

TIPS & TECHNIQUES MANAGEMENT BY MOM

The Importance of Meetings in a Digital World, and of Minutes of Meetings!

By J. Ajith Kumar

Management by Objectives, Management by Results and Management by Means are well established management theories successfully being practised in many industries. All management theories are offspring of needs and options available at different times. Specific situations in particular industries trigger the need for new approaches to handle them and some of the underdeveloped management practices at that point of time rise up to the occasion. The case of Management by Objectives (MBO) is a typical example of this. It was becoming increasingly difficult to justify management decisions on the basis of analysis of reasons when objectives provided the same. In industrial setups that run on MBO, it is much less cumbersome to take decisions and implement them if they are in line with the objectives fixed by the top management.

It is time again to look for novel methods to tackle new management problems generated by the communication explosion. E-mails, conference calls, videoconferencing etc., have made life easier for common man, but not really so for the managers. Almost all managers are now struggling to stay on top when understandings, instructions and even orders are given over the information super highways without any of the conventional methods like signature on hardcopy documents. The worst affected have been Project Managers and Procurement Managers who are very much dependent on the evidences for agreements. It is in this scenario that a hitherto insignificant instrument is assuming importance. Many of the successful Managers have already assumed responsibility for writing down Minutes of Meeting (MOM) with full satisfaction.

Importance of Minutes

Minutes of Meetings involving two separate business entities have always been important. An executive secretary or some one lower in hierarchy compiles the minutes of meeting and it gets vetted by both sides before formal signatures. But it is never so for internal meetings involving personnel from the same company. Very rarely do we have minutes for such meetings and even if they are prepared it gets very little importance. It is here that some of the ingenious managers have found a way to tackle the new situations in paperless offices. MOM is an effective instrument to record understandings reached and to pin actions required by all those who participated in a meeting. It is all the more effective if a time frame can also be indicated in the minutes itself. What else can be more logical for a Manager than making MOM compulsory for all internal meetings and taking over the responsibility to make it himself?

Irrespective of what technology or methods used for day-to-day working of the company, the internal meetings should become the key event in everyone's work schedule. Every employee must be attending at least one meeting every week and that should become a rule whether he or she is a Senior Manager, Manager, Clerk, Peon or Driver. In most of the companies, internal meetings are considered a waste of time. Those who say so feel it is of no additional value to address someone in a meeting when we can always walk in to room and talk. But what they are missing is the formality and focus in a meeting which is missing in an informal chat. And if the Manager chairing the meeting is preparing the minutes himself, one can imagine the paradigm shift that will result in the mindset of everyone attending the meeting.

Impact on Organisation

There will be tremendous change in the culture of the organisation once the Management by MOM culture has set in. If the top man can successfully drive home the dictum that *every employee must attend at least one meeting every week*, the impact will be visible in no time. And

if the next rule ie. *MOM is written by the one who chaired the meeting*, which is much more critical, is also successfully driven down the organisational hierarchy there is no doubt about the success of this new technique in management. It will soon settle down to a steady state where MOMs will start driving the business workflow of the organisation. All that the top man has to ensure is to hold his own meetings regularly without fail and make sure that the MOM is made by himself as a role model for others.

Meeting all our colleagues in a formal environment under the watchful eyes of our own peers on the basis of a written document is one of the best ways to make us do our own work. The time schedule recorded in the MOM and the prospect of giving an explanation if we cannot meet it will bring out the best in us to perform. This being the case of all individuals in the company hierarchy the overall performance of the organisation will change forever. Very soon we will find each one of us setting time bound goals and working towards it so as not to cut a sorry figure in the next meeting. MOMs of lower meetings will start setting the smaller directions at micro level and the company will start rolling faster in the direction set by the MOMs of top level meetings.

One small change and that too only a different way of using an ordinary instrument can change the overall culture of everything in the organisation. Meetings will no more be waste of time and everyone will start giving importance to what is getting recorded in the minutes itself. Use of projectors can even ensure recording of MOM in a completely transparent manner. By inculcating the spirit of participation and keeping the word in groups of employees in various meetings the performance of any company is bound to improve in no time. Added incentives will be overall development of personality of all individuals and the feeling of oneness in a business environment. Management by MOM is definitely an option available to all those companies who are stuck with the loss of direction in a paperless business environment.

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