some bullet points that are more substantial than others, the weaker ones will be dropped in the editing stage.

The stories you develop around each point might be from your own experience. It could be knowledge that you uncovered through research, or you may have heard a story, or related evidence that will help you bring the point to live.

Once you have "bulked" out each point, you should have the majority of the speech written. The next part of the process involves weaving these things together, so they make sense.

Step 5: What is the story?

In a presentation we are taking the members of the audience on a journey. At the end, they will have traveled a distance with us, but how will we have changed them? What will the narrative be?

If you are dealing with content that is fairly matter of fact, it is hard to weave into the story, but in some ways that is all the more vital, if you are to bring it to life. This is important in keeping the audience's attention, but it is also a great way of helping you learn your speech. If there is some logical flow, if one element naturally follows another in the tale, you are much more likely to be able to commit to memory.

Delivering the presentation

While we all want to believe that it's enough to be natural in front of a room, it isn't really natural to stand up alone in front of a group of people. It's an odd and unusual thing that creates stress, tension, and stomach troubles. Being natural won't cut it. We need to be bigger, more expressive, and more powerful. It takes extra effort and energy. It also takes skill and practice. With so much depending on communication and communication depending on body language, it's worth getting it right. Work on your body language-gesture, stance, and facial expression-to make the most of every speaking opportunity.
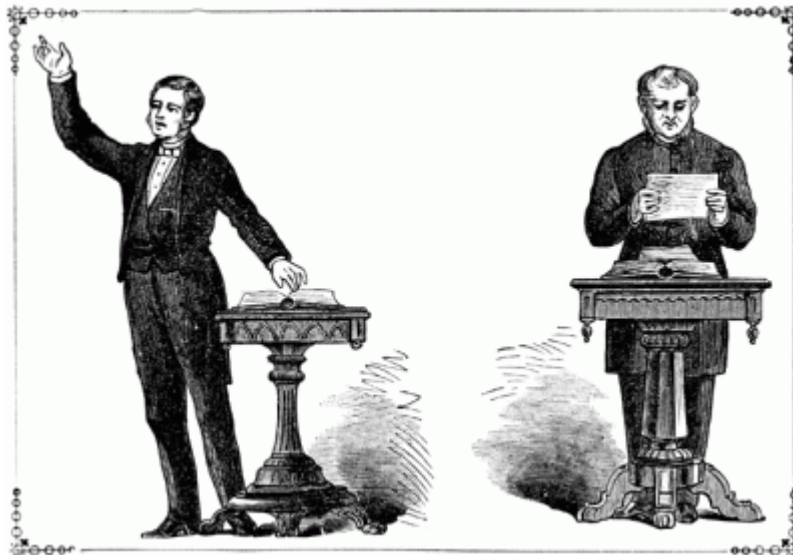
Tip

DO:

- Arms Open. This is good indicator of someone who is relaxed and not tense. Even if you are anxious, practice speaking with arms at your sides to convey a calm attitude.
  Hands. Have your hands wide open and apart. This show sincerity and honesty.
- Head and Eyes. Keep your head up and look at your audience.
  Left and Right. Look to the left and right and down the center of the room. This will tell the whole audience that they are all included in the speech.
- Lectern. If you must use a lectern don't "hug" or "cling" to it. Lecterns are great for presenting formality and authority. Put your notes on it, (if you have any,) not your elbows.

- Movement. Use the three-step rule. If you move towards one side of the room, take three steps then stop. It is distracting if you constantly move one step one way, one step the other.
- Getting off the Stage. Sometimes speakers like to get off the stage and go right into the crowd. This is a great way to get connected with the audience. It also sends the message that I really know what I am talking about because I don't need any notes or visuals.

Don't:

- Arms. Don't cross your arms.
- Hands. Don't put your hands in your pockets. Also avoid pointing, clenched fists and hands on your hips.
- Movement. When presenting you may have lots of energy to release. Avoid the urge to move around too much. This can become distracting. Arm and leg movements should be kept to a minimum.
- Gestures. Don't make gestures too quickly. The larger the crowd, the larger and slower the gestures.
- Getting off the Stage. This is great but remember, (especially in large rooms,) that when you get off the stage there may be many people who cannot see you. It is fine if your image is being projected on a large screen. Just inform the audio/ visual team beforehand. Or else they'll be scrambling to find you when you jump off stage.

Business Writing Skills

There are many reasons we communicate. We also have many different ways of communicating to choose from. In today's modern world e-mail is a very convenient form of communication, but it also is very impersonal. It boils down to thinking about your objective with your communication and how best you can achieve your objective.

Memos

A memo is the shortened name for a memorandum. It is an accurate, brief, official written message that is sent within an organization.
People use memos to:
- Remind or inform people inside your organization about something
- Ask people inside your organization to do something
- Ask for information

- Encourage, motivate or persuade

You can send a memo to one person, a department or all staff.

Tips on writing effective memos:
- A memo should include, in this order:
    - Who the sender is, including a department if appropriate
    - Who the receiver is, including a department if appropriate
    - The date
    - A clear, short heading that captures exactly what the memo is about
    - The message – very clearly and concisely
    - The signature of the person writing the memo
- A memo is an internal document and therefore it is not necessary to include the organization's address and contact details.
- A memo should never be longer than a page
- Never write a memo when you are angry with the people in your organization. Make sure that the language, style and tone will not offend.
- These days a conversational style is the modern style for communicating through memos, letters and reports
- Try not to use CAPITAL LETTERS, **bold** lettering or *italics* for the main part of your memo.

Example:

Community Resource Centre
Memorandum
To: Al staff From: Elizabeth Jacobs, Director Date: 2 December 2002   Staff Christmas Party   Please note that this year's Christmas party will be on 18 December, from 11h00 to 15h00. We will be having a picnic at the park across the road. Your children and partners are welcome.   Please let Elizabeth know by 9 December how many people from your family are coming. This will help with the catering.   *ER Jacobs*

Letters, faxes and e-mails

Tips on writing effective letters

An effective letter works if it:

- Gets straight to the point, after an appropriate greeting. You can do this through a heading and putting your main point in the first paragraph.
- Has sub-headings, if necessary.
- Is short and precise.
- Has short sentences – one point, one sentence
- Does not repeat information.
- Uses everyday language rather than formal language.
- Gives the right amount of information.
- Has a professional style and tone.
- Has no spelling or language mistakes.

Structuring a letter

Once you are clear about the content of the letter you want to write, make sure you structure the letter correctly:

- Include your name and your organization's name, address and other contact details.
- Start your letter with the full and correct name/s, title/s and address and other contact details of the reader/s.
- Use an appropriate greeting.
- Have a main heading.
- Make your point in the first paragraph.
- Have the following paragraphs support your main point.
- Use sub-headings, if they will help.
- End off by saying how you hope the reader will respond to your letter. Follow this up with a suggestion of what can be done if he or she does respond. For example: "We hope you will be able to give a talk at our conference. Please let us know by 15 February 2003 if you can."
- Include your final greeting and sign off with your name printed alongside your organizational title.

Writing e-mails

An e-mail message is almost the same as a short letter. Most of the principles for letter writing apply to writing e-mails. With e-mail however, you do not have to worry about writing addresses out, nor the date. It is helpful to your e-mail message receiver if you program your e-mail program to automatically insert your contact details, like your telephone and fax numbers at the end of every e-mail that you send. This is called your signature.

Things to watch out for:

- Because e-mail is such an almost immediate and sometimes quite rushed way of corresponding it is easy to make mistakes, like spelling.
- Always carefully read over your message before you hit the send button. Once sent, you cannot get them back to make an amendment. This checking will help maintain a professional correspondence.
- Check that you have entered the correct receiver.
- E-mail can make it easy to drop formality, like greetings. It can be easy to correspond in a familiar tone with a person you may not have established a relationship with. Try to pace this in an appropriate way – stick with a language, style and tone that will maintain the level of professionalism required of you.

Minutes

Minutes are the official record of a meeting. It can impact very badly on your organization's smooth running if minutes are inaccurate, unclear or get lost.

Minutes are important because they:

- Are a record of your organization's work – for present and future reference.
- Reflects decisions made in a meeting.
- Are like action notes that members of your organization can refer to in carrying out day-to-day work.
- Help the next meeting to pick up on matters arising to monitor progress.
- Inform those who were absent from the meeting as to what decisions were taken.

What should minutes record?

Minutes are not meant to be a direct record of everything that was said at a meeting. It would be inhuman to expect someone to do this. Minutes should mainly record:

- The agenda of the meeting
- Who attended the meeting and who sent apologies
- When and where the meeting was held and at what time
- Whether previously decided actions were implemented, and if so, the outcomes and consequences – as matters arising
- What was discussed (in brief)
- Outcome of the discussion – decisions taken, points noted
- What action the meeting decided to take, by whom and by when
- Time of closure, time and venue for the next meeting

What makes minute taking difficult?

- You don't understand what is going on in the meeting
- There is no set structure to the meeting
- You are expected to record the meeting word by word.
- When the meeting does not stick to the agenda
- When the meeting does not have an agenda

Structure of minutes:

Model minutes:

- Include an agenda
- Include who was present and who sent apologies
- Have clear numbering of main issues and sub-numbering in line with them so that they are easy to refer to
- Record action decisions in a way that they stand out, for example by using *italics* or **bold**
- Action decisions should state *who is responsible* for doing something and *by when*
- Minutes should include a summary of action decisions and referrals.

Reports

Effective reports are critical organizational documents because they:

- Communicate information and ideas about your work and that of your organization.
- Reflect and explain progress with work – and lack of progress
- Promote accountability
- Promote discussion and informed decision-making
- Emphasis problems and make recommendations
- Share information, learnings and experiences

Who you write reports for varies from organization to organization. Depending on the purpose of your report, your audience could include:

- Staff
- Members
- Executive committee
- Board
- Funders
- Other organizations
- Member of public

Many reports are not read for a variety of reasons. Some of these are:

- Reports are too long – if your report is one page long it is likely to be read from beginning to end. The longer your report gets, the smaller the percentage of it is likely to be read.
- Reports are boring
- Reports look to dense.
- They do not make their point straight away.
- The reports have language that is heavy, difficult and full of jargon.

What goes into a report?

Many people hate writing reports. Report writing can end up feeling like a huge burden. Here are some suggestions that will help you work out what to include in your report:

- Start off by making your report your friend
- Use a mind map to get you started on the first draft of your report.
- Analyze the audience you are writing for and fine-tune exactly what you think your readers needs to read in your report.
- Keep it short, simple and straightforward

Your report should include:

- A meaningful title
- The date of the report
- The author of the report
- The contents list, if it is a fairly long report
- A summary of the main points of the report, especially if it is a long report. Your report's objective must be clearly stated.
- A logical flow of items, with meaningful sub-headings for each. The main point of the paragraph should be at the top of it.
- A conclusion, which could be your recommendation section. Don't use your conclusion to restate everything that was already stated.

Module 2: Group Interaction (KM02-KT02)

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of workplace meeting procedures and administration (including meeting procedures and protocols, Meeting administration, Recording decisions taken during a meeting for own use)

- Draw up a meeting agenda with given information

- Demonstrate an understanding of how to record decisions taken during a meeting for own use

Conduct workplace meetings

Meetings are very important for the work of any organization. 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 organization.

If meetings are used in the correct way, they can help an organization to be efficient. However, like all organizing 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 organization 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.

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 organization might call a special or extraordinary meeting.

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 organization. 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 organizations it is a useful practice to always have their meetings on the same day at the same time in the same place.

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 familiarize 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 familiarize 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.

Friday, 20 November, 2015

MEETING AGENDA

Meeting Title: _____ Meeting Time: _____

Meeting Called By :- _____

Purpose of Meeting :- _____

Attendees :- _____

Please Bring :- _____

Please Read :- _____

AGENDA ITEMS

Activity	Presenter	Allotted Time

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 organization 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 organizations 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 organization.

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.

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 summarize 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 apologize 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 summarize 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.

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 organization 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.

	Please complete Practical Activity: Tasks 17 - 20
	Please complete Workplace Activity: None