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How to promptly distribute meeting minutes

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If you think back to the meetings you've attended in your career, you'll likely find that you've forgotten the details or the big picture of most of them. That's because once a meeting ends, it's back to managing the day to day tasks and projects that fall within your responsibilities.

Thankfully, meeting minutes allow you to have a record of what took place during the meeting so everyone involved is on the same page and can refer back to them. However, when you don't deliver them promptly, their effectiveness dwindles.

Distribute meeting minutes within 24 hours

The sooner you can provide meeting minutes to the attendees and relevant non-attendees, the better. A reasonable time frame is within 24 hours. Wait any longer, and memories will fade along with the group's enthusiasm to follow through with the points discussed during the meeting.

Meeting minutes not only provides a record of the discussion, but they also allow those in attendance to alert you of any corrections that need to be made instead of spreading incorrect that will potentially never get fixed.

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Start with simplifying your meeting minute process

Promptly distributing your meeting minutes starts with developing a simple system for writing them. Here is a 9 step process you can follow. We recommend developing a checklist with these steps so you can be sure to complete the full process for each meeting.

1. **Read the Agenda:** Review the meeting agenda and familiarize yourself with the topics at hand and any unfamiliar jargon.
2. **Review Minutes:** Read minutes from past meetings, making a note of the content and style used.
3. **Learn Participants:** Learn who will be participating in the meeting. If you can locate a visual of any unfamiliar participants, you can recognize them by sight. Also make yourself aware of how to spell their names and use their correct titles.
4. **Create an Outline:** Use the agenda to develop an outline for your meeting notes. You can create headings and subheadings while leaving space to record the information as it's discussed.
5. **Request Changes:** Request that the meeting leaders provide any changes to the agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting so you can make any necessary adjustments.
6. **Sign-in Sheet:** Use a sign-in sheet to keep an accurate attendance record. At some meetings, you may need to document if key attendees leave the room before the session ends.
7. **Identify Members:** Provide nameplates to member attendees or draw a seating chart so you can keep track of who's who. In the case of a large meeting, ask the leader to remind participants to identify themselves before they speak.
8. **Type Notes:** You want to type your notes immediately after the meeting, while your memory is fresh. This might require that you block out time after each session just for this stage of the process.
9. **Get Feedback:** Ask the meeting leader and other participants if required, to review the draft of your meeting minutes before you distribute the final version. They should review the document for any inaccuracies or missed information.

Additional meeting minute best practices

Along with following the steps listed above, you can implement a few additional strategies to make it easier to take your meeting minutes and distribute them within 24 hours.

1. **Do Develop a Note-Taking System**: You want to customize your note-taking system. Consider learning shorthand or developing a system of your own so you can take notes quickly and easily.
2. **Do Record the Session:** Recording the meeting session can serve as a backup in case something happens to your meeting notes, while also assisting with verbatim notions, such as the wording of resolutions. Be sure to obtain permission from all participants before you start recording the session.
3. **Do Focus on Key Points:** When taking notes during your meeting, you don't have to write down everything verbatim like a transcript. Instead, focus on the key points discussed, such as the status of a project, who is responsible, and deadlines. Otherwise, you'll get lost in the details and miss the critical points.
4. **Do Include the Basics:** You should incorporate foundational parts of your meeting into the meeting minutes, including the agenda topic, decisions on the subject, action required on the decision, who will complete what, relevant deadlines, and whether a motion was carried or not.
5. **Do Make a Note of Problematic Phrases:** Pay special attention to phrases that indicate a problem such as "inconvenience" or "potential problem." Document these in the minutes to ensure the chair is aware of feelings related to the matter at hand.
6. **Do Be Unbiased:** When taking meeting minutes, stay objective. You want to avoid including personal comments, judgments, adjectives, or adverbs that suggest good or bad qualities, speakers' experiences, old business, or withdrawn motions.

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Create and quickly distribute quality meeting notes

The role of a meeting minute note taker is crucial. Meeting notes are often the only official record of what was discussed. To make your meeting notes more impactful and valuable, you should develop a process to take accurate notes and distribute them to relevant attendees and non-attendees in a reasonable time.

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