# THE LOST ART OF NOTETAKING

*"What gets written, gets done."*

A few months ago, Will Hermens, a technology leader at Nike, reached out with a suggestion to do a blog on the importance of notetaking in corporate America. His insight sparked a conversation and ultimately this collaboration.

We trust what follows will support you in your leadership journey. Mastering the art of notetaking can move you from being good at your work to being excellent.

In today's fast-paced world, capturing clear actions, owners, and due dates is non-negotiable for leaders who want to drive results, accountability, and speed.

## Let's explore why leaders skip notetaking:

"If you don't capture it, you will lose it."

- It feels like a chore.
- It seems like a waste of time.
- "I'm not good at it."
- "I'll remember everything—I have a good memory."
- "AI will handle it."
- "It's not my meeting."
- "It's not my thing."
- "My manager should be taking notes during our 1:1 meeting."

These mindsets quietly stall leadership growth and undermine trust.

## Benefits of Notetaking:

"Clear notes create clear action."

- Turn an average meeting into an excellent one.
- Adds value to your consistent success
- Capture actions, owners, and delivery dates precisely.

- Hold yourself and others accountable.
- Help people feel heard and valued.
- Retain complex ideas from discussions.
- Uncover missed opportunities after meetings.
- Stop endless negativity and rambling.
- Summarize meetings with accuracy and impact.
- Align teams faster and prepare for next steps.
- Avoid confusion about deadlines and deliverables.
- Support teammates by sharing notes.
- Build trust by sending thoughtful handwritten follow-ups.

# How to Master the Practice of Notetaking:

"Notes are the currency of leadership accountability."

- Set the tone: Ask permission to take notes – make people feel comfortable.
- Always carry a notebook: Great leaders, like Elliot Hill (Nike's current President), walks around with a notebook. He never wants to rely on memory alone.
- Capture timestamps, key phrases, and language used. Draw a star next to it to remind you that you want to revisit this statement.
- Document specifics and quotes for clarity.
- Highlight inspiration to fuel future conversations.
- Capture clear actions, owners, and due dates. If next steps aren't clear, the meeting wasn't optimized.
- Focus on key themes, not every word. Summarize the core topics and discussions.
- Write down your questions. Ask during or after the meeting—don't lose them.
- Document your requests. Clear asks drive faster execution and accountability.
- Record decisions with context. Capture what was decided and why (data, numbers, reasoning), or risk losing clarity.

## Remember the 4 A's of Notetaking:

| A | Description |
|---|---|
| Agenda | What topics were discussed? |
| Attendance | Who was there? |
| Action Items | What needs to be done? |
| Agreements | What decisions were made? |

# Notetaking Best Practices During 1:1s

*"Presence is the greatest gift you give your people."*

- **Be present:** Listen actively and document key themes, coaching, and feedback. Memory fades — written notes ensure accountability and progress tracking.
- **Prepare ahead:** Spend 5–10 minutes outlining topics and goals. Preparation sharpens conversations and makes even tough discussions more effective.
- **Leverage tools, wisely**: AI can help capture notes and actions, but don't rely on it alone. Handwritten notes ensure critical takeaways don't slip through.
- **Stay focused**: Typing during meetings can be distracting. When possible, close the laptop and write by hand — it promotes presence and better connection.
- **Find your balance**: Some leaders prefer handwritten notes, others digital — what matters is consistent, thoughtful documentation that drives clarity and action.

***Will's Pro-tip: Handwritten notes keep you engaged—and show your team you are truly listening.***

## Final Leadership Affirmation

Write + Repeat: "After every meeting, I review my notes and highlight at least one insight I would have missed. This prevents mistakes, accelerates action, and strengthens my leadership."

## Blog Spotlight Leader

**William Hermens**
*Director of Change & Release Management — Supply Chain & Planning Technology, Nike*

Will leads a global team driving innovation, operational excellence, and growth for Nike. With an *athlete-first* mentality, he unlocks bold ideas that drive Nike's future.

## Have an Idea for a Blog?

We'd love to hear it. Reach out if you'd like to co-author and be featured in an upcoming MDC blog!

—Summar and Mark