

Interview with

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You have introduced a meeting management tool with minutes creation in your company. How did that happen?

I have been with the company since 2011 and have carried out a variety of projects during that time. One of them was aimed at improving our meeting efficiency. It is at that point that I came across the meeting management tool MeetingBooster. Having been convinced by its features, we introduced it in the company in early 2018.

How would you describe your experience with it?

I am very enthusiastic and a real “power user”!



Would you say it is useful for medium-sized companies?

For us, definitely yes. We employ more than 1,800 people at three production sites, 350 of them in Germany. We have 21 committees that meet regularly, some every two weeks, others monthly or quarterly. That's quite a lot of meetings overall, and we have seen many efficiency improvements.



In the planning phase alone, preparing the agenda and sending the invitations takes us on average half-an-hour less per meeting compared to before. On top of that, taking the minutes also requires significantly less time.

How does the software handle the agenda and the invitations?

Previously I used to send an email to all the attendees before each meeting, asking them to give me their agenda items and an estimated timescale. Then I created the agenda and sent it

back to everyone. After that, changes were often needed, for instance because a participant had thought of a new point, more discussion time was needed for a particular topic, a planned agenda item was no longer relevant, or any other reason. Each time I had to adjust the contents of the agenda, reformat it and resend it.

Today I no longer have to send either the agenda or the invitations. Instead, all I have to do is to set up the meeting, and each participant can then suggest their discussion items, or, depending on the role I have assigned to them, enter the discussion items themselves, including the time required and the presenter. All the participants can see the current state of affairs at any time – and changes can be made until the last moment without any difficulty.

What are the benefits of creating the minutes using this tool?

As before, I use my laptop. When I go to a meeting, I start with the latest agenda, in which the individual discussion items and their timeframe are already entered. I can then type notes straight away as the meeting unfolds underneath each agenda item. There is no limit on the space available in the editor and I could enter several pages of text, but the default window size encourages restraint. I write much less than before, and that alone saves a lot of work.

In addition, I can indicate with a simple click whether the current topic corresponds to a discussion, a vote or a decision. I do not have to use colors or any other formatting to show this.

If the discussion results in a to-do list, I click the Tasks button to record who has to do what and

when. This information is then sent directly to the task owner during the meeting and pops up in his or her Outlook task list. I no longer have to create overviews and tables.

What about post-processing?

I take the minutes for two meetings a month, one of which lasts six hours. I used to write several pages of notes, and then edit them, shorten them, format them and create the to-do lists. That took up to three hours of extra time per meeting – which is why I always postponed it by days or even weeks.

Today I write less, because the structure of the editor makes it easier to be more concise. I still have to spell check the minutes, as this feature is not included in the software yet. That's about it as far as post-processing goes. The to-dos are already with the participants, so that I can check their progress at any time at the touch of a button. This is all very good for transparency.

And what about archiving?

That is another huge advantage. In the past, because the minutes were filed in date order, I often had to search for a long time before I could find a reference to a particular decision. Today I only have to enter a keyword and the software lists all the entries containing this term via a full-text search.

This interview is an excerpt from the practical guide “Writing minutes” (“Protokolle schreiben”) by Tanja Bögner, Barbara Kettl-Römer and Cordula Natusch, which will be published by Linde International as an updated and extended edition in May 2019.

