

Leading effective teams from home:

Notes in meetings for group memory

By the Catalyst Research Team* on June 3rd, 2020

Research shows that human memory erodes quickly. Within 48 hours, most of us will have lost at least half of what we have read or heard. A few days after a team meeting, individuals will have forgotten not only who said what but who was expected to do what and when – unless written records exist to stimulate recall.

In its simplest form, notes from meetings must capture:

- a. decisions made
- b. who will produce what for the team
- c. when the production will be shared with the team



If each decision and plan for subsequent action is captured and stored in an easily accessible place, the team has a group memory that can be relied on. The formal meeting minutes dictated by Robert's Rules of Order and their formal review as the first agenda item of the next meeting may be overkill.

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A more detailed compromise between the brief 3-point minutes described above and the detailed formal Rules of Order option consists of the following:

1. Decide who will take notes before the meeting starts. Rotate.
2. Capture the notes on a sharable site like Google Docs, so members can check accuracy.
3. Check for accuracy and clarity by asking questions, such as “Is that what you meant?”
4. Use a method like the RASCI form (covered in Factsheet #6) to establish accountability for follow-up actions.
5. Omit the trivia. Focus on the information important for moving the team and project forward.
6. Use simple wording where possible.
7. Urge members to view the notes before the next meeting and add updates.
8. Begin the next meeting with a review of who completed their tasks and who needs help.
9. Deliberately address what will happen between meetings. Link team meetings by mapping the linking events. Capture that fabric in the way notes are created, stored, and shared.
10. Record the time and the place or link for the next meeting.

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