



O-CITY PROJECT

MODULE IV.1 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



Erasmus+

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1. Lesson Document

Lesson 4 Topic 5 Conversation

Follow-up

Introduction

The end of a conversation or a meeting doesn't mean that the communication process engaged ends as well. Rather the opposite, this is a step that should conclude to the opening of a new phase linked to the implementation of decisions or solutions agreed during the conversation.

For this reason, follow-up matters. All the previous conversation and agreements reached are worthless if they are not followed by acts. Indeed, the art and science of follow up is a vital professional habit and it also matters in the context of communication, conversation and meetings.

When it comes to meeting tips, following up on a timely basis is a great way to monitor the decision taken and make sure that your conversation has reached its objective, and is being translated into concrete actions or measures.

Once this lesson is completed and approved, learners will be able to:

1. Report a meeting conclusions.
2. Engage actions that ensure that the meeting is followed by actions.

In this lesson, we will learn how to implement an efficient follow-up procedure after a conversation or a meeting takes place, so decisions taken are effectively implemented in the development of a project.

1. Reporting a conversation

You probably already experienced this exercise in primary or secondary school, when your teacher would show you an audio-visual content, or ask you to read a text, and then report in a synthetic way what is being said in the dialogue you heard... Well, this is the same.

Reporting decisions taken during a conversation or a meeting can be rather formal or informal, but in any case, always worth to be done so you are sure that all the participants taking part in this activity understood the same as you did, and agree

with the results achieved / decision taken, especially if action is expected from them because of this conversation.

There are different ways of reporting a conversation. You might do it orally, at the end of the meeting itself, by taking a few minutes to summarize what was said and the next steps to be undertaken. You can also send a short email with a few bullet points summarizing the conclusions. The most complete way of reporting would be the production of minutes.

a. Contents of a report

Whatever being the reporting solution chosen, some elements are good to include in this exercise:

- Greetings for the attendance
- Summary of main topics discussed and conclusions achieved
- Next expected steps
- Information on next meetings or follow-up procedure.
- Fix the channels for further communications needed
- You can eventually fix already a date and place for a next follow-up meeting

b. Reporting Style

Besides, this exercise is not as easy as a primary school request. It is actually a complex oral or written exercise that requests practice to reach a high level of clearness and fluidity, as well as capacity of synthesis, so it is accepted and used by all.

- Be synthetic. Taking notes during the meeting might help you to produce minutes. But do not confuse reporting and transcribing. This exercise is about reflecting the main points and conclusions of a conversation, not the entire debate: people would not pay attention to it. The objective of the report is to remind the main elements only and make sure that everybody is aware of the next steps to be done.

- If you want your report to be validated by all participants you need to be objective in your report and reflect well their respective positions. You should also avoid personal statements or opinions on the conclusions reached. The minutes of a meeting should be based facted.

- If you need to refer to other documents, just remind where people can find them, but do not try to summarize them or duplicate them.

c. Minutes writing and template

If you choose to report by writing minutes, you can create a synthetic template that will help you to structure your report. It might include, in addition to the elements mentioned in a):

- Type of meeting, date and place
- Purpose of the meeting
- Attendance list
- Resolutions taken and process (for instance if there were a vote)
- Table with a schedule for the next steps

Also, a general recommendation would be to write the minutes of a conversation as soon as possible after it takes place, while you still remember. In the same way, it is good to send them out quickly, so people are rapidly updated with your outcomes, and can send you eventual corrections if they disagree with some point.

2. Follow-up actions

We have seen that a meeting or a conversation should conclude, in a project context, with information shared by all on the next expected steps, which should now be transformed into concrete actions. Some techniques will help you to perform this check on actions:

- Actions to be taken should be clear so they can be implemented. Vaguely keeping things for an undetermined future won't lead to an action. Also, tasks that are too big will demotivate, so it is always good to divide a big action in several small steps that are easier to complete.
- Assign responsibilities or contact people for each of the actions to be taken. You might, during the meeting, decide to create smaller working teams or subgroups that will collaborate on a specific topic to be addressed and will be responsible for it.
- Agree on deadlines with the responsible persons, so they can commit better with those. You can create a calendar shared with all concerned people. This will also be a good occasion to fix priorities if those were not previously established.
- Create follow-up communication channels for sharing short issues regarding the implementation of the actions. Those can be short informal and individual talks in front of the coffee machine asking your peer how they are going, but also more formal during follow-up meetings, or online through emails, chats, etc.

- Create a checklist: you might create a form where all the pending actions are reported and that you and others can tick each time something is achieved. It can also take the form of a shared to-do list.
- You might use monitoring online applications such as Slack or Trello, that will help you share tasks with others and perform a follow-up.
- The follow-up activity should be performed on a regular basis until the entire actions decided during the conversation are performed.

Conclusion

Conversation and meeting are not just about talking with someone. In a professional context, or working on a specific project, it is a complex communication process arising from an initial purpose. It should be carefully prepared, developed and concluded, and that must be accompanied by follow-up action that will ensure that this initial purpose is met.