
UNIT 3 INTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE-II

Structure

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will learn more about:

- Internal correspondence
- Types and functions of internal correspondence
 - ❖ Downward, non-interactive internal correspondence
 - Notice
 - Agenda
 - Minutes
- How to write them

3.1 WARM UP

- a) You have understood what a notice means and how to write it in the previous unit. You have also seen notices in your school/college. A formal ‘notice’ is issued/given to an employee before firing her/him. An employee has to inform the company through a formal ‘notice’ if s/he wants to leave the company. Are there any differences between these notices?
- b) The word ‘agenda’ is a word which has more than one meaning. For example, a notice for a meeting in a company usually includes an ‘agenda’ in it whereas a news report may write about the ‘hidden agenda’ of government agencies. Do these two ‘agendas’ mean the same?

- c) Meetings are usually followed by ‘minutes’. Does this mean the same as ‘minutes’ which are units of time?

3.2 LANGUAGE FOCUS

Activity 1

Given below are some sentences with **business idioms (underlined)**. On the basis of your understanding of the meaning, select the correct meaning from the list given after the sentences.

1. When the demand for software decreased, companies like *Cisco* had to tighten its belt.
2. After working as an intern with *Satyam Computers* for 4 months, Sheetal found it a bitter pill to swallow when she didn't get a full time job offer.
3. The MD of the company cashed in upon his popularity and published his memoirs and opened his own chain of restaurants.
4. If you want to climb the corporate ladder, work hard, perform productively and be nice to your boss.
5. When preparing financial statements, be very careful and be sure to dot your i's and cross your t's.

Meanings:

- a) to benefit financially
- b) something that is bad or unpleasant to face and accept.
- c) to pay attention to details
- d) reduce expenses in the organization
- e) to advance in one's career and make it to senior level

3.3 READING

Read the text given below and then answer the questions that follow:

3.3.1 Notice

A **notice of a meeting** is a formal way of communicating information. It is an official requirement of many organizations. It is a public notice which gives information about any important meeting due to take place soon, and must be circulated well before the set date of the meeting (usually 5 to 7 days). It is usually put up on the notice board or on the company's website so that it can be seen by employees. Generally speaking, a notice for a meeting, also called a **notification**, is sent well in advance to all members who are supposed to be attending. The idea behind this is that members can

come well prepared and the deliberations of the meeting may be fruitful and productive. It also requires a time, place, and date to allow people to know when the meeting will take place. It is also useful to add contact information in case people have additional questions. A written notice should give relevant details and pertinent information that is relevant to its purpose. It should be short, succinct, and give contact information.

The purpose of a notice is to inform the intended recipient about the following:

- * Who is to meet whom
- * Nature of the meeting (what kind of meeting is it? Whether it is routine, emergency, special, extraordinary etc.)
- * Day, date and time of the meeting
- * Location/venue of the meeting
- * Purpose or agenda of the meeting
- * Signature of the Secretary
- * Date on which the notice was issued
- * How long will the meeting take (optional)
- * Whether tea/lunch will be served (optional)

If you were the secretary of the MD of *Akash Automakers*, how will you draft a notice for an annual general meeting of all employees with the MD? You would probably write like this:

<p><i>Akash Automakers</i> 5, Okhla Industrial Estate New Delhi 110023</p> <p>NOTICE</p> <p>Notice is hereby given that the 3rd Annual General Meeting of <i>Akash Automakers</i> will be held on Tuesday 30 October 2019 at 10.30 am in the Conference Room at Hotel Sapphire, Niti Marg, Chanakyapuri by order of the Company Secretary, September 2019. All are invited to attend.</p> <p>19th October, 2019</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Secretary</p> <p>cc :</p> <p>i) Ms. Indrani Rehman, Manager (Production) ii) Mr. Ratan Raghav, Manager (Sales) iii) Ms..... iv) Mr..... v) etc.</p>

3.3.2 Agenda

An agenda is a list of items to be discussed or of official things to be done at a formal meeting. This list is prepared in advance of the meeting, by the secretary in consultation with the Chairperson. It is an indispensable tool to help those attending the meeting to focus on achieving the desired results. Agendas not only prepare attendees for what to expect, they also keep the meeting centered/converged on items listed, and make the summarizing aspects much easier. The agenda is the backbone of any meeting and serves to keep the members' attention on the matter at hand and thereby channelizes the discussion to a fruitful outcome. Thus, there is an optimum utilization of time and members' energy. It contains the following items:

- ⌘ The letterhead of the organization
- ⌘ The date, time and place of the meeting (It is not necessary to include this if the agenda is sent with the notice which has all these details)
- ⌘ Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting (if applicable)
- ⌘ Matters arising from the minutes
- ⌘ Items for discussion
- ⌘ Any other matter
- ⌘ Date, place and time of next meeting (if required)

Example of a Notice with an Agenda

The Human Resources Department of *Akash Automakers* brought out this notice. Please note that this notice is formatted a little differently from the template given earlier.

Akash Automakers

Date: Thursday, September 25th, 2019

Time: 11.00 am to 4:30 p.m. IST (a working lunch will be provided). For remote attendees too, start at 11.00 am IST.

Purpose & Objectives: The Human Resources Department requests your participation in a meeting to explore existing and new strategies of employee-management relationship and establish 3 new centers of excellence in 2018-19. Based on the findings from this session, we will schedule follow-up events to plan future strategies.

Requested Participants: Representatives from the following centers are asked to attend (or participate remotely via live Web seminar conferencing):

* Marketing/Sales

* Customer Service

* Product Development

* Quality Assurance

* Order Fulfillment

* Publications & Media Design

Location: Conference Room 101, *Akash Automakers* Building, 246 South City Road, Gurgaon. Please park in the visitor area behind the building. Overnight accommodations and shuttle transportation will be arranged for the participants flying in from other locations.

Remote Access Instructions: For those participating via Web seminar, use the standard company Web seminar link and access the meeting. You can see all electronic slide presentations as well as interact with the on-site meeting attendees through a Web seminar facilitator.

Proposed Agenda:

1. Overview and agenda review by the VP of Human Resources (30 min.)
2. Strategic Planning presentation (30 min.)
3. Brainstorming sessions with facilitators (90 min.)
4. Working lunch and reporting back to the main group (60 min.)
5. Discussion, (60 min.)
6. Wrap up and a review of the next and future steps (60 min.)

Handouts will be available on the server 48 hours prior to the meeting. The meeting summary and recorded Web seminar will be available 48 hours afterward.

RSVP Requested: Please reply no later than April 19, 2019 with the names and contact information of the representatives from your group who will be attending, either on-site or remotely.

3.3.3 Minutes of a Meeting

"It is an official record of the proceedings of a meeting, conference, convention, etc".

Thus, **minutes** are the "official record" of an organization. It is crucial that they are accurate since they are the legal record of the proceedings and actions of the organization.

All formal meetings require a written record of the discussions held and decisions reached. For this, it is essential to record what happened in a meeting and clearly define whatever transpired therein, so that members are reminded of their role in a project and all readers of the minutes have access to essential information regarding discussions held on different issues and assigned action. Notes have to be taken during the meeting in

order to prepare the minutes. Minutes are prepared by the secretary of the Chairperson. It is advisable that s/he should prepare a document of skeleton minutes in advance of the annual meeting or convention. For this, the following may be used: agenda, program, previous minutes (as a guide) and the script. The skeleton minutes are based on what is expected to happen and therefore, the secretary should leave many empty spaces for the specifics that may happen during the meeting and for any last minute changes. It is also essential for the person writing the minutes to have certain skills like note-taking, use of reported speech and the technique of summarizing in order to compile them. Minutes are a record of what was *done* at the meeting and not what was *said* there. All discussions during the meeting have to be converted into reported speech and the sequence of ideas, proposals, suggestions etc. have to be noted in a logical manner. The prepared minutes should follow a definite format and the sequence of the agenda.

Before writing your minutes, it is useful to **answer the following questions**. This will help you to avoid wasting precious time spent in the meeting.

1. When did the meeting take place?
2. What was the purpose of the meeting?
3. Who attended it?
4. Who did not attend? (Include this information if it matters. It is optional)
5. What topics were discussed?
6. What was decided?
7. What actions were agreed upon?
8. Who is to complete the actions, by when?
9. Were materials distributed at the meeting? If so, are copies or a link available?
10. Is there anything special the reader of the minutes should know or do?
11. Is a follow-up meeting scheduled? If so, when? Where? Why?

Some Do's and Don'ts:

Do write minutes soon after the meeting - preferably within 48 hours so that those who attended can be reminded of action items, and those who did not will know what happened there.

Don't skip writing minutes just because everyone attended the meeting and knows what happened. Meeting notes/minutes serve as a record of the meeting long after people forget what happened.

Don't go into details of "he said, she said" unless this information is very important. Record the topics discussed, the decisions that were made, and items where action has to be taken.

Don't include any information that will embarrass anyone (for example, "Then Mr ... left the room shouting").

Do use positive language. It is better to describe the discussion as *passionate*, *lively*, or *energetic* instead of using words like *heated* or *angry*. All the above positive words are just as true as the negative words.

Don't use words or phrases that sound judgmental (for example, "valuable comment").

Before the Meeting

If you are the person recording the minutes, then ensure that you are not a major participant in the meeting. You cannot perform both the tasks properly.

As mentioned earlier, make a template (skeleton minutes) for recording your minutes and make sure of leaving some empty spaces to fill in your notes.

Before the meeting, try to gain information about those attending the meeting and about the purpose of the meeting. It would be helpful to have a list of attendees and mark them as they join the meeting. Ask your meeting lead or senior to introduce you to members you are not familiar with. This way you won't waste time trying to figure out who is who while taking notes. Whether you want to use your pen and pad, or a tape recorder or a laptop to record your notes is a decision you have to make prior to the job at hand.

During the Meeting

As people enter the room, check off their names on your attendee list. Try to know the names of those unfamiliar to you. This will help you later when you are recording assigned tasks or decisions.

It is not necessary to record notes verbatim. Minutes are meant to give an outline of what happened in the meeting, not to give a record of who said what. Emphasis should be more on understanding what is being discussed and on recording what has been assigned or decided on rather than on writing about who said what.

Remember to record action items and decisions in your template as they occur in the meeting. Don't wait until after the meeting to write them or there might be a mistake or error in reporting. If you don't understand exactly what decision has been made or what action has been assigned, ask the meeting lead to clarify and explain.

After the meeting

Review the notes you have taken. Now add additional comments, or clarify what you didn't understand right after the meeting. Do this while the information is fresh in yours and everyone else's mind. A good meeting minutes template should include the following information:

- ❖ **First**, begin with the title which should be written at the top center of the document and must show the meeting title and the company name. You may highlight it by putting it in italics, bold or underlining it. For example,

Meeting On Establishing Centers of Excellence 2018 – 2019

Akash Automakers

- ❖ **Second**, give the details of the meeting like location, date, day, start and end time of the meeting.
- ❖ **Third**, include the names of those who attended and who didn't attend the meeting. The names are arranged according to rank and importance with the one having the highest rank coming first. Mention their designations also. Don't forget to mention who presided over the meeting. If all the persons in the meeting are of equal rank/level, arrange their names alphabetically.

- ❖ **Fourth**, mention the objective of the meeting. The purpose of holding the meeting should be clearly indicated. For example,

The objective of this meeting was to brainstorm strategies on how to improve employee-management relationship and establish centers of excellence in the financial year 2018-2019.

- ❖ **Fifth**, write the agenda items and sub-topics.
- ❖ **Sixth**, include two important things: (a) **Content**, that is, record whatever discussion took place in the meeting. This refers to ideas generated, proposed solutions, conclusions reached and decisions taken. (b) **Process**, that is, how content was discussed. It refers to how the participants came up with ideas, decisions and actions. It will include who said what, who agreed/disagreed with whom etc. For example,

Mr Raj proposed the method of voting to determine which of the ideas suggested was favored by the majority of the members. Mr Rahman seconded the proposal. The members voted and the idea of "refresher workshops" won by a majority.

- ❖ **Seventh**, mention adjournment information. This is like wrapping up the meeting and giving a short list of expected action and accomplishment from the participants of the meeting. In this part,

you may also provide details of agenda recommendations for the next meeting.

- ❖ **Last**, sign the minutes as its documenter and get it read and signed by the team lead or chairperson.

When you are writing out your notes, keep in mind the following tips from the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP).

- Remember to number the pages as you go about writing your notes so that you aren't confused later.
- Focus on action items, not on 'who said what' only. The purpose of minutes is to set out clearly decisions made and to record what actions are to be taken, by whom and when.
- Be objective. Write in the same tense throughout and avoid using people's names except for motions or seconds. This is a business document, not about who said what.
- Avoid personal observations. The fewer adjectives or adverbs you use, the better. Dull writing is the key to appropriate minutes.
- If you have referred to other documents, put them in an appendix or indicate where they may be found. Don't rewrite or summarize their intent.
- Minutes of formal meetings should be recorded in a specific language and in a particular format. They are supposed to represent a reliable record of all important matters discussed, decisions taken, and action taken or to be taken in the meeting. Therefore, the language used should be simple and clear, free from ambiguity, and precise so that the contents are easily understood.
- Usually, the decisions taken in meetings are a result of collective activity. Thus, the language used should also reflect this. While important suggestions and proposals can be ascribed to individual members, it should not assign decisions to individuals.
- The language of minutes should be concise and precise. Only the major points of discussion, resolutions reached, and decisions taken are included.
- Minutes are an official record of a meeting and maybe used for reference by other agencies and institutions including the courts of law in case there is a dispute. Hence, care should be taken to ensure that the language conforms to standards of formality and impersonality that publicly used language requires.
- The language of minutes uses simple past tense, and passive voice. For example, "The matter was raised.....", "It was agreed" etc. This helps to make the minutes impersonal and objective.

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- The language of minutes should be free from ostentation and literary flourishes.
- Minutes should also be presented in a well-organized manner by using a systematic layout.
- Each section of the minutes should be presented in a separate paragraph. Double space lines should be used between two paragraphs.
- Headings of sections or of agenda items should be in bold letters. In case there are sub-sections or items within a section, they should be numbered and presented in separate paragraphs. If there is an action item, it should be put in a separate paragraph with the heading 'Action'.
- Whenever there is a summary of a discussion, the different contents should be itemized. This will enable the reader to understand the main points of the argument.

When you finish typing the minutes, ask the meeting lead to review the document for errors. Send the final copy of the minutes to attendees right away. Keep a copy of the notes (and the template) for yourself in case someone wants to review them later.

Check your Progress 1

1. **Say whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F):**
 - a) There is no need to write the minutes of a meeting that everybody has attended.
 - b) Use simple past tense while writing the meeting minutes.
 - c) Use strong, judgmental phrases while writing meeting minutes.
 - d) A notice is an informal internal communication within an organization.
 - e) You can have a notice without an agenda but not vice-versa.
 - f) An agenda helps to direct the discussions in meetings on pre-decided matters.
 - g) A notice provides information about who is meeting whom, date, time and the reason for meeting.
 - h) There is no need to have a ready template of the minutes before the meeting.
 - i) An agenda is basically a list of those items that may or may not be discussed in a meeting.
 - j) Writing meeting minutes requires skills of note taking and summarizing

2. **Now that you have read about the different types of downward, non-interactive internal communication, answer the following questions briefly in your own words:**
1. What is the purpose of writing a notice?
 2. Who issues the notice for a formal meeting?
 3. What is an agenda and why is it important to have an agenda?
 4. What are some of the do's and don'ts of writing minutes?
 5. Why should minutes be written at all and that too in a particular way?
 6. List all headings that should be included in the minutes of a meeting.
 7. Comment on the kind of language used in writing minutes.

3.4 VOCABULARY

Activity 2

3.4.1 Some Quotes About Business

- a) We demand that big business give people a square deal; in return we must insist that when anyone engaged in big business honestly endeavors to do right, he shall himself be given a square deal. (Theodore Roosevelt)
- b) It is difficult but not impossible to conduct strictly honest business. What is true is that honesty is incompatible with the amassing of a large fortune. (Mahatma Gandhi)
- c) British management doesn't seem to understand the importance of the human factor. (Prince Charles)
- d) The growth of a large business is merely the survival of the fittest. ... The American Beauty rose can be produced in the splendor and fragrance which bring cheer to its beholder only by sacrificing the early buds which grow up around it. (John D. Rockefeller)
- e) The salary of the chief executive of the large corporation is not a market award for achievement. It is frequently in the nature of a warm personal gesture by the individual to himself. (J. K. Galbraith)

Which of the people above is making each of these points?

- 1) Being rich and being honest do not go together.
- 2) Top businessmen often give themselves bonuses regardless of their performance.

- 3) Large businesses become successful by destroying competition from small businesses.
- 4) Those who are managers do not pay attention to their employees.
- 5) It is the duty of companies to treat their customers in a fair and just manner; then government will also treat companies fairly and justly.

3.4.2 Note the collocations given in the box (from the above quotes) and choose one of them (changed/modified to the correct form only if required) to fill in the blanks:

Square deal	an award	chief executive	personal gesture
to amass a fortune			

Shekhar Ranjan is now the (i)..... of a large company. He managed to (ii) by designing some game apps which are very popular all over the world. He's intelligent and successful and ensures that all his employees receive a (iii) Last year, he won(iv) in business. In a remarkable (v) he gave his prize money to his employees.

♣ 3.5 LISTENING

Listen to the audio recording and then respond to the instructions.

(The tapescript given at the end of the lesson may be recorded on a CD or cassette. Students have to listen to it and then find out the following).

- What is the passage about?
- What are the three principles that must be followed?
- List the 5 step 'best practice' process outlined in the passage.
- What advice is given at the end of the passage?

* 3.6 GRAMMAR: COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Let's read about coordinating conjunctions in this unit.

We know that conjunctions are words that are used to join two sentences without causing any change in the original sentences. For example: *and, but, nor, or, so, yet* etc.

When we use conjunctions like *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*, etc. to join words to words, phrases to phrases and clauses to clauses in order to make compound sentences, we call them **Coordinating conjunctions**.

Examples:

- a) **Word to word:** Most children like biscuits *and* milk.
- b) **Phrase to phrase:** I dropped my earrings inside the store *or* by the lakeside.
- c) **Clause to clause:** What you say *and* what you do are two different things.

“and” (+) and “nor” (-) are used to show an agreement between items/clauses.

“yet”, and “but” are used to show a disagreement between clauses.

“for” and “so” are used to show a reason between clauses.

“or” is used to show agreement or disagreement between items/clauses.

Remember to insert a comma before the conjunction when you use a coordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses. For example,

I want to buy a new bag, but it is too expensive.

The 2 independent clauses are “I want to buy a new bag” and “It is too expensive”.

The 2 clauses are separated by a comma and the conjunction “but” which is used to show disagreement.

Activity 3

Use suitable coordinating conjunctions to complete the following sentences.

Then say whether the conjunction is used to show agreement (A), disagreement (D) or reason (R).

- 1) Shaista ate all the snacks, _____ I had to go hungry.
- 2) I don't like drinking soda, _____ I can have it with popcorn.
- 3) I started for office on time, _____ I was late in reaching it.
- 4) Meera created a resume, _____ the new firm was accepting resumes.
- 5) I like to read novels _____ write poetry.

✂ 3.7 WRITING

1. Based on your reading of the above unit, draft a notice calling a meeting for the situation given below. Include an agenda and then write the minutes of the meeting.

VP (Sales and Marketing) of *Energy Solutions* had a meeting of all department heads on 20th July 2019 at 12 pm in the convention hall, in order to discuss plans and strategies for increasing the sales of their new product in the second quarter of 2018-2019.

2. On behalf of VP (Human resources), write a notice of suspension for an assistant manager with the hint of possible termination for an employee who has been accused of sexual harassment.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt about other different kinds of non-interactive internal correspondence. You have read about notices, agendas and the way to write minutes of meetings. Now you are aware why these business correspondences are important in the proper functioning of an office. Hence, it is important to learn/acquire the skills for writing these instruments of communication. Other than knowing the format of writing them, this is where the careful use of words comes into practice. The dynamics of communication require your message to be clear, concise and correct.

3.9 ANSWERS

Activity 1

1-d; 2-b; 3-a; 4-e; 5-c.

Check Your Progress 1

1. (a) F (b) T (c) F (d) F (e) T (f) T (g) T (h) F (i) F (j) T

Activity 2 (Vocabulary)

3.4.1 a) 5 b) 1 c) 4 d) 3 e) 2

3.4.2 Shekhar Ranjan is now the chief executive (i) of a large company. He managed to amass a fortune (ii) by designing some game apps which are very popular all over the world. He's intelligent and successful and ensures that all his employees receive a square deal (iii). Last year, he won an award (4) in business. In a remarkable personal gesture (v), he gave his prize money to his employees.

Activity 3

Use suitable coordinating conjunctions in the following sentences:

- 1) Shaista ate all the snacks, so I had to go hungry. (R)
- 2) I don't like drinking soda, but I can have it with popcorn. (D)
- 3) I started for office on time, yet I was late in reaching it. (D)
- 4) Meera created a resume, for the new firm was accepting resumes. (R)
- 5) I like to read novels and write poetry. (A)

3.5 TAPESCRIPT

Employment termination by the employer normally falls into one of these categories: redundancy, misconduct, or poor performance (which may be due to various reasons, often not the fault of the employee). Here are the three essential rules for proper employment termination:

- **Ensure you understand and apply the correct legal procedure for your situation.** The process doesn't necessarily begin with the termination interview or letter, it can be deemed (by a subsequent tribunal, court, review body or process, for example assessing an unfair dismissal or discrimination claim) to have begun as early as when the employee was first recruited into the organization. If employment termination is due to redundancy check with the relevant government department for employment as to the proper procedures and statutory requirements relating to pay and notice periods, etc. UK and European laws have changed frequently in these areas, nevertheless central principles provide a basis of best practice for other regions of the world in the absence of specific legislation, for example:
 1. Give reasons for the proposed dismissal to the employee in writing and give the employee a reasonable period during which to consider the facts and his/her response.
 2. Hold a meeting with the employee to explain the reasons and give employee the opportunity to explain his/her position.
 3. After the meeting give the employee the employer's decision in writing (whether to proceed with the dismissal or other action), and invite employee to make an appeal and attend an appeal meeting.
 4. After the appeal meeting the employer must confirm the appeal decision in writing.
 5. A manager of proper authority must attend meetings, and meetings must be at reasonable times and venues, also the employer must not delay unreasonably any of the stages in this process.
- **Concentrate on the facts of the situation, and clear evidence to support these facts.** Ensure there is clear indisputable proof for the facts and figures. This requires good record-keeping to be an essential part of the process, and therefore to also be a part of the management practice of the organization.
- **Be fair and compassionate.** Even in situations involving gross misconduct - remember you are dealing with another human-being who has her/his own problems, probably now made all the worse because their employment is being terminated. S/he doesn't need you to start being vindictive, vengeful or spiteful and nor will any subsequent

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review process look kindly on any aspects of personally directed behaviour in the employer's handling of the situation.

These principles are also a good guide for terminating other forms of supply contracts. Always check the law and follow proper process. The consequences for employers and organizations for failing to apply correct process when terminating employment or similar contracts are increasingly serious.

As a matter of philosophy - always try to part as friends, not enemies. Nothing is gained by alienating people who already see themselves as victims; negative treatment can prompt them to be vengeful, which does nobody any good at all. Also by keeping employment termination and dismissal letters positive you avoid risk of libel or defamation, which carry potential legal liabilities for the employer, irrespective of the circumstances and process of the dismissal itself.

(<http://www.businessballs.com/employmentterminationletterssamples.htm>)



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