

THAKUR COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & COMMERCE

Autonomous

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

MEETINGS & COMMITTEES

Introduction:

A major objective of communication is to help decision-making by collecting, processing and transmitting information. A decision-making process must involve discussion, consultation and consensus. For example, the members of the examination committee meet before conducting an examination to decide on the dates, schedules, time required for evaluation, and declaration of results. Any decision, taken individually on behalf of an organisation without consultation with others, is considered arbitrary and autocratic.

Advantages of group communication: A group is a reserve of collective intellect, diverse opinions, different perspectives aimed at creating a pool of ideas to obtain the best possible results of any endeavour. Apart from helping the common cause, it enriches individuals in the group by exposing them to plurality of ideas. It also engenders a sense of involvement in an organization, and strengthens relationships between the management and employees. A collective decision-making process encourages latent talents. Members learn to value compromise and still contribute to the cause. Delphi techniques, meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops, brain-storming sessions are the various ways of group decision making in the organization.

Disadvantages of group communication: Working in a group on an idea is a time-consuming affair, particularly when a consensus is required. Levels of background research, knowledge, sense of responsibility and intelligence vary, bringing about unintelligible differences and lack of participation. Often, the actual purpose of a meeting is lost in endless circumlocution. A better idea or opinion can get sacrificed in the collective bargain, rendering the process a waste of time and resources.

Consensus: A decision supported by majority members of a group is known as decision by consensus. This common agreement is arrived at by analysing different views. While arriving at a decision, an individual may have to set aside his opinion and accept that of the majority. Consensus teaches suppressing one 's ego in the larger interest.

MEETINGS:

A Meeting: A Meeting is a collective decision-making process. Organizations generally have appointed groups to supervise specific areas, commonly known as committees. Louis Allen defines it as —A body of persons appointed or elected to meet on an organized basis for the consideration of matters before it. A committee is also seen as —a group appointed by the parent organization which meets to investigate a problem and, later, to formulate its report and recommendations.

A committee meets: to get a clear perspective on a given proposition, to arrive at a decision, based on facts and figures, to find out views, attitudes and emotions of the participants while tackling a problem or facing a challenging situation, to explore the most appropriate solution to a problem, to collect data

Types of Committees: Executive & Advisory.

An Executive Committee is a formal body with elected/appointed/nominated members. It has a formal structure and constitution, and members meet only when a formal notification is issued. It looks into administrative issues of the organization.

An Advisory Committee is a reservoir of knowledge and experience, comprising nominated members, entrusted to provide guidance whenever required and has no role in the daily administration of an organization.

The working of a committee meeting: A meeting is convened by circulating a notice amongst its members. The chairperson, in consultation with the secretary, decides the agenda of a meeting. A notice informs the members about the day, date, time and venue of the meeting, apart from briefly describing the agenda. An agenda is a list of items that are to be discussed at the meeting.

The notice and the agenda help members to complete their background research and prepare for the meeting. The meeting begins when there is a quorum — one-third of the total number of members constituting that particular body.

The chairman initiates discussion according to the agenda. Each item is discussed in detail allowing members to voice their opinions. This is known as the discussion phase of the meeting. After the discussion that examines the pros and cons of a given matter, a decision is arrived at and the modalities of the implementation are discussed. This is the implementation phase of the meeting. A decision could be arrived at by consensus or by putting the proposition to vote. Decisions are recorded by the secretary of the committee. When they are recorded during the meeting, they are called resolutions. Resolutions, when recorded in the minute book, are called minutes.

The Role of the Leader/ Chairperson in a committee meeting: The role of the leader / chairperson / head of the group, is crucial for the success of a meeting. He/she must be a person with clear vision, drive and good communication skills to be able to provide direction to the group. The group must work towards achieving its goal within the allotted time.

- A chairperson must set the objective of the meeting, which can range from discussing strategies to increase sales to reducing the quantum of leave taken by employees. A meeting can have one or two such major items on the agenda. The chairperson must know what he wants out of such a meeting.
- The chairperson must know the members of the group and their profiles. What are their biases? Are they going to conform or are they going to resist the decision?
- After checking the quorum, the chairperson begins the meeting by welcoming all members.
- He /she must spell out the agenda and invite participation from members.
- He / she should take up items of the agenda one by one.
- He / she must allocate sufficient time for discussion of the item and then take a decision on it.

- He /she should ensure that the members get time to voice their opinions but at the same time do not overshoot the time that has been allocated for each item.
- In case of conflict within the group, he / she must intervene swiftly to ensure that the process of decision-making is not hampered and that the atmosphere is not vitiated.
- He / She must try for decision by consensus but, if unable to do so, he /she should ensure that the group's unity remains intact despite voting on a given point.
- He /She has to instruct the secretary to keep the record of the deliberations and the resolutions passed.
- Prior to the meeting he / she has to circulate notice of the meeting and set the agenda for the meeting.
- He / She has to make proper arrangements for seating where members can see each other and converse with each other.
- Besides writing pads and pens, any other gadgets or technological support required should be provided for.
- He / She must ensure that the new members are introduced to the senior members. Chairing a meeting is an art. It is a leadership skill which can be learnt or improved with practice.

The Role of the Participants: A meeting is a democratic process of arriving at a decision that encompasses interests of all the people concerned. The role of participants representing all the people is important. They have to participate in a decisive way to bring the meeting to its logical conclusion.

1. The participants must study the agenda and prepare themselves mentally for the meeting.
2. They need to understand their importance in the group and must contribute to its success.
3. They should have a stand/perspective based on facts. They should not voice opinions without factual support.
4. They have to understand that meeting is a place wherein divergent views will be expressed.
- 5 They must voice their opinion in the time allotted to them in a clear and concise manner. They should not try to monopolise time by being circumlocutory and waste everybody's time.
6. Decision-making in a group is arrived at through consensus. Which means one must be prepared to compromise, to give up something in the larger interest
7. They should not argue for the sake of arguing or oppose the rival viewpoint. At no point should they make it a prestige issue

Drafting of Notices, Agenda, Resolutions

The first step in convening a meeting is to draft the notice which informs members about the location, time, date and purpose of the meeting. Unless a notice is sent, a meeting is not considered formal or legal.

Irrespective of whether it is a formal meeting or an informal one, intimation about the venue, time and purpose of meeting has to be sent out.

Any formal intimation of the meeting must bear the following items: The signature of authority. Normally, the secretary, in consultation with the chairperson, drafts the notice. A formal notice should therefore contain the signature of the secretary and the chairperson. It must be typed on

the company letterhead. It must mention the venue which should be convenient to all the members. It must state the day and time of the meeting. It must state the date on which the meeting will be held. The notice should be circulated minimum two weeks / 14 days in advance. [In the case of the AGM 21 days, Board of Directors Meeting, 7 days]. It must state the nature of the meeting (AGM, Statutory, Board of Directors Meeting, committee meeting etc) It must spell out the purpose of the meeting under the heading agenda.

Agenda: An Agenda is a list of items to be deliberated upon in a meeting. The reason behind circulating the agenda is to inform members about the purpose of the meeting, so that they can come prepared and participate in the meeting.

Example:

Infra Structure Finance Company Ltd.

123, Mehata Street, MIDC, Andheri[E]

Mumbai 400077. Tel: 022 23334445

Notice

30 June 2008

Notice is hereby given that the 31st Annual General Meeting of IFC Ltd will be held on Wednesday, July 16, 2008 at Burlap Ambusher Sahara', 19, Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, at 3.00 p.m., to transact the following business:

Agenda

Ordinary Business:

1. To read the Notice of the meeting
2. To confirm the minutes of the AGM held on July 16, 2007
3. To receive, consider, and adopt the audited profit and loss

account for the financial year ended on 31 March 2008

Resolution: Resolution is the decision taken at a meeting. The secretary is expected to maintain a record of the deliberations and decisions made at a meeting. While keeping such a record of the decisions taken, the decisions are recorded in the present tense. However, while making their entry in the minute book, they are recorded in reported speech.

A resolution may begin in the following ways:

—It is hereby resolved that

—Resolved that

Example:

1. —It is hereby resolved that Messrs. Panel Kerr Frostier be and are hereby reappointed as branch Auditors for the year 2008-09, on such terms and conditions and on such remuneration as may be fixed by the Board of Directors of the Corporation.

[Minute of the same would read as —It was then resolved to reappoint...]

2. —Resolved that the Corporation hereby declares a dividend of Rs2 per share to each shareholder whose name appears on the company's register up to 30 July 2008.

[The same item in minutes would read as —It was resolved that the Corporation declared a dividend.....whose names appeared.....]