

VOLUME THREE – BEING AN EFFECTIVE OFFICER IN A CLUB OR SOCIETY

SESSION 10 Correspondence and minute taking

Skills Covered

- Communication (written)

Aim of the Session

This session aims to equip clubs and societies secretaries with the essential skills of dealing with correspondence and preparing minutes and agendas for their year.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- list effective ways of dealing with correspondence
- describe good practice in preparing agendas and writing minutes.

Method

This exercise will involve a short introduction in plenary, a brief trainer talk, some work in buzz groups which is then debriefed and an exercise done in small groups. This is then debriefed in plenary. It is **A** rated.

Resources required

- Flipchart & pens
- Worksheet
- One trainer per 16 participants
- Enough A4 paper and biros for half the group

Suggested timings

- Introduction and explanation of exercise 5 mins
- Trainer talk 5 mins
- Buzz groups 10 mins
- Debrief/discussion in plenary 10 mins
- Exercise 10-15 mins
- Debrief/discussion in plenary 10-15 mins
- Summary 5 mins
- **TOTAL RUNNING TIME 1 hour**

Running the session

- 1 Start the session by outlining the aims and learning objectives of the exercise. Explain how the session will run, ie the methods you will use and what skills you will be developing.
- 2 Tell the group:
“The job of the secretary of a clubs or society may not sound exactly glamorous, but it can be very rewarding and you will undoubtedly develop many skills over the year ahead. The job will provide experience which will benefit you after you leave college. Many of the skills you are key transferable skills – ie they can be applied in many different situations. Even if your future job has little to do with minutes and agendas an employer will value your experience.”
- 3 Tell the group that you would like to start by thinking about dealing with correspondence.

Write ‘2’, ‘4’ and ‘8’ on the flipchart, and give half of the group a biro and a piece of A4 paper.

Tell the group that they will be working in groups of two, four and finally eight (or whatever half the total number of participants is). In their groups you would like them to generate a list of top tips for dealing with correspondence. Now write '3', '5' and '9' next to the '2', '4' and '8' on the flipchart and tell the group that they need to come up with three, five and finally ten reasons in their groups. They are not allowed repetitions and should seek to join other groups as soon as they are finished.

Check that they are clear about the task and ask them to start.

While the exercise is underway flip quickly between the groups to check all is well, to encourage them and to keep them working quickly.

As soon as one of the large groups generates ten reasons congratulate them and ask the other group(s) to stop and for all to re-form in a semi-circle.

Debrief

Ask the group with ten reasons to read them out to you while you put abbreviated versions on the flipchart. Some may be funny or facetious, but add these anyway. Then ask the others if they had other reasons and add these on to the chart.

At the end of the discussion ensure they have covered the following points:

Check pigeon holes regularly.

- Bin junk mail!
- Aim to answer promptly, or at least acknowledge if the reply will take some time.
- If you are going to be away for some time ensure someone else covers for you.

4 Tell the group that now you would like to move on to the other key skill of writing good agendas and minutes. Explain that while the agenda should be produced by the chair and then circulated by the secretary, often the secretary has to produce them as well.

Tell the group they will be working in three smaller groups and handout the exercise sheets.

5 Ensure they are clear about the task, split them into three smaller groups and tell them where they will be working. Ask the groups to start at different points of the exercise. Group 1 should start at question 1, group 2 at question 2 and group 3 at question 3. Tell them they should endeavour to answer all the questions but they need not worry if they fail to answer their last one or two.

After a few minutes visit the groups to check they are underway. Remind the groups when there are a few minutes left.

After 15 minutes get them to return to the plenary.

Debrief

In order to facilitate discussion, ask group 1 to feedback on question 1 and then ask the other groups to agree/disagree or if they wish to add. Then move on to question 2 and group 2, and finally group 3 and question 3.

Ensure the following points are covered:

Question 1

Essentially everything is too brief. An agenda like this gives virtually no information about the decisions to be made. Therefore no one else can genuinely prepare or consult before attending. Low participation or unstructured discussion usually results.

Question 2

- Doesn't give a list of who attended
- No clear guide as to who will be what re the social in 'The Poisoned Goose'
- Poorly laid out and difficult to read

Question 3

- Neither too much nor too little. They need to cover the key relevant points which led to decisions.
- Exactly what has been agreed, when and where it will happen and who has responsibility for any action required.

Summary

Spend five minutes at the end of the re-cap on the main points made. Wish them good luck for the year ahead!

Close the session

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WORKSHEET 11 Questions 1 and 2

Question 1

Look at the following agenda:

Slackers Club

Committee Meeting 14 February

1. Minutes
2. Matters arising
3. Reports
4. Social event?
5. Correspondence
6. A.O.B.

Why is this a poor agenda? How could it be improved?

Question 2

Look at the following set of minutes:

Slackers Club

Committee Meeting 14 February

Minutes

1. Gave out minutes of the last meeting. Peter complained that I hadn't circulated them beforehand and insisted I minute this.
2. Matters arising. Nothing important.
3. Reports. Mary reported on the disastrous social held in 'The Slaughtered Lamb'. Only 8 members turned up (four were committee!) and the locals didn't seem very friendly. Azra made some comments about problems with publicity.
Fred report no-one had joined (i.e. membership still twenty-eight). Viv ill, so no financial report.
4. Social event. Mary said she was fed up with organising socials which no-one came to. Monica said Azra needed to produce more posters. She said that wasn't the problem – needed help sticking them up. Fred suggested next social in either the union bar (as it's close and cheap) or 'the Poisoned Goose'. We agreed to try 'the Poisoned Goose'.
5. Correspondence. Something from the union about a training course, no other mail.

A.O.B.

- i) Fred asked what was the matter with Viv – flu
- ii) Azra said again about help with posters
- iii) I mentioned possibility of making contact with the Slackers group at Poppleton University.
- iv) Agreed to meet same time in a fortnight.

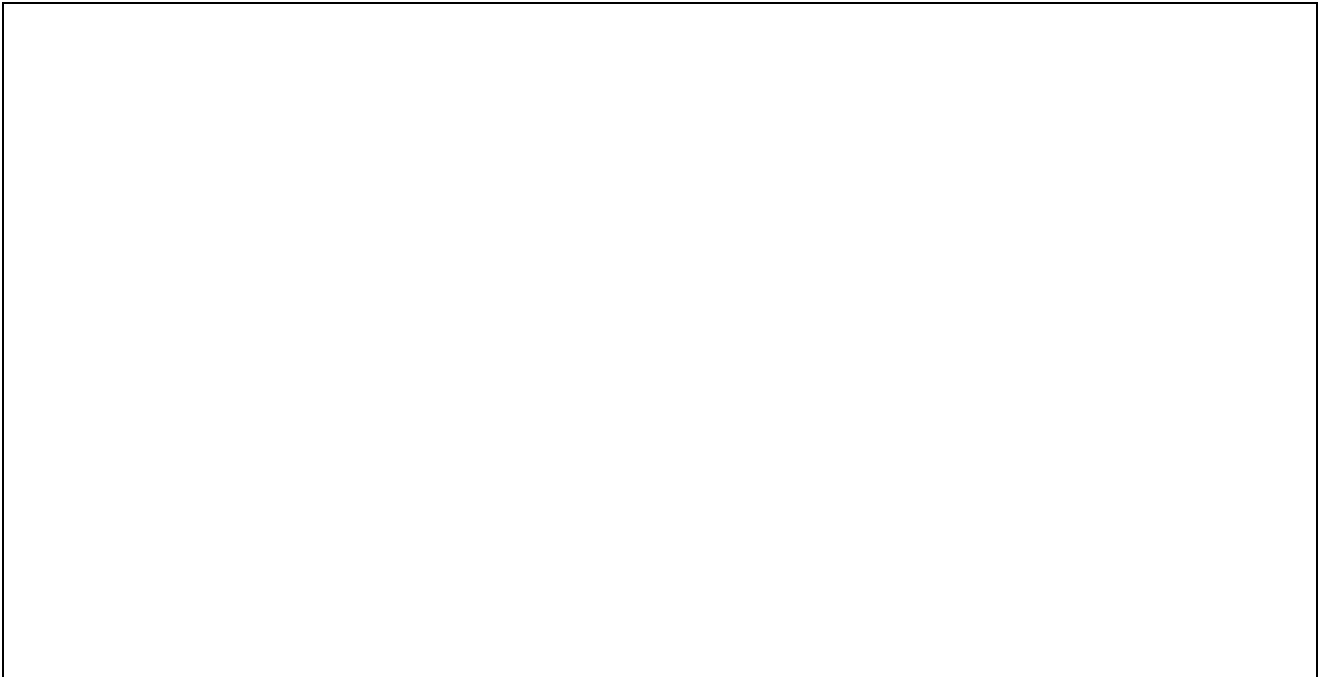
Why are these poor minutes? How could they be improved?

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WORKSHEET 11 Question 3

Question 3

Discuss how much detail you believe minutes should go into. (As much as possible, as little as possible?)



What are the key things that needs minuting?

