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7.0 OBJECTIVES

After learning this unit, you will be able to understand:

- What is an agenda and why it is important ?
- How to systematically draft an effective agenda to optimise meeting efficiency

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.1.1 What is an Agenda?

The literally meaning of the term agenda is ‘things to be done’. An agenda is essential list of items to be discussed at the meeting. It is considered as one of the most important documentations since it gives structure to the meeting and also sets the tone and direction of what needs to occur before and during the meeting.

7.1.2 Importance of Agenda:

The agenda of the meeting determines whether or not the meeting will be productive, meaningful and meet the expected outcomes of the meeting. Therefore, it is necessary that the items placed on the agenda should be precise, (to the point) in clear and explicit language. Moreover, it is expected that the meeting must be conducted in the same order in which the items are listed in the agenda.

7.1.3 Preparation of Agenda:

The format of the agenda normally varies in formality and detail. Some of the agenda includes detailed list of topics while other agendas identify a single or

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general topic to be discussed. However, a lot of rigorous discussion and consultation is necessary to develop an effective agenda which provides meaningful information, at the same time one should make sure that it should not become a lengthy narrative document. Two most important points to be considered while preparing an effective agenda are:

- to ensure that all items of importance will be dealt with and consider in their proper order
- To give an idea to all the members of what business has to be discussed in the meeting.

It is important to note that the agenda should be distributed to the members of the meeting well in advance so that they will be aware of the subjects to be discussed and are able to prepare for the meeting accordingly.

7.2 HOW TO SYSTEMATICALLY DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE MEETING AGENDA

7.2.1 Format of the Agenda:

The standard format of the agenda includes the following items:

- The title, date and place of the meeting
- Noting apologies for absences
- Confirming minutes of the previous meeting
- Discussion on matters arising out of the minutes of the previous meeting
- Items for discussion mentioned in the agenda
- Taking any other item not listed in the agenda with the permission of the chair
- Date, time and place of the next meeting
- Closing the meeting

7.2.2 Detail description about each item on the agenda:

- **The title, date and place of the meeting:** Information of the venue, timing and date of the meeting. However, it is not necessary to mention this details if the agenda is circulated along with the notice.
- **Noting apologies for absences:** Information of the members who were unable to remain present in the meeting and have submitted their apologies for the absence.
- **Confirming minutes of the previous meeting:** Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting is a formal procedure which is to be followed before the commencement of the meeting. It should be presented before the members for their approval. However, if the minutes have already been circulated well in advance along with the agenda, they should be taken as read. In case of any objections or concerns regarding the minutes, they will be taken up for the discussion, and if necessary, corrections will be made in the records. These corrections must be initiated by the chairman and the secretary. Once the corrections are completed, the revised minutes will be presented before the members for the approval.

- **Discussion on matters arising out of the minutes of the previous meeting:** There are possibilities that many a times after the confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting, the members would like to know the action taken on the resolution passed in the last meeting. In such circumstances, the chairman or the secretary will present the report or discuss the relevant information. However, the chairman should ensure that discussion on matters arising out of the minutes of the previous meeting is relevant.
 - **Items for discussion mentioned in the agenda:** Discussions on the items mentioned in the agenda is the most important part of the meeting. It usually requires a major share of time. It is necessary that these items are listed on the agenda in appropriate and logical way so that the members can get an idea about the focus of the discussion. In this section, routine or non controversial items are listed first so that minimum time is spent in discussing them. Further, those items are listed which requires rigorous discussion and consultations. It is to be noted that the secretary is responsible for documenting all the decisions in the manner and style they are passed.
 - **Taking any other item not listed in the agenda with the permission of the chair:** Once all the items listed on the agenda are discussed, any other item which needs immediate attention and decision is taken up with the permission of the chairman.
 - **Date, time and place of the next meeting:** At end of the meeting the date, time and venue of the next meeting is communicated well in advance to the members.
 - **Closing the meeting:** While concluding the meeting, a vote of thanks will be proposed and chairman shall announce the closer of the meeting.
- C. Apart from the above mentioned points it is advisable to:**
- **Include Objective of the meeting on the agenda:** Identifying or highlighting the meeting objective will lead to a focus discussion. Moreover, the members present in the meeting will get an idea of what the meeting is intended to accomplish at the end.
 - **Seek Inputs from team members:** In order to have effective discussion, it is necessary to engage the team members while developing the agenda. The team members should suggest the agenda items along with the reasons why each items needs to be addressed.
 - **Process for addressing each agenda item:** The process helps in moving together to complete the discussion or make a decision. Moreover, it helps in increasing the effectiveness of the meeting. The process for addressing each item should appear on the written agenda. Example of the process for addressing each agenda item is given below.

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Statement of the problem	Time - 5 Minute
Members identify and agree on each relevant information	Time- 10 Minute
Discussion on solution of the problem	Time- 10 Minute

- **Identifying a person who can lead the discussion on a particular agenda item:** It is one of the best practices which can be followed while developing an effective agenda. In most of the formal meeting except the chairman of the meeting, there are designated individuals who are responsible for beginning or leading the topic. He/she may be providing base for a particular agenda item or may have an organizational responsibility for that area. Following this protocol will ensure that anyone who is responsible for leading part of the agenda knows it before the meeting. It also lets other members know who is responsible for each topic or subtopic
- **Estimating a realistic time slots for each item:** Time management in formal meetings is one of the most difficult facilitation tasks. Moreover, it is necessary to end the meeting on time. Therefore, it is advisable to assign realistic time slots for each agenda item by calculating how much time a member will need for introducing the topic in agenda item, resolving queries/ questions from members, discussing the potential solutions and agreeing on the action items that follow from discussion and decisions. In case if the discussion on a particular agenda item is not completed within a given time slot, members can suggest that more time should be allotted or the item should be referred to in the next meeting.
- **Ensure type of action needed for each item agenda:** In most of the formal meetings sometimes it becomes difficult for members to participate effectively in the meetings if they are not aware whether to simply listen, give their input, or be a part of decision making process. In order to avoid this, it is advisable to include the type of action expected from the members next to each agenda item.
- **End the meeting with a review:** It is advisable to include on the agenda the time to review or evaluate the meeting before adjourning. It will help to improve the outcome of the meeting. Moreover, the members can use this opportunity to get clarification on any issues raised, duties assigned, or to propose topics for the next meeting.

7.3 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt:

- What is Agenda and why it is important?
- How to systematically prepare an effective agenda for the meeting
- Detail description about each item on the agenda

7.4. KEY WORDS

- **Agenda:** A 'time-table' listing items for discussion at a meeting

- **Apologies for absence:** Written or orally delivered excuse for not being able to attend a meeting
- **Chairperson:** Coordinator of a committee, working party, etc.
- **Minutes:** Written summary of a meeting’s business
- **Statement of the problem:** Concise description of an issue to be addressed
- **Meeting objective:** The purpose of the meeting
- **Matters arising from:** feedback, follow-up on action which has been taken to implement the decisions of the minutes previous meeting

7.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BRIEFLY.

- A. Why is an agenda necessary for a meeting and is considered as an important documentation?
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- B. What are the two most important points to be considered while preparing an effective agenda are?
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- C. Why it is important to include objective of the meeting on the agenda?
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- D. Why it is necessary to seek inputs from the team members while developing an effective agenda?
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- E. Why it is necessary to identify a person who can lead the discussion on a particular agenda item?
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- F. How are the ‘items for discussions’ listed in the agenda and why?
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G. Which factors should be considered while estimating time slot for each item in the agenda?

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H. You are planning to hold a meeting to organize a visit to ‘The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India’ (ICAI), New Delhi for all the students. Draft an agenda for the meeting. You can include some of the points given below or add additional points if required.

- Date, time, duration of the programme
- Places of visit
- Transport arrangements
- Food arrangements
- Organiser of the trip
- Preparation requirements
- Cost of trip
- Any other issue

7.6. BOOKS SUGGESTED

- Burleson, Clyde W. (1990). *Effective Meetings: The Complete Guide*. New York: John Wiley & Sons
- Thill, J.V. & Bovee, C.L. (1993) *Excellence in Business Communication*, New York: McGraw Hill
- Hodgson, P. & Hodgson, J. (1992) *Effective Meetings*, London: Century Business
- Carter, W. (1996): *Communication Skills, A Complete Package for a One-Day Training Workshop*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Kogan Page
- Koul, O.N and Sharma, K.K. (1994): *Effective Communication Skills*, New Delhi: Creative Publishers.
- Marnoria, C.B and Gankar, S.V. (2003): *Personal Management*, Mumbai: Himalaya Publishing House.
- Rai, U. & Rai, S.M. (1992) *Business Communication* (IV Edition), Bombay: Himalaya publishing House

ANSWERS

Check your progress 1

Answer-A: Agenda of the meeting is necessary because it determines whether or not the meeting will be productive, meaningful and meet the expected outcomes of the meeting. It is considered as an important documentation since it gives structure to the meeting and also sets the tone and direction of what needs to occur before and during the meeting.

Answer-B: The two most important points to be considered while preparing an effective agenda are:

- to ensure that all items of importance will be dealt with and considered in their proper order
- To give an idea to all the members of what business has to be discussed in the meeting.

Answer-C: Including the Objective of the meeting will help in maintaining the quality of the discussion. Moreover, the members present in the meeting will get an idea of what the meeting is intended to accomplish at the end.

Answer-D: It is necessary to seek inputs from the team members while developing an effective agenda so that the discussion can be effective and meets the expected outcome.

Answer-E: It is necessary to identify a person who can lead the discussion on a particular agenda item as it will ensure that anyone who is responsible for leading the discussion is aware about his/her topic before the meeting. It also lets other members know who is responsible for each topic or sub-topic. Moreover, it is one of the best practices which are followed while developing an effective agenda.

Answer-F: Items on the agenda should be listed in appropriate and logical way so that the members can get an idea about the focus of the discussion. The routine or non controversial items should be listed first so that minimum time is spent in discussing them. The items which require rigorous discussion and consultations should be listed last.

Answer-G: In order to assign realistic time slots for each agenda item, one should consider how much time a member will need for introducing the topic in agenda item, resolving queries/ questions from members, discussing the potential solutions and agreeing on the action items that follow from discussion and decisions.

Answer-H: Department of Commerce

Agenda for the meeting - Visit to The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India

Date: 10th November 2017

Venue: Multipurpose Hall- 2

Time: 2. 00 p.m.

- A. Apologies for absence
- B. Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meetings
- C. Matters arising from the minutes
- D. Items for discussion
 - Date of the proposed visit to be finalized
 - Places to be visited
 - Transport arrangements
 - Election of student-in-charge for the visit
 - Budget allocation and cost per head
 - Any other issue