



## **ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE.**

Successful Administrators, Planners, Human Resource Managers, Executive Officers, Engineers, and others have maintained their top positions or even progressed upwards because they have constantly improved their skills.

What are skills? Skills are the “ability, coming from one’s knowledge, practice, and aptitude e.t.c; to do something well.” Skills are competent excellence in performance.

As newly appointed Officers of the Local Government Service, what skills do you need to make you competent and indeed, to help you progress? Admittedly, you will acquire these skills as time goes on, while on the job, through workshops and seminars as well as through academic training courses.

However, some of the skills you would require immediately for your day-to-day work are many and varied. Some of the skills are:

- ❖ Taking of minutes of meetings;
- ❖ Writing of formal letters;
- ❖ Writing of reports;
- ❖ Writing of memorandum;
- ❖ Speech writing.

Besides these, senior staff of the Service needs more skills including:

- Time-management skills;
- Computer skills;
- Cross-cutting skills-
  - 1) Communication skills;
  - 2) Paying attention to detail;
  - 3) Decorum

### **TAKING MINUTES OF A MEETING**

What are minutes?

In a formal sense, minutes are the historical record of an officially convened meeting of an organization or agency. Minutes should generally focus on decisions taken by a group and may also capture the thought process that led to decisions.

The term can extend to mean a summary of a meeting of a group that is not formerly organized.

Minutes provide accurate, concise record of a meeting; provide a clear and unambiguous statement of recommendations and decisions and actions required.

To avoid wasting time in meetings, be sure to answer these 10 questions.

1. When was the meeting?
2. Who attended?
3. Who failed to attend?
4. What topics were discussed?
5. What was decided?
6. What actions were agreed upon?
7. Who is to complete the actions and by when?
8. Where documents were distributed at meeting, do you have a copy?
9. Is there anything urgent the reader of minutes should know or do?
10. Is a follow-up meeting scheduled? If so when? Where? Why?

How to write meeting minutes.

- a) What is the meeting all about?
- b) Who are attending?
- c) What, where and how is it going to be held? Take time to verify that all details –location, time and communication methods are organized properly;
- d) Prepare a sheet that lists meeting elements. Do this by looking at a copy of previous meeting.
- e) Is a recorder needed or a lap top computer or is it by short hand?
- f) During meeting, put relevant or connected ideas together in a way that you best understand. Edit document after initial summary.

- g) Last, has the chairperson read and approved minutes before you distributed them?

## **WRITING OF FORMAL LETTERS**

Formal or Official letters are different from private and informal letters.

For formal letters, the format is simple:

- 1) Address of writer should be at right top corner to include the date;
- 2) Addressee could be at left corner below the address;
- 3) Salutation: use “Dear sir” or “Dear Madam” or Official title of recipient;
- 4) Provide a heading;
- 5) Write letter-the introduction, the main body and then the conclusion.
- 6) End with “ Yours faithfully,” Yours Sincerely”, “Yours truly” .....
- 7) Write your name beneath and sign on top of it.
- 8) You include “copied to” for other recipients.
- 9) Sent to registry to dispatch officially.

## **WRITING OF REPORTS**

What is a report?

A report is a structured presentation in response to specific purposes, request or demand. Reports may be written or verbal.

Reports are important management tools for current and future purposes. Through reports information is shared and lessons are learnt.

It is important to note that reports are not essays. Reports are organized into separate sections according to the specific requirements of the task given. Unlike in essay writing, reports are not a continuous piece of

writing. Each type of report serves a very specific purpose and is aimed at a very particular audience.

Report writing may seem repetitive, but so because they are usually not read from cover to cover by one person. For example, a manager may read only the summary and act on what it contains while middle level Officer may read the conclusions and recommendations that affect his/her work.

Reports have many useful purposes. When effectively used, reports constitute an integral part of organization's business. Reports help us to:

- ❖ Keep records;
- ❖ Inform stakeholders about progress;
- ❖ Tell others and ourselves about successes and failures;
- ❖ Be assessed or evaluated;
- ❖ Receive feedback;
- ❖ Determine further action;
- ❖ Create a platform for learning by others;
- ❖ Meet legal or organization's requirements.

### **Preparation for Report writing.**

- Subject: Decide the information required to be in report.
- Purpose: Is report to inform or is it a presentation?
- Layout: Find out if report is a compulsory layout or not.
- Target group: Determine your audience and know contents required.

- Structure: Determine maximum number of pages by consulting.
- Time span: When is report to be ready?

### **Report writing format.**

Strictly speaking, there is no set format for report writing. But there are general sections that should be included. Main sections include:

- ✚ Title Section- If a report is short; the front cover may include any information that is necessary. If the report is long, it includes a table of contents, definition of terms, e.t.c, e.t.c.
- ✚ Summary- There is the need to have a summary of the major points, conclusions and recommendations. This should be short because it is a general overview of the report. Some people even prefer to read the summary and skip the rest of the report. This is why the summary should include all the relevant information. It is advised that this is written last so that important things will be included.
- ✚ Introduction-The first part of the report should have an introduction; where the problem is explained and the reader informed why the report is being written. You need to give terms of reference if you did not include this in the title section and explain how the rest of the report is arranged.
- ✚ Body- this is the main section of the report. The previous sections needed to be written in plain English, but this section can include jargon from your organization. Here there will be many sections with each having a subtitle. Information is

usually arranged in order of importance with the most important information coming first. Also a 'discussion' section could be included to go over findings and their significance.

- ✚ Conclusion- this is where everything comes together. Keep it free of jargon as many people may read the summary and conclusion.
  
- ✚ Recommendations- this should be presented in plain English when explaining your recommendations, which should be in order of priority.
- ✚ Appendices- this includes information the experts will read. It has all the technical details that support your conclusions.

## **WRITING OF MEMORANDUM**

A memorandum or memo for short is a common form of communication in the workplace. It provides an easy way to convey information or ideas in a quick and informative way to workers from management. They also are inter-office memos.

The following tips make memo-writing skill effective and easy.

1. Organize your thoughts before writing the memo. Memos are meant to be direct and to the point. So therefore be sure

you have all the information you need which should be organized in an efficient manner.

2. Understand the format of a basic memo. The heading always includes the date, the name of sender, the names of the recipients and the subject heading. Make the heading as specific as possible.
3. Simplify your information. A memo must be able to be read quickly and easily understood. Use simple words and bullets and numbered lists where appropriate.
4. Eliminate any statements that are not directly related to the purpose of the memo. It is not the place to expound one's personal opinions.
5. Remember your audiences, Consider who will be reading your memo and be sure to write in a style and language that will be appealing and easily understood.
6. Be sure that prior to sending out memo that you have included everyone that will need access to the information it contains. The information should reach all the sources you intended.
7. Check your spelling, grammar and punctuations before sending out the memo.

### **Other forms of memorandum**

Besides the simple inter-office memos, several and varied types exist. These include:

- I. Cabinet memorandum

- II. Memorandum of understanding (MOU)
- III. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)
- IV. Business memorandum
- V. Legal memorandum
- VI. Military Memorandum.

### **SPEECH WRITING.**

A speech is a form of communication in spoken language, made by a speaker before an audience for a given purpose; Example- An emotional speech or a fiery speech.

A speech may be persuasive, informative, and ceremonial or even keynote. It is also important that a speech is made effective, specific and simple. It should flow and with humor and quotations included to make it interesting and emphatic. Good speeches usually consider the audiences and write to suit them.

Speeches are usually in three parts, namely, Introduction, Body and Conclusion.

To write good speeches, one needs to practice and practice and practice.

### **TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS.**

As serious officers, you are expected to be highly organized individuals. You need to have good judgment, you need to be punctual to work, you need to have initiative and you need to have a good work ethic. As a

senior staff you will need to complete jobs within deadlines, and if you can manage your time, the better. A few tips:

### **ABC Analysis.**

This is a technique that has been used to advantage by many. It is a categorization of data into groups- AB & C, hence their name.

- A –tasks that are perceived as URGENT & IMPORTANT;
- B- tasks that are IMPORTANT but not urgent;
- C- tasks that is neither important not urgent.

Each group is then ranked according to priority. You may apply these to help in your time-management.

### **POSEC Method.**

P: prioritize -your time and define your life by goals.

O: organizing- things you to have to accomplish regularly to be successful.

S: streamlining- things you may not like to do but must do.

E: economizing – things you should do but are nor urgent.

C: contributing – by paying attention to the few remaining things that make a difference.

It must be noted that, habitual lateness to work and absenteeism are serious misdemeanors and offenders are subject to disciplinary action.

Consider these wise sayings: 1. “ What ever you resolve to do, do it quickly; do not defer to the evening what the morning can accomplish”

2. “ Procrastination is the thief of time”.

## **COMPUTER SKILLS**

Almost all nations of the world today do their work on computers, and you should be well versed in computers if you wish to succeed. Computer skills are therefore a must for all senior staff of the Service. The following may be required to start with:

**Basic skills.**

- Ability to switch on the computer;
- Ability to use a mouse to interact with elements on the screen;
- Being able to use the computer keyboard;
- Being able to shut down the computer properly after use;

**Intermediate skills.**

- Functional knowledge of word processing;
- How to use email;
- How to use the internet;
- Installing soft ware;

**CROSSCUTTING SKILLS:****EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION.**

In some organizations, attending to calls, arranging meetings and appointments, interacting with clients, maintaining office correspondence, sending emails, may be a part of your job. In all these, you require good language, grammar or oral communication.

In **oral communication**, the following tips essential:

- Focus on audience and say give them the information they want;
- Be concise and do not bore your visitors with long and unnecessary talk;
- Select most important piece of information to convey;
- Choose examples that are meaningful to clients;
- Pay full attention to audience and do not be doing other things at the same time. Indeed, ignore other tasks;
- Be diplomatic and nice to visitors- exhibit good interpersonal skills.

**Written communication:**

These include writing formal letters, memoranda, and minutes of meetings, reports, speeches, and electronic messages as well as posters and bulletin board notices.

Be concise, simple and self-explanatory. Being grandiloquent or verbose to one who does not know the words is indeed not good communication and should be avoided when writing these letters and reports mentioned above.

### **PAYING ATTENTION TO DETAIL**

Under normal circumstances, while at work, family and friends vying for your attention through phone calls, emails, text messages and other face-to-face encounters in the Office- it makes it difficult to pay attention to what is really important official work. This lack of detail can easily lead to absentmindedness in work places.

However, this should not be so because an Officer must pay attention to detail if she/he wants to succeed. Paying attention to detail means the officer is thorough in accomplishing a task with concern for all the areas involved, no matter how small. In dealing with Local Government Service machinery, care must be taken to do the right things at the right time.

There are examples of workers who were severely punished for being reckless or for doing shoddy work while at work.

To assist, the worker may take the following key behaviors serious:

- Keep the work check list covering all the details that might be over looked;
- Always check and recheck for mistakes before sending out letters or minutes of meetings or reports;
- Follow procedures exactly to make sure that all parts of a job are completed;
- Perform repetitive or routine tasks with care and attention;
- Review work carefully for completeness and accuracy;
- Make sure that equipment required for work are working before they are needed.

### **DECORUM**

Decorum means dignified propriety of behavior, speech, dress, e.t.c. It is the quality or state of being decorous. When an Officer dresses well, speaks politely, she/he acquires personal dignity or that the demeanor elevates her/his character.

Appearance/dressing is important and what we say are important. A local Government Service Senior Officer must appear decent and neat at work. Indeed, your dressing tells a story about you. As such, we expect you to always dress properly. Generally, therefore, men must appear as respectable gentlemen while women must appear as cute ladies. It is all about personal dignity.

### **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, let me leave this with you.



The above indicates that, you require administrative skills to gain competence in order to perform creditably in the Local Government Service. Sharpen your skills continuously for success.