

# ENHANCE MINUTES WITH ACTION AND DECISION LOGS

How many times have you arrived at a meeting to find that nobody else has read the minutes either? It's hard to find the time, we're all busy people. Make sure that important information doesn't get lost beneath a pile of 'he said, she said'. Enhancing minutes with an action log and a decision log can be a real boost to your productivity.

## 1 - CHANGE YOUR MIND-SET

Keeping an action log is easy. The hard part is changing your mind-set. It's become ingrained in 'business culture' that we have to minute meetings.

The first thing to accept is that pages of minutes are not only laborious to read through; they are also counterproductive. Information gets lost in what we think we're supposed to record. Embrace change.

## 2 - UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF A MEETING

A social event is where we get together and talk about 'how things are going.' An effective meeting is about bringing information to the table in order to make decisions.

We're usually really good at the first part but struggle to make clear decisions based on the information we have shared.

An action log takes the focus away from the information brought to the meeting and records what needs to be done once we leave.

If something is important enough to be minuted, it usually requires an action. Actions drive an organisation forward. They are what you monitor progress against.

## 3 - WHAT TO RECORD

Recording actions is easy. There are only three things you need to know:

**WHO:** has agreed to the action

**WHAT:** exactly have they agreed to do

**BY WHEN:** will they complete this

Be specific, keep it concise, and don't abbreviate instructions. People will forget what was meant.

This section is the most important point. Unless you set dates for the completion of tasks, you will not be able to monitor your progress.

#### **4 - ALWAYS CLARIFY ACTIONS**

In order for an action log to be successful, everybody needs to be clear about what they have agreed to do.

**END OF MEETINGS:** The Action Taker should read out each action recorded, allowing participants the chance to clarify or change what they have agreed to. An updated copy of the action log should then be e-mailed to each participant.

**BEGINNING OF MEETINGS:** At the beginning of every meeting, the action log should be reviewed. Any actions that have been completed successfully should be ticked as 'done'. Participants should be encouraged to help to find new solutions for anything that has not yet been completed, and a new completion date should be set.

Productivity should increase once people get into a routine of setting tasks and reporting back. Tasks that are not completed may help to highlight capacity building opportunities within your organisation.

#### **5 - RECORDING VOTES AND DECISIONS**

For official purposes, it's a good idea to keep a separate log of votes and decisions. If a vote or decision is taken during a meeting, make it an action to write the outcome in the Decision Log in case anyone wishes to dispute or review it in the future. It is important that absent trustees are noted, especially for when the board makes decisions that they weren't a party to. Your minutes guide the board and any external parties who may want to review your meeting, so it's essential to note these down accurately.

Decision logs are a similar template to the Action Log with slightly different headings, it gives a quick and easy way of looking back at decisions and discussions that the board has had. They can be as complex or simple as you need them to be. What you need to know:

**WHAT:** what decision was made and why – in factual points

**WHEN:** the date the decision was made, which may not be a meeting

**WHO:** those involved in making the decision