

BSB 7.0

BSBLDR414

**LEAD TEAM
EFFECTIVENESS**

BSBLDR414

Lead team effectiveness

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1



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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBLDR414 Lead team effectiveness*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at:

www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this Learner Guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	These highlight key learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice Tasks	Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Summaries	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning Checkpoints	There is a Learning Checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which Learning Checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepares workplace plans that communicate intent and elicits feedback clearly and effectively
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in discussions or provides information using structure and language appropriate to the audience and situation
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selects and uses appropriate conventions and protocols when communicating with team members Adapts personal communication style to model required behaviours, build trust and positive working relationships and to show respect for the opinions and values of others Plays a lead role in situations requiring effective collaboration, demonstrating conflict resolution skills and ability to engage and motivate others
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops, implements and monitors plans and processes to ensure team engagement and effectiveness Uses formal analytical thinking techniques to identify issues and generate possible solutions, seeking input from others, as required

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Plan team outcomes	1A Lead team to identify team objectives and processes	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Support your team to document objectives and processes	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Encourage team to incorporate innovation and productivity measures into work plans	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Lead and support team to meet expected outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2: Promote team cohesion	2A Provide opportunities for team input	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Support team members in taking responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Provide feedback to team members	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Address issues identified by team members	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Model expected behaviour and approaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3: Supervise team performance	3A Encourage team members to collaborate in team activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Support team to identify and solve problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Model work contributions to your team	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 4: Liaise with management	4A Establish communication with line management	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4B Communicate information from the line management team	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4C Communicate unresolved issues that require action to line management	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4D Communicate issues raised by management to the team to action	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



Topic 1 | Plan team outcomes

- 1A Lead team to identify team objectives and processes
- 1B Support your team to document objectives and processes
- 1C Encourage team to incorporate innovation and productivity measures into work plans
- 1D Lead and support team to meet expected outcomes

1A Lead team to identify team objectives and processes

Team leaders are expected to play a vital role in establishing objectives that can be achieved through work processes.

Team members do not operate in isolation. If a team is to be an effective unit, all members need to understand the team's objectives, each member's role and responsibilities, workload priorities, time lines, the expected standard of work, and how they are progressing.

Misunderstandings arise when people are unaware of their tasks, make assumptions, or do not know how their work fits into the organisation's overall objectives and strategic directions. The role of the team leader is to communicate with team members to ensure a common understanding and to promote a culture that encourages easy access to information, cooperative planning and commitment to team and organisational objectives.

Team leaders must play the key role in driving their teams to higher performance standards. This requires them to correctly identify team objectives and have a thorough understanding of the work processes required to meet those objectives. To effectively accomplish this, team leaders must consider the following:

- benefits of providing effective leadership
- the personality types a leader will encounter
- identifying team objectives and processes
- establishing team objectives and processes
- typical roles and responsibilities within the work team
- creating effective work team dynamics
- traits of a successful team.

What is a team?

A work team is a group of people who work with a shared purpose to accomplish common objectives.

A team can be defined in many ways, depending on the situation. Teams exist in many contexts, including recreation teams, sporting teams, and of course teams of people who work together. Most people are familiar with the idea of being in a team and have worked in teams of some sort. This may have been organising a staff party with a fellow employee or being a member of a cross-functional team responsible for implementing a major project.

Although people's experiences of what teams do and how they do things differ, definitions of teams have a few common themes:

- Teams involve several people, with one member taking a leadership role.
- A team activity is united or organised.
- A team is cooperative and has a sense of belonging.
- The team must work together to achieve its common goal.

In a team, people work interdependently, communicate frequently and see themselves as part of a specific group. Successful teams also need effective leaders. A team is not just a collection of people working on the same thing. A group of employees is not a team just because they work in the same area or on the same shift. Teams have different characteristics to groups. Teamwork is characterised by a combined effort and focus, while individuals in a group focus on their own efforts and objectives. An effective team relies on all members taking responsibility for its success, even if it has a leader, as most teams do.

It takes a lot of hard work, the right support from the wider organisation and commitment from team members and leaders for a group to evolve into a team. This does not mean that teams are good and work groups are bad. In fact, there are situations when having a work group is preferable to having a team. Work groups and teams are compared below.

Work groups	Teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leader of a group issues instructions, and disciplines and controls group members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leader of a team is like a coach, helping team members achieve.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of a group are given instructions and make decisions individually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A team is self-directed and makes decisions as a unit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group meetings are led by the manager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members of a team actively participate in team meetings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups are measured on and emphasise individual achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams focus on performance as a team.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group members receive information from their manager and are not encouraged to feed information or opinions back up, or among themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team freely expresses their opinions and ideas to any other member of the team.

What defines a successful work team?

Cohesiveness, collaboration and the ability to complete tasks at a high standard are traits of successful teams.

As a team leader, one of your major responsibilities is to lead the team effectively to achieve its outcomes as well as the organisation's objectives.

This might involve meeting sales targets, keeping customers happy, completing tasks within a set time or budget – or all of these things.

An effective team, however, is more than a group of people who can achieve objectives, although getting things done is central to any measure of success or effectiveness.

A successful team will gain a reputation in the wider organisation as an effective team. Other staff will want to join the team and other managers will want to make their team achieve similar results. Team success implies that the team members and leaders are working well and contributing positively. Below are some qualities that apply to different people in successful teams.

Characteristics of effective teams

In a successful team, team members:

- work well together and respect each other
- learn from each other's experiences and skills
- contribute to goal-setting, planning, implementation and measurement
- proactively look at better ways of doing things
- share information and ideas
- think in terms of 'we' and not 'I'.

In a successful team, the team leader:

- promotes team objectives to team members
- helps team members achieve objectives
- communicates openly and honestly with all relevant stakeholders
- shares information with others
- makes decisions that are in the team's best interests
- encourages the team to take responsibility
- listens to and learns from others
- knows team members professionally and personally
- knows what team members want to achieve and their career objectives
- motivates, mentors and coaches
- trusts team members to complete tasks effectively
- helps establish and then works to achieve team values, standards and norms (protocols).

Benefits of leading teams to complete work tasks

Work objectives can be achieved more efficiently when working in a functional team.

In a workplace environment, teamwork is necessary to complete tasks to an expected standard. Working effectively in teams is essential to complete complex workplace tasks.

Teams offer organisations and individuals many benefits. Working in teams allows us to learn from each other's experience within an organisation, or to gain new skills when completing tasks. You may observe a colleague who has a more effective way of completing a task. Watching them and replicating their skills contributes to a cooperative work environment that improves the business. This atmosphere also encourages team members to collaborate through demonstrating or teaching others about improved work methods. This collaborative system also underlines the expected standards of the workplace; members of the team can show others the performance standards they are expected to reach. Below are some benefits of effectively leading teams to complete work tasks.

Teams enable completion of large-scale projects	Many organisations rely on projects in order to get work done, from developing a new product to moving locations. Many of these projects are either very complicated or have a short time frame in which they need to be completed. One person working alone may not be able to finish the project due to time limitations or because they do not have all the skills needed.
A team is easier to manage	A team of people all working towards the same goal is easier to manage than several people all working independently. Organisations that have a team-based structure can have a 'flatter' management structure with fewer managers. Frontline managers have a more direct link to senior management and information is better able to flow up and down the organisation.
Teams can offer new solutions	We all have a unique perception when analysing tasks. Different people looking at the same problem will find different solutions. A team of people can conceive of many ways to solve a problem and then develop a solution that incorporates the best aspects of all their ideas.
Teams create a sense of belonging	Working in a team allows staff members to interact with colleagues, make friends, build a sense of camaraderie and share information. People spend a lot of time at work and, increasingly, organisations are recognising that people who are happy at work are more likely to be productive and stay with the company for longer. Employees need to have constructive relationships with colleagues and a sense of belonging to their workplace.

Identifying team objectives and processes

An effective team leader should work with their team to accurately identify work objectives and processes.

Objectives are broad outcomes a team wants to achieve that are ongoing and central to the success of the business. They are benchmarks that indicate a work team or organisation is functioning effectively. Objectives can be wide or narrow in scope and can focus on any part of the work process. A leader must work with their team to identify which objectives are achievable and relevant to their tasks. Work processes are the procedures in place to help facilitate the achievement of objectives. For example, an organisation may identify an improved customer service standard as an objective; they determine that the process to ensure that is to adequately train their team members in effective customer management techniques.

As team leader, you can use the following documents and methods to identify the necessary objectives and processes.

Organisational charts

These are visual summaries you can refer to. They identify the various objectives and processes within an organisation, and the detailed charts also include summaries of the responsibilities of team member roles. These charts are especially useful in large organisations when you need to identify seniority or who to report issues to.

Employment contracts and performance reviews

These documents outline the objectives a team member must work towards, the level of standard they need to reach and who they report to. Reviewing these documents can help you identify necessary objectives and processes you will need to implement. Reviews also detail the strengths of your work team and this information can help you design an effective team.

Business plan

Depending on the size and complexity of a business or organisation, a business or operational plan may be a simple two- or three-page document or a complex and detailed report examining all aspects of an organisation. A business plan is a confidential document that underpins all the organisation's business practices. Because it is used as a strategic planning tool, it is usually only available to management, staff members and relevant bodies such as board members, investors or financial organisations.

A business plan outlines specific objectives and the process required to achieve them.

Policies and procedures

Policies are a set of rules employees should follow when completing tasks. These policies can be adapted to all aspects of a business – WHS, financial, operational, human resources, marketing etc. These policies are communicated to employees and team leaders both verbally and on official documents.

Policies detail exactly how the team leader and work team must communicate with each other when completing work processes.

Policies also discuss which stakeholders you should consult with to determine which objectives and processes your work team will work towards.

Establishing team objectives and processes

A team leader plays a vital role in developing the objectives of their team and the processes they must follow to achieve them.

Team leaders and managers agree that having a clearly stated, well-understood goal is a major motivator for team members. If everyone is clear on what needs to be done and understands the part they play in achieving the team's objectives, then individual and team effectiveness will increase. Your role is establishing relevant objectives and processes for your work team; this means embedding knowledge of them in the everyday work habits of your team.

For example, if you are managing a customer service team, you must ensure that team members have a clear understanding of what their personal objectives are, what the organisational objectives are and the work processes they must follow to ensure they are achieved.

A team leader should support a team member to recognise how their daily tasks align to work objectives and required processes. This will improve their performance and the subsequent performance of the organisation, as objectives are what employees work towards achieving. A team member trying to achieve a goal not relevant to their role or responsibility will, ultimately, not fulfil the task they were employed to complete. This reflects on them as an employee poorly and provides little of benefit to the organisation.

The work team needs to feel their actions are directly contributing to the achievement of their objectives. When aligning your team members' objectives to their role, consider the following:

- be prepared to provide official documents that outline the specific objectives of the team and the processes they need to follow
- align team objectives and processes to organisational objectives and processes

- consult with your team members when establishing objectives with them – ensure they contribute to the process as they may be able to provide information about their responsibilities you were not aware of
- provide regular and detailed feedback to the team about how their objectives are progressing – schedule regular meetings and be willing to intervene if you observe deviation from team task descriptions
- facilitate team communication where opinions and ideas are shared freely
- inform the team of the purpose of the objectives and processes they are following – a team member may be unaware of a particular task requirement and you, as the manager, should inform them of their responsibility
- encourage the team to work innovatively and productively when meeting their objectives.

Creating effective work team dynamics

It is important to construct a work team that includes a wide range of relevant skills and personality types.

In most modern organisations, work is completed and decisions are made by teams of people who work together on achieving set objectives. Teams exist at all levels of organisations. They are expected to plan, implement and measure their work as well as look for ways to improve their work methods.

In your role as team leader, you will be asked to encourage your team members and work with them to complete their objectives. Work group leaders provide instructions to team members and ensure those expectations are met. Both roles are challenging; you will need to find a mix of skills and personality types that complement each other. Some work teams can fail at achieving their objectives because the mix does not work.

Dr Meredith Belbin, an English management consultant, conducted a well-known examination of personality-based team roles. He and his team of researchers studied the behaviour of managers from all over the world for nine years. Over time, the researchers found that the success of the teams was largely dependent on the presence of particular types of behaviour exhibited by the team members. They observed that there were nine types of 'successful' behaviours that made a positive contribution to a team, split into three broad categories.

Dr Belbin and his researchers gave each of these roles names and described the kinds of attributes each role possessed. They found that effective teams usually had a balance of all nine roles. These role definitions are intended to help team members learn about themselves rather than 'pigeon-hole' them. People take on different roles in different teams. However, when used wisely, the nine roles can be a useful and interesting learning tool for managers and teams. Below are the broad categories and description of each role.

Action-oriented roles

- Shapers thrive on pressure and drive the team to higher standards.
- Implementers take the lead in planning.
- Complete finishers scrutinise the final product to ensure it meets expectations.

People-oriented roles

- Team workers perceive weaknesses in the team and use their personal skills to support others.
- Coordinators delegate task responsibilities to other team members.
- Resource investigators uses questioning an inquisitive personality to generate ideas for the work team.

Cerebral roles

- Specialists bring technical knowledge about a specific component of the task to the team.
- Plants are creative problem solvers who offer unconventional solutions.
- Monitor evaluators provide objective evaluation of how the team is progressing.

Typical roles and responsibilities in work teams

Team leaders need to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of people within their work team.

Roles and responsibilities in teams vary dramatically depending on the team, the organisation and the environment or industry in which it is operating. In all situations, though, it is crucial that team members – regardless of their role in the team – are aware of their responsibilities. Individual job descriptions usually set out the responsibilities of a particular role; however, it may be necessary and useful to discuss individual and team responsibilities in the team context.

One or two responsibilities outlined in a job description may be particularly important to the success of the team. Additional responsibilities created because of a team goal may need to be added to an individual job description or work plan. Team roles generally depend on a person's skills and knowledge. The role of a person in a team is often evident in the title of their position or is summed up in their job description. Below are some roles and responsibilities you may see in your workplace.

Finance

Team members who work in the finance department support the organisation in documenting cash flow. Some roles include:

- accountants whose responsibilities include completing key financial documents
- finance compliance officers whose responsibilities include making sure team members are aware of financial processes
- financial advisors whose responsibilities include finding cost effective suppliers, recommending savings and adjusting budgets.

Marketing

Marketing roles are focused on promoting the products and brand of the organisation. Responsibilities can include:

- producing print and digital advertisements
- managing the organisation's social media accounts
- gathering useful market research.

Customer service

Customer service roles include receptionists, sales staff or technical support. Responsibilities can include:

- answer customer queries
- responding to customer complaints
- providing technical assistance to customers.

Human resources

Human resources roles ensure staff within an organisation can support the objectives of the organisation. Responsibilities can include:

- training new employees
- delivering performance reviews to team members
- resolving disputes between team members.

Leading an effective work process

Design a process that will allow your work team to complete their objectives efficiently.

To work effectively, team members will expect to follow a consistent order of tasks that is predictable, and that they can reliably plan around. This allows them to develop work habits that they can use and employ strategies to complete work tasks without surprise or unnecessary stress. Leading a work team is best achieved by providing a 'road map' to your team. Team leaders and managers can provide a written document of this information so team members have a summary document they can refer back to. This can reduce confusion about roles or expectations.

Below is an example of a work process 'road map' that can be applied broadly to most workplaces. Not every step can be or needs to be followed, and this example does not account for unexpected events or unconventional production processes.

Define the work purpose

Identify the work purpose of why you are completing the tasks. Inform your work team of the purpose to generate their enthusiasm.

Identify the objectives of the work team

List the overall broad objectives of the task for the work team. Ensure they align with the objectives of the organisation.

Outline your objectives to achieve the goal

Decide on which objectives you will have to meet so that the overall goal can be achieved.

Identify and agree on team roles

- └ Determine which team members have the skills to help the work team meet the objectives.

Develop a work plan

- └ Document a work plan that sets out:
 - organisational objectives that are suitable to the size and focus of the organisation
 - objectives for the work team to achieve based on task requirements, roles and responsibilities of each team member
 - agreed principles of team cohesion that outline the conduct and values that should be demonstrated when working collaboratively
 - establishing productivity and innovation KPIs
 - work tasks to be completed
 - work processes such as seeking input, providing feedback and conflict resolution techniques
 - support mechanisms such as training and open communication policies
 - specific WHS policies
 - meeting and privacy processes.

Document guidelines on how the team will work

- └ Provide a list of behavioural and conduct expectations to your team that clearly sets out what is expected of them in the completion of these tasks.

Example

Leading a work team

Freda is a team leader in a retail company named Snazzy Suede Shoes. She oversees the Queensland sales team. The team has a clear understanding of what they are expected to do (sell a high volume of products) and they have a sales target set by the national sales manager (\$100,000 worth of product each month).

However, Freda decides the team needs her to provide clearer leadership on how they should meet their goal and work together effectively. After thinking about the issue, Freda decides to document a primary objective description that also outlines how the work team will meet this objective. The document will be distributed to all members of the team.

The document reads:

'To generate additional sales from existing clients and build our client base through excellent service and attention to detail.'

On the document, Freda assigns tasks and responsibilities to each member based on their skills and experience. She gathers this information from their performance reviews. Freda determines how they will achieve the \$100,000 target each month by growing existing accounts and looking for new ones.

The document also establishes guidelines that the members agree to work by, including:

- how they will make decisions
'The team will meet weekly to discuss important issues and will make a recommendation to the team leader who will make a decision.'
- the standards to which they will work
'All queries will be replied to within 24 hours.'
- how issues and concerns in the team will be managed
'The team will meet once a week to discuss and resolve issues and concerns.'
- how the team would want disagreements or differences resolved
'The team leader will act as mediator.'

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Draw a line to match each term about team and group work characteristics to its definition.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| » Team communication | » The leader of a team is like a coach, helping members achieve common objectives. |
| » Work group communication | » The leader of a group issues instructions, disciplines and controls work of members. |
| » Team leader | » Group members receive and act on information from their manager and are not encouraged to feed information or opinions back up, or among themselves. |
| » Group leader | » Communication and information flows up, down and around in a team situation; information is shared between members. |

Question 2

Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow to set team objectives and guidelines for working together.

- Team identifies and agrees on the team roles
- Team sets out guidelines how members will work with each other
- Team determines their team purpose
- Team sets their objectives for the work plan
- Team identifies their objectives
- Team develops a team work plan

Question 3

List three team member roles of a team working in a warehouse servicing supermarkets. Select one role and list two responsibilities for the role.

Question 4

Write in your own definitions of a team purpose, team goal and team objective.

Team purpose

Team goal

Team objective

Question 5

Which of the following statements relate to a team leader's responsibility to lead the team to identify and establish team objectives? Tick all that apply.

- Communicating about performance measurement of team members
- Consulting with team members about the time lines to achieve outcomes
- Developing team processes to ensure team engagement
- Encouraging team to take responsibility
- Directing action plans to team members

1B Support your team to document objectives and processes

Team leaders will need to assist and guide to their team members by documenting key information related to the work tasks.

Your role is not limited to issuing instructions and making assessments about the contributions of team members. It is an expectation that you will support the members of your team to improve their performance. Many team leaders see their role best described as 'umpire'; overseeing the workplace, noting infringements and issuing penalties. In the modern workplace, you should perceive your role as that of 'coach'; meaning that you are finding ways to motivate and engage your team to improve their performance.

Providing documents to team members that outline key information is crucial to creating an engaged and successful work team. This is part of your role as 'coach'. Rather than criticise when a team member does not meet an expectation, be proactive and train your team how to put themselves in a position to work to a high standard. Many of your team members will not be able to memorise every single aspect of what is expected of them. Knowing the purpose of tasks, objectives of the organisation, their own objectives, and roles and responsibilities of others should be documented in written form.

In supporting your team by documenting objectives and processes, you should consider the following:

- types of team and work plans
- actions a team leader should make
- documenting relevant objectives
- written communication techniques.

Types of work teams

Identify the type of team you are leading before preparing a team work plan.

The first step in documenting a work plan is identifying the structure of the team you are working with. The team you are working with can vary from the project you are working on, the organisation you are working with and the group you have been tasked to manage. Below are some examples of common types of teams.

Working team	Perhaps the most common type of team, a working team is organised around the structure of the organisation. Members of the team work on similar tasks and need to have similar or complementary skills and experience – for example, a sales team, a team of nurses on a hospital ward, a firefighting team, or a customer service team.
Cross-functional	In cross-functional or multidisciplinary teams, members are drawn from different functional areas in the organisation, such as sales, manufacturing and finance. Different people are needed to share their unique skills or knowledge with others in the team. In cross-functional teams, people are usually chosen for a significant reason, so it is important to ensure that team members are all able to participate in team discussions.
Project team	Project teams (task forces or special purpose teams) are quite common and often form to deal with a particular issue or problem that, once solved or investigated, sees the team disband. Some team members may be assigned to work on the project for the duration or for part of the project time frame and then return to their usual work. Or, at the conclusion of one project, they might join a new project team.
Individual and self-managed team	The defining characteristic of these teams is the absence of a team leader. Team members need to share the leadership function. For example, a string quartet organises itself without a conductor or leader.
Management team	Management teams, as their name suggests, make management decisions. Most organisations have management teams, some at operational and some at strategic levels in the organisation. A typical management team might consist of a finance manager, a sales manager, a production manager and a human resources manager, and is led by a managing director or CEO.
Remote team	Remote teams are teams whose members are located in various places. They are separated by distance but may also be separated by time if they are in different time zones.

Types of work plans

When supporting the work team in documenting the work plan, ensure it is aligned to the tasks your work team must complete.

Just as objectives need to be understood by all team members, plans need to be agreed on, clearly stated and easy to follow. Like team objectives, plans are subject to change depending on the success of the organisation, the focus and strategic objectives it sets for itself and external influences such as competitor behaviour and economic and legislative changes.

There are a range of work plans that can be used to support your team. Below is a list of work plan types.

Team plans

Team plans are developed by the team and describe how the team and individual members will achieve their objectives. Any specific projects that teams will complete will be detailed in this plan.

Individual work plans

Individual work plans are developed by each team member in consultation with their manager. These plans align with other team members' plans and describe how the team will achieve their objectives.

Operational plans

Operational plans are developed by senior management and passed down to teams in the organisation. These plans will detail strategic planning for the long-term view. These plans will include service delivery processes or product manufacturing, outsourcing or resourcing processes.

Action plans

Action plans deal with a sub-section or component of the broader plan to which the team is working.

Business plans

Business plans are focused on short-, medium- and long-term objectives, and do not include a lot of operational detail. They include details of what was discussed during stakeholder consultation.

WHS plans

Work health and safety (WHS) plans describe how the team should work in order to create and promote a safe workplace.

Supporting your team in documenting work team objectives

The objectives you document should be specific to the task of the work team and should be achievable.

The objectives of your work team need to be documented and provided to all members of the work team. As a team leader, you are expected to support your team in documenting these objectives. It is true that many teams have difficulty in designing objectives that are suited to their task, can be achieved with their skillset and are aligned to organisational objectives. They may also lack the opportunities or skills to get together as a team to document these objectives. Your role is to facilitate this. A 'good' objective is one that is specific, measurable and achievable, and is understood by the whole team. Below is a list of strategies you may like to use as a guide when you are supporting your team to document objectives.

Provide a forum to properly discuss and document objectives. This may involve setting aside a time to document objectives as a group. You may also have to book a room or area where this can be done away from noise and other distractions.

Ensure team members fully understand the documentation and objective identification process. This may involve answering any questions or providing written documents.

Provide relevant recording materials, hardware or software to properly document these objectives. Examples include paper, writing utensils, text software such as Word, or laptops. Your organisation may require you to provide templates on which your team needs to document these objectives.

Gather feedback from team members about the planning process to better support the documentation of objectives.

Share organisational information (such as plans, resources, time lines) to help document objectives accurately and within organisational expectations.

Follow organisational and legislative requirements such as WHS, anti-discrimination and consultation policies when meeting to document objectives.

Train your team members to professionally present these objective documents and display them in common areas.

Supporting your work team to document work processes

Every workplace has processes in place to improve team performance; you must help your work team document these.

Business organisations put a great deal of time and financial resources into embedding processes that improve the performance of staff. These processes are complex; examples include consulting widely to gather ideas about improving performance, communicating a variety of methods eliciting feedback about performance and communicating legislative requirements. Some team members will be reticent to participate in these processes. A vital role of the team leader is to support their team in producing relevant documentation about these processes.

Team leaders can support their teams in many ways.

Consultation	Consult with key stakeholders such as team members, other managers or external people. Provide writing utensils or software so the team can record their opinions or ideas. Be willing to share your decisions in writing or email form with the stakeholders you consulted with.
Using a variety of communication methods	The members of your work team will have a wide variety of language and reading skills. When documenting work plans, encourage use of multiple communication methods. Details about resources, plans, time lines and responsibilities should be shared verbally, in writing and digitally by team members.
Gathering feedback	Feedback is where other stakeholders provide assessments about the success of work processes. It gives others an opportunity to express their opinion about what could be improved. Be sure to provide opportunities for your work team to gather feedback and offer any training about how to ask questions or collect information.
Documenting compliance with organisational requirements	Team leaders should provide documents to their team about compliance requirements. This can be information about WHS requirements, issues related to sexual harassment and racial discrimination or organisational policies about communication and task completion.

Documenting your team work plan

Ensure your team follows organisational procedures when documenting work plans.

As a manager, you need to support the team in developing a plan that they understand and can work to. They should know that plans are workable documents that help the team reach its full potential. Regardless of the type of team you are leading, team plans need to include the following planning components:

- team objectives that are relevant to their area of work
- organisational objectives that are based on the size of the workplace and mission
- correlations between the work team objectives and organisational objectives
- specific tasks and actions required to meet objectives
- the specific roles and responsibilities of each team member
- KPIs of the team based on productivity and innovation
- principles that outline acceptable conduct and values when working as a team—these should be agreed on by the work team
- work process descriptions; for example, feedback procedures, forums for generating input and conflict resolution procedures
- support procedures that outline training programs and communication policies.

In addition to these components, you should ensure you follow organisational procedures when developing and documenting team work processes.

Acknowledge staff

Your team may need to acknowledge the name and contributions of staff in your documents. These staff may have contributed to the document, so acknowledging this contribution supports team morale. Other documents may require you to identify which team member provided a useful idea.

Accessibility

Ensure these documents are accessible enough to be read and understood by all team members, regardless of their language skills. A team member may be able to speak English clearly but not be able to read complex documents or understand some terminology. Offer them the opportunity to examine the language used or to have someone translate it for them.

Privacy standards

Your team must comply with all Commonwealth, state or territory privacy legislation that governs the use of personal and client information. Your planning documents should not reveal the personal details of colleagues or customers.

To read more about privacy standards, visit the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner:

aspirelr.link/oaic

Organisational style guides

Your team must format documents according to organisational requirements. These requirements may require you to use logos and water marks, formatting specifications, referencing source styles and word lengths. Ensure you proofread your document.

Example

Supporting your team to document objectives and work processes

Livinia is a team leader of reception staff at a real estate agency. The owner of the business has asked her to prepare a plan for the work team. Livinia produces some feedback cards that she asks clients to complete after they have used the services of the real estate agency. At the conclusion of the month, she analyses them and writes down key weaknesses.

Livinia produces a plan, written in clear and direct language, and emails it to all relevant staff.

Objective	Tasks	Responsibility
The business projects a positive image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a social media page for the business Update signage around workplace Have external windows regularly cleaned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelle has IT training and can design the social media page Livinia to organise the other two items
Clients are adequately informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train staff how to use the database Produce reference manual for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Livinia to train staff and produce training manual
Reception operations are efficient and streamlined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce clutter on desks Use paper recycling bins more regularly Use wireless headsets for client phone conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Davis to be responsible for this role

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Write in your definition of a team work plan, organisational plan and individual work plan.

Team work plan	
Organisational plan	
Individual work plan	

Question 2

Write an example of a team objective for a customer service team.

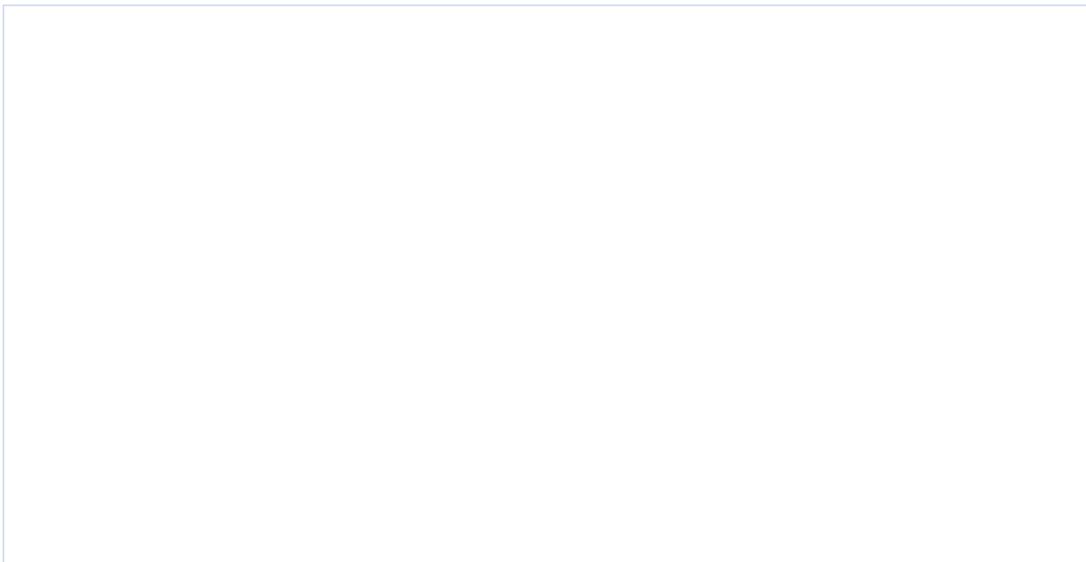
Question 3

Outline the structure of the team work plan. Explain what organisational processes are relevant to planning team outcomes.



Question 4

List three actions stating how you as a team leader would support your team members in documenting identified objectives and team work processes.



1C Encourage team to incorporate innovation and productivity measures into work plans

Team leaders are expected to support their team in adapting practices that increase production and creativity.

A commitment to innovation and productivity are vital to the ongoing success of every business. Organisations that can effectively implement productive practices and innovative ideas will have a competitive edge over those who carry on with the same unsuccessful processes.

Economic conditions go through cycles and have peaks and troughs. The way organisations react to these cycles often determines how well they succeed or if they will survive. During downward economic cycles, many organisations are less focused on how to manage their talent and engage their employees, and instead focus on cutting costs. Some short-sighted leaders may even think that employee engagement is no longer important as their employees will also focus on job security rather than productivity and innovation.

Knowing how to drive productivity and innovation is a valuable skill for any team leader. To do so, consider the following:

- implementing productivity measures in the workplace
- incorporating innovative strategies
- encouraging your team to participate in these practices.

Implementing productivity measures in the workplace

Knowing how to incorporate practices that improve the ability of your business to increase productivity is a key role of team leaders.

Productivity refers to the total amount of goods or services produced by a business. A productive organisation is able to meet the demands of customers in a timely manner while creating a respectful work atmosphere that allows team members to focus on their task. Productivity is a primary goal of every business; ultimately, being productive means to succeed.

Productivity can be measured in a variety of ways. A business that produces goods such as textiles or cars can measure their productivity in terms of goods produced over a given time period; a manufacturer that makes 400 units in a week compared to 300 units the previous week has improved their productivity. Service businesses can define their productivity in terms of clients' service; a hairdresser that services 230 clients

in November compared to 270 in December has suffered a decline in productivity. Productivity can also be measured in customer retention rate; the more customers who return, the more productive your business is. A high revenue per client is another indicator of productivity.

Most businesses have issues which prevent them from achieving their desired levels of productivity. For example, modern team leaders have observed that some team members are too easily distracted by technological devices and social media. A lack of communication skills can prevent team members from being able to work at an optimum level. Organisations who have international markets often report that unreliable technological and physical distance are barriers that hamper their productivity. Below are some examples of measurement that can increase a business's productivity.

Productivity measures

- Improving customer service skills to increase the speed of service
- Reducing delivery time of products
- Identifying barriers to productivity and eliminating them
- Delegating appropriate number of tasks to team members
- Maintaining adequate levels of stock and resources
- Reducing distractions around the workplace
- Utilising technology to speed up the pace of service or production
- Ensuring team members are adequately trained to work more efficiently
- Eliminating tasks that are not important; focus on completing vital tasks
- Soliciting team member feedback that instructions are clear and direct
- Ensuring tasks for team members are achievable within their existing skillset
- Giving appropriate amount of feedback to team members about performance

Incorporating innovation and productivity measures into work plans

Organisations increase their success rate when they find new ways to operate.

Innovation can be divided into two categories – finding new products or services to sell to the market; and, selling existing products in a new way. Apple demonstrated the first type of innovation when it launched the iPhone; a radically new product compared to other phones on the market. UberEATS is an example of the second type of innovation; they are a business that is providing a new type of access to existing foods made by restaurants.

Your role as team leader is to ensure innovation and productivity measures are incorporated into the work plans of your team. This can be achieved by supporting your team's documentation measures; provision of examples of measures you have used previously, helping to monitor your work team's progress in achieving these measures and answering questions from your work team about the suitability of measures they suggest.

Below are innovation measures you can use. These Key Performance Indicators should be expressed numerically for greater objectivity.

Innovation measures

- The total number of innovative initiatives completed as a team (for example, utilising a new delivery service)
- Customer feedback data from new products or service delivery methods (gather from customer surveys, for example)
- Revenue generated from new products or services
- The amount of positive feedback received from team members about innovative training methods (gathered from team member engagement surveys)
- Total social media likes and comments on digital advertisements of new products and services
- Return on Investment for the new products or services developed

Productivity is the total amount of goods or services produced by the work team. A primary objective of every work team is to be as productive as possible; achieving this means the various aspects of a work team are functioning well. As a team leader, you are expected to help define productivity measure for your team to identify. As with innovation measures, ideally, they will be expressed numerically.

Productivity measures

- The total number of goods or services produced by the work team in a specified time frame (hour, day, week, month)
- The total time it takes to produce one service (handling a customer complaint, for example) or one good (manufacturing a product, for example)
- Total profits for the work team – a team leader can support their team in gathering financial data to determine the profits from the work team's productivity
- Absenteeism – team members are less productive if they are absent from work regularly

Encouraging team members to incorporate innovation and productivity measures

Team leaders should engage their team by convincing them of the importance of innovating and working productively.

Team leaders should encourage their team to incorporate innovative and productive measures into their work plans. This is best achieved by engaging them in discussions about these strategies that are important to their development and the success of the organisation.

Engagement is a two-way process between employees and the employer. The employer attempts to engage employees who return a level of engagement to the organisation. However, research has revealed further layers to employee engagement. The first is the level of engagement that employees have with their career or profession. The second level is the engagement employees feel toward their organisation.

For example, the distinction between these levels was evident in research conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies, which looked at health professionals working for the UK National Health Service. The research clearly showed that many employees had extremely high levels of engagement with their career and professions but were disengaged from their employer.

Employee engagement is a critical consideration for organisations who need team members to work innovatively and productively. Most, if not all, of the other key measures that reflect and drive organisational performance (customer satisfaction, innovation, profitability, productivity and quality) are products of engaged, committed employees. Engaged employees understand the value of creating an innovative and productive workplace and are more likely to demonstrate their commitment by delivering high quality products and services.

Ways team leaders can encourage their team through engagement

- Communicate how important innovation is to team performance
- Include innovative practices into personal development plans and performance reviews
- Recognise productivity achievements by team members
- Personally demonstrating the benefits provided by innovation and productive practices that improve service delivery, information management, internal and external communication
- Inform team members of professional development opportunities

Ways team leaders can encourage their team through engagement

- Reward team members who successfully participate in innovation and productivity initiatives
- Share information about organisation-wide innovation and productivity initiatives

Example

Encouraging team members to incorporate innovation measures in the work plan

Stephen is a team leader who works at an office supplies distribution company. They service mainly rural and outer suburban areas on the fringe of Sydney. Recently, a large office-supplies company has opened a branch in the area, and much of their business has gone to this chain firm.

Consequently, a work plan must be designed to increase the innovation and productivity of the team. Stephen sets aside time for the team to decide on strategies and measures. He provides information to the team about previous performance and market analysis. The team decides on three innovative strategies that would regain some of the customers lost to the larger company.

They will offer direct delivery service for customers. The success of this strategy will be measured by the total amount of deliveries via this method. Each business client will be assigned a personalised member of the customer service team who can attend to their needs during business hours. To measure the productivity of this innovation strategy, customer satisfaction surveys will be distributed to clients to determine if this strategy has improved productivity. The team will release video profiles on their social media page that boosts the profile of their customer service agents. This will be measured by total number of customers.

In the meeting, Stephen encouraged the staff to clarify any issues about these innovation strategies. He told them that the future success of the business depended on innovating, so they can keep current customers and find new ones. He offered to provide whatever training is required to incorporate these strategies. A team member requested manual handling training to safely load deliveries into the delivery van.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Draw a line to match each of the following statements on innovation and productivity to the correct description.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| » Innovation | » Success rate of new ideas, ROI of process improvements, staff contribution to creativity initiatives |
| » Productivity | » Revenue per client, client retention rate, average daily outcomes |
| » Productivity measures | » The process of making an idea into a new customer value |
| » Innovation measures | » The process of using production inputs to produce outputs over a specific period of time |

Question 2

Give one example of how innovation measures could be integrated into the team work plan.

Question 3

Give one example of how productivity measures could be integrated into the team work plan.

Question 4

Give two examples of how you as a team leader can encourage team members to incorporate innovation and productivity into their work plans.

1D Lead and support team to meet expected outcomes

The team leader must use leadership skills to drive their team to higher performance standards and to meet expected outcomes.

A team leader's role is complex. It requires you to lead, motivate and direct, act as a support mechanism for members, and facilitate and create a working environment that helps team members work at their best. A manager represents the team at higher levels in the organisation and acts as conduit for information to flow into, out of and within the team.

You will find that different team members will respond to different ways of being managed. Additionally, depending on the nature of the environment in which you are working and the objectives of the team, you will need to operate differently on a day-to-day basis as work changes and develops.

In some cases, the work team reflects the personality and management style of the team leader. If they are a hard-working and conscientious team leader, the team completes their task in this manner. In some other situations, however, the working style of the team is entrenched, and a team leader will encounter resistance if they try to impose their own management and work styles. Issues like this can make it difficult to support your team to meet objectives. You should consider the following when seeking to become a more effective team leader:

- using participatory styles of leadership
- traits of effective leaders
- supportive actions you can use in day-to-day operations
- long-term initiatives to support your team
- how to support a remote team.

Effective leadership traits

Identify which traits suit your style and use them to support your team.

Many studies show that leadership traits and behaviours create successful work teams. A common finding is that honesty when communicating with a work team creates the support necessary to work effectively. Leaders need to fine tune the balance between keeping their teams properly informed without compromising the needs of organisations to keep some matters confidential. If honesty is a policy that is shared with respect and consideration, then team members will accept that sometimes it is not possible to be

given all the facts. Building a transparent relationship with each team member requires honesty, the ability to keep promises, being able to deliver bad news in an appropriate manner, remaining composed at all times, correctly handling mistakes, avoiding destructive comments and generally showing your team that you care about them.

Team members appreciate team leaders who provide timely and constructive feedback. Ultimately, all workers want to complete their tasks to high standards. Most recognise feedback is a necessary and beneficial process that can help them improve their performance and career prospects. Team members are more likely to respect you if you provide useful feedback that allows them to learn from their mistakes and that is delivered in a timely manner.

Seeking views from team members is another useful strategy that you can use to support your team. A good team leader recognises they may not have all the solutions to a given situation, and seeking the opinions of others can generate useful ideas. Even if you disagree with a proposed solution from a team member, provide an explanation why it was not used. This shows consideration for the opinions of team members and will engender respect in return.

Seek to inspire and motivate your team members. These traits demonstrate a passion for your role that generates enthusiasm within the workplace. Staff will have a model to follow if their team leader is passionate about their job. Use anecdotes about success, set targets for them to achieve and offer rewards when appropriate. Below are some other traits which effective team leaders can use to support their team.

Research shows that team members expect their leaders to be:	
▪ forward-looking to future tasks	▪ competent in fulfilling their role
▪ intelligent when analysing situations	▪ inspiring to other team members
▪ open-minded to new ideas	▪ fair-minded when managing conflict
▪ direct when communicating	▪ courageous when making difficult decisions
▪ dependable	▪ imaginative

Using a participatory management style

A democratic management style encourages collaboration among team members.

A management style is a set of principles you follow when supporting your team to reach expected performance standards. A manager will develop a style that suits their personality, can be adapted to facilitate good performance from their team and reflects the values of the organisation. These styles determine how you communicate with team members, the level of supervision you engage in, the type of feedback you provide and forms of interaction. The style you use provides a framework for the type of relationship you will have with the team you lead.

There are various styles that managers use that are authentic to their personalities. An authoritative style is where the team leader issues instructions with minimal collaboration; they set expectations very high and demand all team members meet them consistently. A delegative style allows the manager to entrust team members to complete work tasks with minimal oversight or direction. Both styles have benefits, but are also unsuited to some teams.

A style that many team managers find effective to support their teams is a participatory or democratic style. This style is a compromise between the authoritative and delegatory templates; team members have a say in workplace decisions but also get clear directions in what they are expected to complete.

A strength of the participatory style is that it boosts team morale. Team members see their team member as a trusted colleague who can help them achieve their work objectives, rather than a boss who only comes to work to issue criticism and complain about their performance.

Below are strategies you can follow to properly employ a participatory style when supporting your team.

Participatory style techniques:

- Encourage team members to contribute to decision-making processes; however, leaders make the final decision
- Make team members responsible for tasks – this demonstrates a trust that they have the capability to meet expectations
- Invite others to contribute or participate in work activities of your team
- Generate ideas for improvement from team members – encourage them to be creative and innovative in their thinking when expressing these suggestions
- Focus on performing your people-oriented roles – these include providing feedback, resolving conflicts and offering training and advice
- Create a respectful culture where communication avoids unnecessary criticism or discrimination

Supportive actions you can use in day-to-day operations

Use a wide range of strategies to support your team during their everyday work tasks.

The day-to-day operations within a business will throw up a wide range of challenging situations. They can be customer related; legitimate complaints, emotional outbursts or a large number of support requests. They can be team member related; disputes between staff or urgent training requirements. Also, they can be operations related; sudden product recalls, equipment breakdown or service launches can present difficulties in managing your team.

When responding to these difficulties in your role as team leader, focus on supporting your team members in resolving these problems. Occasionally, you may have to issue some direct criticism, but your actions should be geared toward supporting your team members by guiding them towards effective solutions. Studies indicate that modern employees value team leaders who support and coach rather than criticise and demean.

Below are some strategies you can use in a wide variety of day-to-day scenarios.

Support team members to identify achievable objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Break up large tasks into smaller and more manageable tasks for team members ▪ Provide written summaries of task or project objectives ▪ Offer suggestions on how team members can achieve their objectives
Clarify team member roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distribute written documents that outline team member roles and responsibilities ▪ Answer any questions from team members ▪ Organise collaborative tasks when required
Communicate tasks clearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use different communication methods to outline tasks ▪ Confirm that team members understand their task ▪ Provide regular updates on task outlines
Measure performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide regular feedback on team member performance ▪ Organise on-the-job training ▪ Discuss performance assessments with team members

Long-term initiatives to support your team

Initiate ongoing guidance programs to support team members.

Setting up programs that are designed to support workers achieve performance standards over a long period of time is a proactive approach. These processes can prevent many of the day-to-day challenges before they become problems. For example, setting up a coaching program to improve customer service can reduce the amount of complaints that have to be managed on a day-to-day process. Below are some examples of long-term supportive programs you can implement.

Mentoring

A mentoring relationship involves two people. One, the mentor, is usually a more senior staff member or someone who has considerable skills and experience. The person being mentored is usually someone in a more junior role who is keen to learn and is capable of achieving more than they are currently. Being a manager does not oblige you to mentor all team members. More senior or experienced team members could mentor their less-experienced counterparts, or people external to the team in your organisation or industry could mentor you or members of your team. Mentoring may be formal or informal.

Coaching

Assuming a coaching role can be an effective strategy at an individual and a team level. In modern business organisations, coaching has been implemented to help equip team leaders or members to identify their own objectives and strategies to work more effectively. The coach assumes a supportive role; they help the individual they are coaching realise their potential. This can be achieved via the following.

Team coaching strategies:

- helping and encouraging team members to be an expert or 'pro' at what they do
- discussing objectives for individuals that are unique to that person and reflect their abilities and personal aspirations
- using collaborative techniques that give team members some control over the way things are done and a sense of ownership in the process
- providing stimuli for leaders or team members to determine more productive and innovative work habits
- providing regular feedback as requested by the individual being coached

Training

As well as training that promotes teamwork, team members may need training in order to perform well. They may also need to attend training because of changes in organisational procedures or industry legislation (such as workplace health and safety). They may also simply be better placed to achieve more and work more effectively if training is provided.

Training is a major part of any role. At the very least, when a new employee begins with an organisation there should be an orientation program or training session. While it costs money to provide training, it is a profitable investment for any organisation and yields long-term dividends. Providing adequate training is an organisational obligation in some workplaces (particularly where safety is concerned) and is standard practice in many others.

Guide career planning

Taking time to ask each team member what their objectives are and what experience they have had can make a huge difference to their morale and to the contribution they can make to the team's objectives. Knowing people's capabilities, motivations and interests can be a powerful tool for a manager in building a high-performance team.

Career planning may include actively helping team members find a new position in the organisation that will challenge them further and allow them to continue to grow and learn. Many organisations have in-built career planning systems, advisers and facilitators who provide assistance in developing and delivering career planning programs at a team and individual level.

Supporting a remote team

Many managers find themselves in charge of a team that has members in different places and does not work together in a geographical sense. These teams have similar needs to other teams, although special consideration needs to be taken in planning communication and team building.

Electronic communication tools such as email, telephones and teleconferencing have made remote team members' and managers' work easier. Even so, many organisations like to hold annual conferences or general meetings where colleagues from remote areas meet to make plans, review achievements and focus on new objectives.

Ensure you have adequate technological equipment with modern laptops, tablets, phones and updated software. Check in regularly and use telecommunication to engage remote team members in discussions and decision-making processes.

Example

Supporting team members achieve work outcomes

Owen works in a busy call centre as a team leader. It is an incredibly demanding role due to the heavy volume of often irate customers calling to complain. The team members provided their feedback that they are feeling increasingly isolated and disengaged with their positions. They feel that their day consists of getting abused by angry customers, not knowing how to resolve the complaints and being criticised by their team leader.

Owen realises he needs to be a more supportive team leader. After some reflection, he is open to listening to new ideas from the team.

He decides to hold weekly meetings where staff can share ideas about how to manage customer complaints. This will be very useful as the team can determine consistent responses to common issues.

To support his team over a long period of time and develop skills that will sustain them through their career, Owen organises formal training for staff. They will complete an online customer service course and will present effective customer management techniques to the team during the weekly meetings.

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Give two examples of behaviours or traits you have noticed in managers or leaders you admire. How did they support their teams to meet expected outcomes?

Question 2

Which of the following statements relate to democratic leadership style? Tick all that apply.

- Leaders provide team members with resources, support and advice, and do not require high-level involvement of team members.
- Leaders make final decisions but include team members into decision-making.
- Leaders distribute responsibility to team members.
- Leaders invite participation from others in the organisation.
- Leaders work well in times of crisis.

Question 3

List five actions you can do to support your team to meet expected outcomes.

Summary

- The role of a team leader or manager is to plan and communicate with team members to ensure all members understand the team's objectives, roles, responsibilities, priorities, workloads, expected standards and time lines.
- Teams provide benefits for organisations and individuals, such as problem-solving, generating ideas, offering new solutions, being easier to manage, enabling largescale projects and generating a sense of belonging.
- There are several types of teams in organisations, including working teams, cross-functional teams, project teams, self-managed teams and remote teams.
- Teams must have a clearly stated and well-understood common goal to ensure all team members are motivated, committed and aware of what is to be achieved and their part in achieving these objectives.
- Team plans for achieving objectives need to be agreed on by team members and clearly state how the team and its individuals will achieve their objectives.
- The Belbin framework indicates that people take on action-oriented, people-oriented or cerebral roles in a team.
- Consultation must be used in teams to gain additional insights and ideas from team members, as well as creating higher satisfaction, interest and commitment from members of the team environment.
- Team leaders and managers should support their teams through mentoring, coaching, gaining and giving feedback, training and career planning.
- A participatory management style allows team members to contribute to decision-making discussions and encourages teamwork and collaboration.

Learning Checkpoint 1

Plan team outcomes

Part A

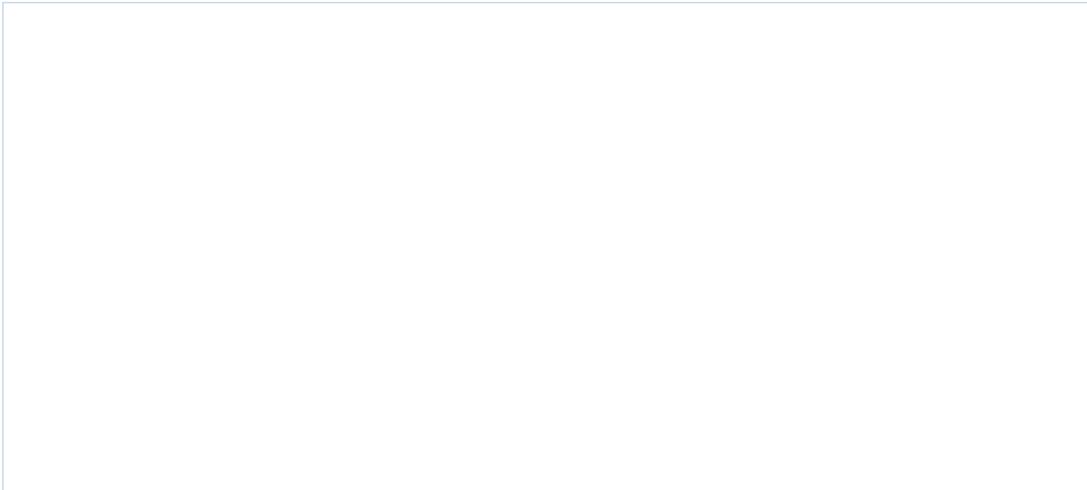
1. Identify three benefits of working in effective teams.

2. Which of the following statements relate to a team member of an effective team?
Tick all that apply.

- Promotes hierarchical structure of the team
- Learns from each other's experiences and skills
- Collaborates with others
- Works according to the team standards
- Shares information on a need-to-know basis

3. List three types of personality team roles according to The Belbin Team Inventory.

4. Suggest three behaviours of a participatory leadership style you could demonstrate in leading and supporting your team.



Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Arya is a newly appointed team leader of the Youth Engagement Team (YET) at the Nimna Local Council. Ali and Peter have been in their roles for a year, and Tasha has just started in the Council to coordinate YET's activities with volunteer organisations.

The Council has just approved a Community Engagement Plan, and Arya needs to develop her team objectives to contribute to the Nimna LC objectives. The key goal of the Nimna LC is 'to work on an ongoing basis with the community to ensure that community ideas, concerns and aspirations are listened to and understood and that community knowledge is harnessed for the benefit of all'.

A working group has been established to increase engagement of youth in the Nimna geographical area. According to the data reported to the working group, the engagement of youth in Nimna's events is 60% lower than engagement of senior citizens. Last year, there were three events organised for youth and the turn-out was low.

Arya's team will work closely with the working group and will follow specific terms of reference and reporting mechanisms. Her team is also assigned the responsibility of developing new initiatives and collaborating with youth volunteer groups, such as sports clubs, music clubs and The Kitchen Hub, which teaches practical cooking skills to teenagers.

Arya is challenged to lead work processes with a new team, and lead and support her team members to meet expected outcomes.

1. How could Arya approach the task to lead her team to establish team objectives and work processes?

2. Write an example of a team’s objective that could contribute to the organisational objectives. Give one example of the task or action to achieve the team objective.

Nimna’s Local Council (NLC) community engagement objectives	Youth Engagement team objective	Task to achieve the objective
<p>To increase overall satisfaction and participation of community groups in the events organised by NLC by 20% by the end of the financial year</p>		

3. Suggest examples of roles and responsibilities that the YET team should allocate to team members and write them into the table.

Individual	Role	Responsibility
Arya	Team leader	
Ali		
Peter		
Tasha		

4. List one innovation and one productivity measure that the team could include in the work plan.



Topic 2 | Promote team cohesion

- 2A Provide opportunities for team input
- 2B Support team members in taking responsibility
- 2C Provide feedback to team members
- 2D Address issues identified by team members
- 2E Model expected behaviour and approaches

2A Provide opportunities for team input

The team leader must devise methods to generate participation from team members in operational planning and decision-making.

In a team, members are given the opportunity to raise issues and concerns, contribute knowledge and opinions, and assist in operational, decision-making and planning activities. Managers and team leaders need to work hard to foster a team culture where members are encouraged to participate and have input into the team, its outcomes and its processes.

Forums such as team meetings, one-on-one meetings, planning days, performance appraisals, conferences, communications folders, team diaries and social get-togethers all help people to develop relationships, share information, understand each other's work and discuss issues related to achieving team goals. More recently, email, videoconferencing and intranet sites have expanded opportunities for team building, especially for remote teams.

These opportunities can create a sense of team cohesion; this is the term used to describe several disparate parts operating together seamlessly. Applied to a team, cohesion means that everyone understands the common purpose of the team and pulls together to achieve the goals. The role of the team leader or manager is to promote a culture of cooperation in which everyone's input is encouraged, valued and rewarded.

When seeking to provide opportunities for team input, team leaders should consider the following:

- how to include team members in the decision-making process
- inclusive and productive meetings
- organising planning days
- workplace appraisals
- inclusive practices
- delegation.

Inclusive practices and principles

Team leaders must adopt workplace management strategies that include team members.

The ability to make decisions that are balanced, perceptive and based on relevant information and advice does not come easily to everyone. Most team leaders or managers are expected to make decisions on a range of issues. Working in a close team does not necessarily make this process a difficult one. Team members need to know how decision-making works in the team and understand their role in the decision-making process.

Different teams will have different ways of making decisions. The process depends on the environment, the team culture, the organisation's culture and the personalities and working styles in the team. It also depends on the manager's leadership style. A team may use different decision-making methods in different circumstances. If this is the case, the team should understand why its advice might not be needed in some situations. Consider the different principles and practices which can guide the process you choose.

Team provides significant information	The team leader makes major decisions but relies heavily on information, opinions and advice given by team members. The team leader talks to the team about decisions that concern them and explains why he or she has chosen a certain path.
Team makes decision together	The team leader facilitates and aids the decision-making process but the final decision is reached by consensus in the team. Contributing to decisions as a team will increase accountability amongst the team.
Decide on the amount of input your team will have	The team leader asks team members to provide limited input prior to making a decision. This might mean input only from selected team members whose duties relate directly to the decision. Team members are informed of the decision later.
The team leader makes a decision	The team leader makes a decision that suits as many stakeholders as possible and genuinely considers the opinions of others. If the final decision by team leader is in disagreement with others, the team leader should explain the reasons for their decision.
Be transparent within the process	Be prepared to explain the decision-making process, how the decisions you make impact the work patterns of team members and relevant goals and objectives. There are some details you may need to keep confidential; discuss this with your manager.

Planning your inclusive decision-making process

Be proactive in including the views of others when planning key decisions in the workplace.

As team leader, you will play a key role in making decisions that impact the workplace and team members. Rather than improvise a new method every time you must make an impactful decision, you should rely on a process that you apply in most decision-making situations. Following a process enables you to be calm and measured when presented with a difficult situation. Process-based management builds a sense of trust among your team in your consistent and predictable leadership methods.

Below is an example of a decision-making process that will help you resolve day-to-day issues that crop up as well as more significant issues that can have serious ramifications. A primary focus should be finding ways to involve others; some team leaders mistakenly use this process but do not invite the opinions of others throughout.

Determine the issue that must be resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather relevant documents from other employees that discuss the issue ▪ Provide forums for discussion where team members can discuss the issue ▪ Seek feedback from stakeholders about the issue
Identify why this is an issue and potential consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distribute surveys about impacts of the issue ▪ Seek opinions from others about why this is an issue ▪ Review documents prepared by other team members to identify cause/s of the issue
Write down a checklist for what decisions must be made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask a colleague to review your checklist ▪ Invite colleagues to provide criteria for your checklist ▪ Discuss your checklist with team members
Evaluate potential solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Propose solutions to team members and ask for their opinions ▪ Request ideas to solve issues ▪ Allow a vote amongst team members on certain issues
Determine if proposed solutions meet your checklist requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Request key documentation from managers to clarify if your solutions are compliant ▪ Have your manager review your proposed solutions
Implement the best option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain to the team how they will contribute to the solution ▪ Acknowledge the contributions of others to determining the solution ▪ Gathering ideas from team about how the solution will be monitored

Organising and running meetings

Provide opportunities during staff meetings that encourage the input of team members to shape decisions and operations planning.

One popular method of sharing information and facilitating team input is to hold a meeting. Many teams hold regular meetings; for example, daily, weekly or monthly. Meetings can be formal events with agendas and presentations, although information exchange and talking with team members can be carried out effectively on an informal basis. They are a primary method to gather input from your team.

If you decide to hold a meeting, you need to respect that the people you invite are busy and that the meeting time needs to be spent productively. Ideally, at the end of a meeting, everyone should leave feeling that they have gained from the experience. Often people think meetings are a waste of time because they have gained nothing from the time taken to attend. The best way to make team members feel like meetings are productive is to ensure team members have opportunities during them to share ideas, offer opinions and provide feedback.

Many managers make the mistake of scheduling regular team and one-on-one meetings because they believe that the simple act of holding the meeting will induce team input and information sharing. Effective meetings, though, have a definite and known purpose. Before you start scheduling meetings, it is a good idea to think about why the meeting needs to take place. Below are some techniques you can use to have productive meetings that provide opportunities for team input.

Effective meeting strategies:

- Be focused in your meeting purpose and be clear about what input you want the team to have.
- Encourage participants to stick to a time frame when talking, even in informal meetings. Formal meetings often use an agenda detailing each discussion item and the length of time allocated. The chairperson, who could be a member of the team, needs to keep time and make sure the meeting finishes on schedule without missing any important items.
- Be organised. Make sure people have information and agendas ahead of time. Minutes taken should be brief and distributed as soon as possible once the meeting has finished.
- Do not overuse technology. Not every meeting needs an electronic presentation, a video or overheads – a whiteboard or flip chart may be all you need. Simply talking together can encourage people to share ideas.
- Make the meeting interactive. Ensure attendees know they are expected to participate, that they need to come prepared and that the meeting is an important time for you all to spend as a team.
- If you have shy team members or if some people are nervous speaking in public, encourage them to offer their opinions without making them uncomfortable. Make sure members respect everyone's opinions and ideas – lead by example and make it clear to team members that talking over or ignoring others is not acceptable.
- Work extra hard at making sure team members who join the meeting by phone or video link feel included and are not forgotten.
- Only invite people who need to be there.
- Keep the meeting as brief as possible. If the meeting must be long, include breaks in the agenda.
- If the meeting involves a presentation, ensure there is time for questions and answers. The presenter should not dominate a meeting.

Providing planning days for team members

Planning days provide an opportunity to reflect on existing performance and suggest improvement ideas.

Many organisations arrange time for employees to come together to discuss key issues of the organisation's operations and plan for future action. Such planning sessions may last a day, a week, or more. Generally, they are carefully structured events with a set agenda.

Planning days provide an opportunity for departments and teams to have input into organisational planning as well as planning for their particular section. Strategic planning topics often include risk management, workplace health and safety procedures, environmental issues, sales performance, competitors, and future products and services – all of which will have an impact on the team's operations.

Organisations have become more willing to invest financial resources into these planning days; they are often combined with professional development activities so team members are provided formal opportunities to contribute to planning.

The role of a frontline manager is to encourage team members to contribute actively, as crucial decisions can be made at these times that will affect all staff. Below are some strategies you can use to generate ideas and input during planning days.

Techniques to generate input

- Provide key video, audio or written stimulus to generate ideas. Examples could include case studies of other successful strategies and their operations.
- Provide opportunities for team members to work in small groups so that those who are uncomfortable in large group settings are willing to contribute.
- Ensure you provide adequate planning resources. This may be planning document templates, organising required resources and stationery, or booking necessary meeting spaces.
- Provide a timed agenda for the day and clearly label when team members will have an opportunity to contribute.
- Allow time for group tasks and individual tasks.
- Make it known this is a two-way communication; team members are invited to provide ideas and suggestions rather than be directed.

Using appraisals to seek input

Formal and informal performance reviews should be used to seek feedback and ideas from team members.

Regular performance appraisals give employees the opportunity to provide input into the way the team operates and provide team members with a sense of ownership. Some people prefer to contribute when they are in a one-on-one situation rather than in an open forum.

Encourage team members to discuss how they think the team could improve its performance. Discussion might include suggestions for better planning strategies, or ways for staff to contribute their ideas. A team member might believe that decisions are always made by one or two people or that their ideas are not heard. Pooling ideas collected from performance reviews can be very constructive.

Many team members dread performance reviews; they believe it is a process used by team leaders to criticise performance, and often in unfair ways. Consequently, they do not participate in it enthusiastically and potential improvements are lost. If you approach the process as an opportunity for team members to provide input on key workplace issues, as well as review their performance against expectations, this may encourage them to contribute more freely.

Performance reviews are documented processes; a team leader will usually provide a team member with a summary of their achievements and list of suggested improvements. These are reviewed at least annually. Documents are retained by managers and used when making staffing decisions.

Informal appraisals are less documented. Rather than be heavily planned, they are impromptu and can occur regularly; either directly after or during work tasks. These appraisals can be positive or negative and provide immediate feedback. Be willing to listen to your team member; ask them why an event happened, what their understanding was and ways this could be improved in the future.

Delegating to capitalise on team members' skills

Trusting team members to complete tasks allows them to demonstrate their capabilities.

Delegation is the act of assigning tasks, powers or functions to others. A team leader or manager is normally in a position to delegate. The importance of delegation in a team environment should not be underestimated. Employees often crave trust and responsibility. Effective delegation meets these and other needs. Delegating tasks increases staff ownership of their job role and encourages them to provide input.

Delegating work is not the same thing as allocating work. Delegated tasks normally cannot be completed in a short time frame. Delegation does not tell people what to do; rather, it involves explaining the outcomes and results they are expected to achieve. They are then expected to work out what to do and the necessary steps involved to achieve this outcome.

A team leader or manager making the delegation is still required to be involved, but the extent of the involvement will vary depending on the existing knowledge and skill levels of the employee or team member receiving the delegation. If the team member is very experienced, the team leader's involvement will be minimal. If they are inexperienced, the team leader may provide more support.

If uneven workloads exist in a work team, a review of the delegations in place is warranted.

Employees will be more involved and engaged if they feel they are being trusted with important responsibilities or activities. If they are required to think about a task, consider alternatives and make choices, the work becomes more rewarding.

Many team leaders treat allocating tasks and delegating tasks as being the same. Although dividing up and allocating work tasks is essential, it should not be confused with delegation.

Responsibility and accountability are important. As a result of past delegation failures, many managers and team leaders often think ‘I’ll just do it myself’ as this may appear to be quicker and easier. Delegation is not easy, but it is a key skill team leaders need to develop.

Example

Generating input from team members

Carrie leads a team at a medical clinic. It is a busy organisation, as it is located in a shopping centre. They get lots of foot traffic walking past and many unannounced people requesting medical services. Carrie’s role is to coordinate the reception staff and ensure they know how to use the patient database, that they have adequate stationery and resources, and to organise appointments and transfer of medical and test results.

Carrie has worked in this clinic for three months and senses that her staff are frustrated. After talking to three experienced receptionists, she finds that staff feel under-appreciated and no have say in how the clinic runs. They agree that their knowledge is ignored. Carrie realises that she has tried to carry too much of the work load; she has a talented and experienced team to improve business operations.

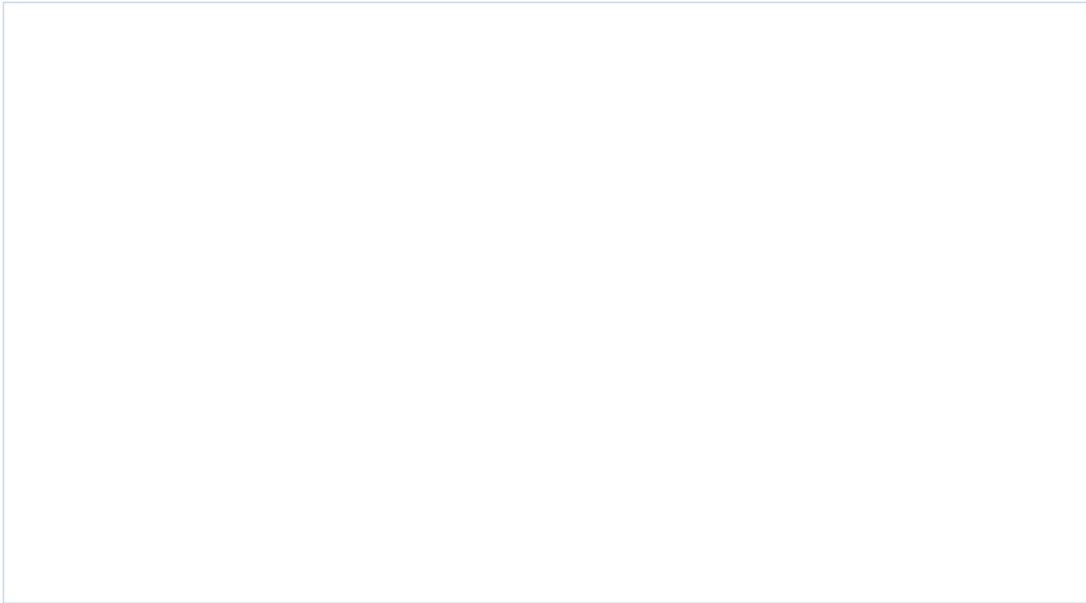
To capitalise on their abilities, Carrie will seek their input more regularly. Usually, team meetings involve her telling others what their tasks will be for the week. In the future, Carrie decides to allocate five minutes to each of the six team members. They have the option of sharing ideas or seeking clarification.

After three months, the meetings idea has worked. Carrie finds that staff feel more connected to the workplace and many of the ideas shared during the meetings have been adopted, and have improved the operations of the clinic.

Practice Task 5

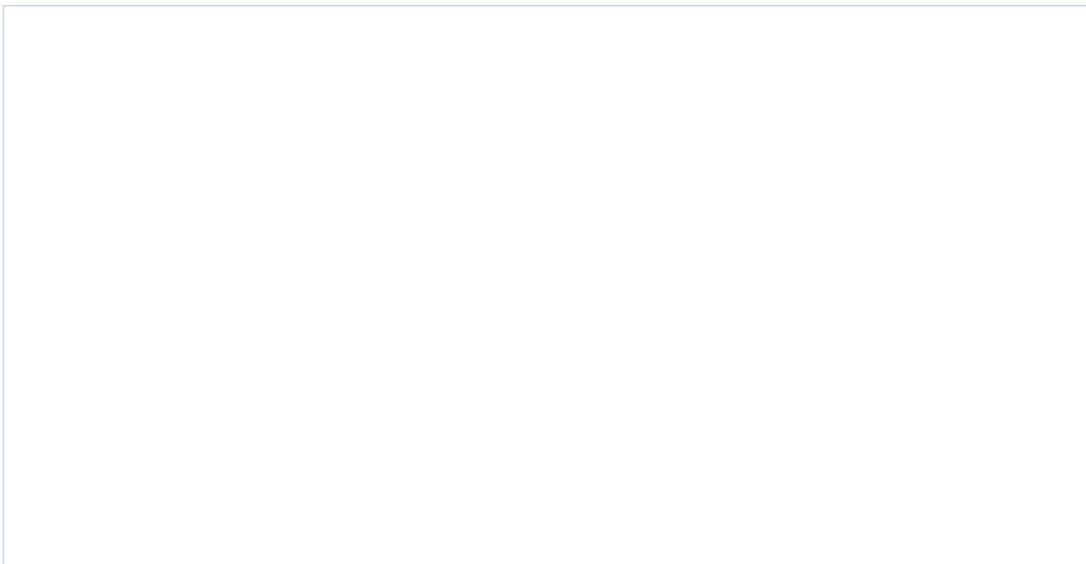
Question 1

Meetings provide team members opportunities for input into decision-making and team effectiveness. List three other tools or activities that could provide team members with opportunities to contribute to team decision-making and planning.



Question 2

Suggest two leadership approaches in team decision-making that you as a team leader can use.



Question 3

Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow to make decisions in the team.

- Identify and discuss potential solutions
- Select the best option for implementation
- Identify the decision to be made
- Establish decision-making criteria
- Analyse the issue under discussion
- Evaluate options – options need to be evaluated against the established criteria

2B Support team members in taking responsibility

Team leaders need to guide their staff in self-managing their performance.

Creating a team culture where staff members are enthusiastic, committed, involved, responsible and cooperative is not easy. You may have experienced teams that could have worked better than they did, where individual team members did not agree on team objectives, procedures or operational functions.

Managing a group of people, developing procedures and systems and working with them to the point where they consider themselves a unit takes time. Team leaders and managers need to promote a team culture that encourages team members to work cohesively and responsibly.

Taking responsibility means to acknowledge that your actions are largely responsible for the performance standards you reach. While some outside factors such as stress, workload or lack of training can impact your performance, ultimately every team member is responsible for whether they meet work expectations. Team members should use strategies that support team members in assuming responsibility for their performance, and should consider the following:

- the impact of individual behaviour impacts team performance standards
- managing non-cooperation
- issues relating to team ineffectiveness
- team leader actions that support responsibility
- creating a culture of responsibility.

Encouraging responsibility for individual behaviours

Teams are made of individuals whose actions can exert positive or negative impacts on team performance.

As a team leader, remember that your team is a group of unique individuals with different work styles, motivating influences and personalities. You may encounter difficulties if you try to impose a 'one size fits all' management style on your team, unless they have similar personalities and respond to instructions in the same way.

You need to recognise how divergent personalities can positively or negatively influence how the work team operates. Once you assume leadership of a work team, spend time observing how individuals impact the work team. Some team members may exert influence over others, there may be a dominant personality amongst the team, or conflict may be occurring between team members; there are a range of issues you should attempt to identify.

Team leaders should encourage their team to demonstrate responsible individual behaviours that improve team chemistry rather than hurt it. Below are some examples of how the behaviour of team members can shape the work team. These are the behaviours you should encourage individual team members to display. Each is supportive of better self-management.

Encouraging responsible behaviour

- Avoid blaming others for errors. Either refer a mistake to yourself (as the team leader) or be constructive in feedback. Excessive blaming hurts team morale and hurts trust and collaboration.
- Encourage team members to act respectfully with each other. This can be accomplished in various ways; showing care for each other's work space, communicating as equals, avoiding judgemental statements and working collaboratively with a positive attitude.
- Acknowledge your mistakes and work to improve on any errors in a way that supports the growth of the team. Seek to continually improve and innovate.
- Encourage team members to have a 'one for all and all for one' attitude. This creates a collaborative atmosphere where issues are resolved as a team and ideas are generated from multiple team members rather than individuals having to design solutions.
- Put processes in place that encourage team members to behave professionally; these behaviours can include contributing enthusiastically to reviews, providing honest and timely feedback and following uniform expectations.

Managing under-performance

Teams that fail to meet expectations will find that a lack of acceptance of responsibility is a primary reason.

In many teams, plans and decisions are made by consensus. If a faulty decision or plan results in under-performance, it may be that the planning process is at fault rather than a lack of team responsibility. In such a situation, the process that led to the creation of the plan should be examined and revised so that future plans are stronger and more relevant to the team.

However, if the team members act without regard for one another or are lacking in a sense of camaraderie and teamwork, the team leader will need to work quickly and carefully to remedy the situation. Team counselling and one-on-one discussions will help, as will further efforts to build team spirit, trust and cooperation.

A team leader should be proactive in seeking to determine the reasons why team members did not take responsibility for their actions. Perhaps they were not motivated enough; or were not willing to seek assistance with a task when they were unsure of an issue. Often, team members will claim they do not feel like a part of the team and cannot perceive how their actions impact others in the work team. A significant part of your role is to create a workplace culture where team members feel ownership of their job, and that their actions have very real impacts on performance.

Two suggestions for managing team member non-cooperation are shown below. Each of these suggestions will support individual team members in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. Once they have this accurate understanding of their importance, they can take the next step and work and act in a way that improves the operations of the business.

Individual consultation

If a team member is not pulling their weight, speak to them privately to find out why. If they lack knowledge or organisational skills, you could enlist the help of more able or experienced team members to mentor them or organise outside training.

If the reason is personal rather than work related, you may need to refer them to your human resources officer or suggest they seek specialist counselling.

Team-based solutions

If team members do not contribute, think about asking the team how such behaviour should be managed. Solutions can be incorporated into team policies and procedures that are devised and updated by the team.

Recognising when team members do not take responsibility

Problems caused by a lack of accountability will create a wide range of negative impacts.

Business consultant Patrick Lencioni observed traits of teams that do not function effectively. These teams shared some of the following characteristics:

- the teams avoided a genuine debate about ideas for a shallow sense of harmony
- they avoided holding each other to account
- teams lacked a profound commitment to decisions reached within teams
- they focused on individual results rather than team processes.

A particular concern of Lencioni was how team members did not build trust in each other and were unwilling to fail or be innovative in team processes.

Part of a team leader's role is to create a culture of responsibility. Many business analysts make the claim that you can only determine how accountable a work team is when you observe them when their team leader is off site. If they remain focused on their task and maintain adherence to key expectations, the team leader has adequately instilled a culture of responsibility. If team members lose focus and processes collapse, it is apparent that the team needs support from their team leader in taking personal responsibility.

Issues relating to a lack of responsibility can manifest in various ways in the workplace. There may be times when you are off site or working in a separate location to your team. You may not have the type of role that has you directly supervising all day or even most of the day. In some circumstances, these issues may arise when you are in proximity to your team for most of the work day.

Recognising such negative habits in your work team will help you begin the process of finding possible solutions. Identifying these issues is the first step to take before seeking to instil a culture of responsibility within your work team.

Signs that a work team does not take responsibility

- Members of your team do not demonstrate trust in the ability of others to complete a task to an adequate level. Team members do not communicate openly with each other and are not willing to discuss their mistakes and weaknesses.
- Team members are inattentive to the results of group tasks. They care about their own role, but the overall success of the team is of no concern to them. It is admirable that individuals perform their role but they should be engaged by the overall objective.
- Individuals are not committed to their role. They may do the bare minimum and not have any interest in improving their skills and capabilities. This may be related to a lack of involvement in decision-making processes.
- A fear of conflict can result from an absence of trust in other team members communicating and behaving respectfully. Often tensions can be created when feedback is not delivered with regard for others, and team members therefore choose to avoid discussions relating to their responsibility.
- Some team members prefer to shirk their responsibilities and not commit to group decision-making or discussions.
- Team processes break down during stressful times; team members choose to blame each other rather than seeking to work collaboratively to solve problems.

Signs of a work culture that embraces responsibility

An accountable workplace culture can be recognised through observation of your team's work patterns and conduct.

A fundamental part of any effective team is the way team members work together. Working together means relying on one another, working towards a common objective and helping each other to achieve goals. Team members need to feel responsible to the team and acknowledge the role they play in achieving their goals. Furthermore, team members need to agree on and have a sense of pride in the quality of their planned outcome. Being responsible in a team environment is more than verbally agreeing to do the work that comes your way. Team members whose performances are measured (and in some cases rewarded or recompensed) on the basis of their team effort and achievements, as opposed to being measured only on individual outcomes, will want their colleagues to work as hard as they do in order to achieve goals. Collectively, this accurately summarises a work culture that actively embraces responsibility.

Your role as team leader requires you to make assessments on workplace culture so you can support your team to improve its sense of responsibility. Below are some specific indicators that you have effectively supported your work team to develop a culture of accountability.

Indicators of a positive workplace culture

- Team members commit to completing tasks to a high standard and on time, while also collaborating with others to support them
- Team members are interested in the progress of work tasks that have been allocated to others
- If mistakes happen in the team, the focus immediately shifts to finding a solution through collaboration rather than seeking to apportion blame on individuals
- All members of the team including the team leader are available at regular intervals to discuss issues and clarify queries
- The team leader is willing to regularly review the work of team members who are appreciative of constructive criticism
- Relationships between team members and the team leader are mutually respectful and focused on completing tasks to a high standard
- Constructive debate of ideas and conflict does occur in relation to pursuing better performance results; however, it is respectful of each other's abilities

Methods a team leader can use to support a culture of responsibility

Knowing the hallmarks of responsible work teams, use these strategies to embed them within your team.

If you determine that your work team has the traits of a group that avoids responsibility and accountability, you will have to implement strategies that support your individual team members to recognise their responsibility for their work tasks and act on them. Even if your team exudes the hallmarks of a responsible team, it is an area that can always be improved and, in all likelihood, you will encounter team members who do not embrace responsibility.

Below are ways to support team members and promote team cohesion.

Embed accountability into work processes

Always be willing to publicly acknowledge your mistakes. This sets the example for others to follow. Hold regular meetings where accountability is constructively explained as a benefit to the business. Always encourage team members to seek knowledge and assistance if needed.

Create a sense of ownership

Make the team accountable for their actions as a whole. Have team members report to each other on what they have done. If they have not completed their allocated work or met their responsibilities, ensure there is recourse at the team level. Allow team members to make decisions that impact their own role. Avoid micromanaging; allow team members to make mistakes and learn from them.

Conduct an audit

Conduct a skills, knowledge, resources and interests audit in your team on areas that are relevant to their allocated tasks. Make the results known in your team and encourage members to share their knowledge and seek help from colleagues. Allow for staff to have the necessary resources required to do their job properly. Provide for skills training if requested by team members.

Share problems

Encourage team members to share any problems they have with work in meetings. Each team member can raise an issue they have and others can help them solve it. Be willing to engage in two-way communication between yourself and team members.

Learn from mistakes

Make sure team members know that it is okay to make a mistake. The whole team can learn from mistakes as long as members ask for help and are willing to help others when necessary.

Avoid a 'blame culture'

Do not allow team members to reproach or attack colleagues who they feel they are not contributing. Provide avenues and forums for the team to talk about responsibilities in a constructive manner and deal with problems cooperatively. Be willing to give praise to team members for their contributions.

Example

Consequences of not acting responsibly

Patricia is team leader of an advertising sales team in a publishing company. Once a month, she attends a senior management meeting to make a presentation on the team's performance. She relies on her three team members to prepare reports for her to use in the presentation. In previous months, Patricia has received reports just an hour before her presentation. She speaks to her team and explains why she needs the reports on time. She suggests ways in which they can plan ahead, knowing that the report is due each month.

Stephen plans his work week around getting his report done on time, rescheduling less urgent tasks. He hands his report to Patricia half a day early and she thanks him for responding to her feedback.

The next morning, Patricia is still waiting on reports from Bronwen and Mohammed. Mohammed hands her a hard copy of his report, apologising for being late. 'I stayed back last night to get it done but I had computer problems,' he says. 'I worked on it at home and printed it out for you this morning.' Patricia is relieved to have the report but is disappointed that Mohammed left it to the last minute again.

Bronwen is not in the office and neither Stephen nor Mohammed know where she is or the status of her report. Stephen in particular feels annoyed and disappointed – Patricia told them that if she gave a poor presentation because she didn't have the information she needed, senior management would question the whole team's performance. At 12.00 noon Bronwen arrives back from a client meeting and submits her report. Patricia has very little time to review it and finalise her presentation. She feels angry that the understanding, helpful approach she tried has been ignored by some of her staff.

It is clear to Patricia that she will have to manage the team more closely in future. She resolves to implement monitoring procedures that will make sure the reports are submitted on time.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

List three effects of individual team member behaviour on team effectiveness.

Question 2

Which of the following statements relate to creating shared responsibility in team work?

Tick all that apply.

- Committing to completing own tasks and then assisting others to meet deadlines may not be the best shared responsibility approach as tasks are interrelated and need cohesive work
- Committing to completing tasks allocated to team members and assisting others to meet deadlines
- Taking an interest in work performed by other team members and sharing relevant information
- Focusing on solving problems rather than placing blame on others
- Avoiding differences of opinions

Question 3

Which of the following statements about supporting team members are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a) Team leaders need to be available for the team members. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Team leaders need to review work of the team members frequently. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Team leaders should not take the role of a relationship builder in the team. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Team leaders should take control of an individual team member's tasks if the team is failing. | » Yes | » No |
| e) Team leaders should not be fear a conflict in their team. | » Yes | » No |

Question 4

List five ways how a team leader can encourage team members to take responsibility for their own work.

2C Provide feedback to team members

Feedback supports team cohesion by ensuring team members have a clear understanding of how to improve their performance for the benefit of the team.

The process of communication in a team is a critical one. Team members need to communicate well between themselves and feed information to their supervisor or manager; team leaders need to provide enough information and guidance to their team and communicate with their own manager.

One of the most important elements in the communication process is feedback. The process of providing constructive feedback in a team is a sign that the team is truly working together. People who do not seek or give feedback are running the risk of working in an information vacuum or isolating their colleagues. This includes managers as well as team members. Receiving feedback from team members can be invaluable. As well as learning about what you could do to improve next time, you can benefit from the experience and insights others provide.

Feedback is used to determine how well you and your team are performing work tasks. It can be based on positive or negative aspects of performance and is important as it helps to identify the areas that need improvement. Feedback should be objective, timely, constructive and unbiased. This type of feedback can provide information on what aspects of the tasks your team is completing to a high standard and where you can improve your performance and how you can improve.

Team leaders have the added responsibility of seeking and evaluating feedback for the team they supervise. You should develop various methods of collecting feedback both on your own performance and the performance of your team. Once the feedback is collected, it needs to be analysed to find trends that have impacted performance. To support team cohesion via the use of feedback processes, you should consider the following:

- feedback methods to use
- incorporating feedback into existing work processes
- using appropriate communication conventions when engaged in the feedback process.

Methods of providing feedback

Knowing how to provide feedback can help your team improve their performance.

Positive feedback involves explaining to the people or person involved just what their hard work means and how they have made a difference. However, it is also necessary to give and obtain negative feedback if people are to learn where and how they can improve their performance. Managers need to create a culture of constructive criticism rather than blame and encourage staff to learn from their mistakes rather than trying to cover up problems.

Feedback can be given verbally and in writing. It can be public and private, informal and formal. Managers who ensure that feedback is used to good effect in their team will reap the rewards of a more involved and informed team.

Below are effective ways of providing feedback to team members.

360-degree feedback	This highly structured method of giving feedback involves all team members giving other individuals in the team a rating or qualitative feedback on their performance. For example, team members could give each other a score out of 10 on points such as communication, team spirit, contribution and preparedness at meetings. The results can be delivered anonymously, with participants receiving a report showing the scores they received on each point. 360-degree feedback can be confronting and needs to be managed carefully. 360-degree feedback is a useful tool, especially when plans are put in place to correct poor results.
Feedback during performance reviews	Any kind of performance feedback needs to be given carefully, especially if it is negative. Feedback that constitutes part of a performance review can affect a person's career and advancement prospects and, in many cases, their earnings (if performance reviews are linked to bonuses or salary). Positive and negative feedback needs to be given constructively. Try to give examples and to be balanced in what you say. Link the feedback to key result areas, performance indicators, or team goals, and state the effect the positive or negative performance has had on team outcomes. If feedback is negative, move on to ways you can work together to remedy the situation.
Provide informal feedback	Some workplaces rely on informal feedback processes as they can be more time efficient and effective in getting specific feedback to workers in a timelier manner than formal feedback methods. As you work directly with a team in your supervisory role, you will have numerous opportunities to provide informal feedback in the course of your normal work tasks. These informal appraisals can be short conversations or emails that won't take long to respond to. The work flow of the team is not disrupted, and you can provide a meaningful update on how the task is progressing or some additional tasks you need to organise in your role as team leader.

Providing feedback within organisational processes

Feedback should be provided to support the development plans of team members.

Feedback can be sought and provided in many situations, both formal and informal. When instructions or requests are given, elicit verbal feedback as to whether team members understand the information provided. Sometimes people say they understand when they do not. A good way to get direct feedback is to ask questions; the replies will show what has been understood. You can then clarify the aspects (if any) that need more explanation. The feedback provided should be aligned within existing organisational processes such as reviews, communication policies and development plans. This can be accomplished by following these strategies.

Provide constructive feedback

Team members will not respond to incessant criticism. Constructive feedback is where you calmly explain an issue about the team member's performance and explain how they can rectify it.

Provide positive feedback

Team members will welcome positive feedback. Affirming that they are using their skills to reach performance expectations builds confidence and allows them to work towards this standard as a future reference point.

Provide feedback that is based on performance

Avoid providing feedback that is unnecessarily personal. Ensure your feedback is based on performance rather than a person's worth as a team member.

Provide feedback that is specific

Team members want feedback that they can understand. Provide them with details of what they achieved or failed to achieve and how to improve next time the task is performed.

Use KPIs to monitor team progress

Key performance indicators are a form of objective feedback that shows a team how progress is tracking against targets.

Pass on relevant information that you get from other sources

- Give your team feedback on what happens at management meetings or other projects you are involved in as a representative of the team.

Provide feedback in a timely manner

- Feedback is most effective when you provide it to a team member directly after an issue arises. They won't forget key details and can redress the issue immediately. Aim to provide feedback within 24 hours of when the need arises.

Communication conventions team leaders should follow

Feedback is a two-way process that requires you to listen and gather information along with provide feedback.

When providing feedback, you may be required to gather or provide more information than what you initially intended. Often, team members will use your feedback as an opportunity to open up a discussion they've been intending to have about their work role, task expectations or the conduct of team members. You may even receive feedback about how you are performing as team leader. Below are some listening techniques you should follow when engaging in the feedback process.

Listening techniques

- Active listening – this means you are making effort to understand what the speaker is saying. You may recap key points of what the speaker said.
- Use engaged body language. Maintain eye contact with the speaker and do not allow yourself to be distracted.
- Ask clarifying questions. Demonstrate you have listened by asking questions of the speaker about what they just said.

When providing feedback, you need to ensure that is communicated in the correct manner so the message is clearly understood and can be acted on. Like all aspects of your job, communication is a skill. Therefore, it should be refined through practice and considered theoretically. For the example of providing feedback, you should break down communication into three categories.

- Forms and methods:** Verbal communication is where you speak and listen to others. Written communication is where forms are filled in or emails sent. Non-verbal communication involves interpreting others' body language.

- **Communication channels:** These are the ways you communicate feedback with staff. You can choose from face-to-face meetings, emails, phone calls and official documentation.
- **Relevance to job role:** An employee should communicate issues relevant to their job role.

The skill in communicating feedback is knowing which form/methods to use and what communication channels are appropriate.

Urgent feedback that may prevent physical injury should be communicated with verbal language and the channel should be immediate; preferably face-to-face.

Feedback that requires an official review should be communicated in writing, on official documentation.

A report that is not urgent can be communicated by email. Team members you have a good relationship with can often be provided with non-verbal feedback such as gestures and hand signals.

Example

A manager gives feedback on a job well done

Jeremy, a team leader, is providing feedback at a team meeting on a recently completed project.

'I want to take the time now to talk about the work that Margie and Harif have been doing on the new customer service questionnaire. They have worked very hard on this project and last week the new questionnaire replaced the old one.

'Initial reports they have given me have shown that the new questionnaire provides us with 60 per cent more data on each client than we had before. This is already having a major impact on our product design department. The completion of the new questionnaire is one of the key result areas for our team, so that task can now be crossed off our list.

'On behalf of the team, thanks for your hard work and congratulations on a job well done.'

After the team meeting, Jeremy meets privately with Margie and Harif and talks to them about their project in more detail, asking them what they learnt and what they would do differently next time. He praises some specific aspects of the project and reinforces his previous statement that they have made a major contribution to the team.

Finally, Jeremy asks Margie and Harif for their feedback on his performance as a manager during the project.

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Give two examples of feedback methods.

Question 2

Give one example how providing feedback to team members on their efforts can be incorporated into the team development plan.

2D Address issues identified by team members

Team leaders must be proactive in resolving problems raised to you from work colleagues.

Every day, teams of all kinds, in all industries, come across issues and problems that could mean that team goals will not be met if the issues are not dealt with, managed and planned for. Sometimes, despite the best plans, the right people and a productive team culture, things go wrong. Issues that are impacting your team may be blindingly obvious, or you may have to analyse the situation to determine the exact cause of any decline in performance standards.

In such circumstances, having contingency plans and a flexible, positive team culture will help get the team back on track. You will encounter situations where members of your work team raise issues with you. They may be issues concerning resources being used, skills and knowledge deficits, or personality clashes. As a team leader, you will be partially reliant on using information from team members to resolve workplace issues. To ensure that you manage these issues effectively, consider the following:

- potential causes of team issues
- processes to improve team cohesion
- using collaborative problem-solving techniques
- consequences of team leaders not addressing these issues
- conflict resolution techniques.

Common issues that impact the work team

Members of the work team will identify issues that are impacting on their personal and collaborative performance.

All work teams have specific strengths and weaknesses; these are dependent on the skills and capabilities of team members, the mix of personalities within the team, availability of resources, quality of training offered, and the processes designed by the workplace to improve performance. The team you lead will encounter difficulties; the only question is what type of difficulties and how severe. Team members will identify issues that impact their ability to contribute effectively.

Your capacity to address or refer difficulties raised by team members is largely dependent on you listening your team as they report them. However, they may not report them to you directly. They may discuss issues with colleagues or refer to an issue vaguely. For example, a team member may complain to a colleague that they ‘never have the right stationery’; this team member is raising an issue about lack of resources that may impact more than just stationery. As a team leader you should seek to engage in discussion with team members about these common workplace issues.

Unclear roles and responsibilities	Sometimes team members are not sure what their specific task and role responsibilities are. If they are not sure what they are responsible for, they will not complete their tasks to an acceptable standard. This issue may present as staff using time unproductively or repeatedly asking for assistance.
Avoidance of accountability	This is when team members avoid processes that require their performance to be assessed. They may avoid participating in review processes, miss deadlines or accuse others of negatively impacting their performance.
Lack of team member motivation	Some team members may appear disengaged from their task and do the bare minimum. They do not participate in development activities and are reluctant to participate within group tasks. They do not display any visible traits of enjoying their job and may express discontent.
Decline in commitment	Team members whose commitment declines may demonstrate this through a tangible drop in performance standards. This issue may present in absenteeism or an inability to be punctual to work.
Lack of collaboration	This issue can be demonstrated by team members withdrawing from group collaboration tasks. They may not perform their work requirements in a group task and fail to communicate appropriately with other members of the work team.

Consequences of team leaders not addressing these issues

Issues left unresolved by team leaders can have severe impacts on the productivity of the work team.

Reading the signs from a team that things are not as they should be can be tricky. Little can be done to fix a situation once deadlines are missed or when a crisis point is reached. You need to be aware of problems and address them when they arise, not after the event.

Promoting a strong sense of communication in the team, asking team members for opinions and feedback on how things are going and being involved with the team at an operational level will help avoid problems. The more involved you are, the sooner you will notice if things are going downhill.

Creating a culture of accountability within your team means that team members will often inform you of these issues. Ensure you acknowledge to the reporting team member how valuable this information is as you may not have been aware otherwise. This is especially true for team members who work remotely or who often work at different sites to their team.

Maintaining open communication with your team is crucial to identifying the impacts of these unresolved issues. Ensure you have an 'open door' policy whereby team members can discuss problems and issues with you. Make it clear to your team that all of them have a shared responsibility in reporting these issues. Below are some potential consequences of unresolved issues.

Impacts of unresolved issues on work teams

- A general lack of enthusiasm that makes the workplace an unpleasant place to be
- Non-stop bickering about responsibilities and verbal arguments that can become personal
- Inability to reach consensus on issues
- Personal agendas being placed ahead of the team's agenda
- Team members complaining to others who are not part of the team
- Dominant team members pressuring or overshadowing their colleagues
- Missed deadlines and tasks not performed to expectations
- Work not being shared equally; some members doing most of the workload while others do little
- Customers complaining about a drop in service standards; services are late and below the usual quality
- Team members begin to follow the example of unengaged team members if they observe there is no addressing the issue

Using collaborative problem-solving techniques

Issues raised by team members can be addressed via seeking support from other members of the team.

A key responsibility of the team leader is embedding the idea within their team that all processes, successes and areas of improvement should be worked through as a team; it is through their collective action that the team will meet their requirements, rather than by individual performances. This should also apply to the resolution of problems. Avoid thinking it is solely your role to identify problems and determine solutions. Be willing to engage the other members of your team by identifying and solving issues as a group.

A collaborative technique to resolving problems is posing hypotheses to team members and asking them to propose potential results of actions taken. This is an analytical exercise that can compel team members to probe into work issues at a deeper level. They will contribute to a greater level of understanding of work operations.

Another analytical problem-solving exercise that can be tackled collectively as a team is assigning each team member a particular aspect of a problem to investigate in depth by asking the 'five whys'. For example, one team member can research the economic impact of potential solutions while another looks at environmental benefits. They analyse the problem by exploring 'why' five times after finding out key information.

Using structured meetings is an effective technique to solve issues collaboratively. They provide an opportunity for team members to meet at the same time and in the same space. Your role as team leader is to provide a clear structure of what should be discussed during the meeting; potential causes of a problem, solutions and resources needed. Ideally, this structure will prompt discussion amongst the team that leads to a solution.

Using role-plays or demonstrations that involve team members can promote ideas and empathy with the subjects involved in the role-play. This technique is particularly useful when seeking ideas about customer service problems as they can be emulated within role-plays.

Using visual organisers, such as SWAT charts, plus-minus-interesting charts and mind maps can spur conversation and ideas among the work team. The act of recording information on a chart within a group setting offers a sense of structure that can make it easier for staff to formulate suggestions.

Solving issues collaboratively

- Identify strengths of ideas and connecting ideas from people involved in the decision-making process
- Provide suggestions to the collaborative group rather than always issuing instructions, which empowers others to be accountable
- Value others' ideas and seek to implement them
- Encourage and affirm the contribution from all members of the team

Conflict and performance issue resolution techniques

Ensure that the strategy you use complies with organisational policies and procedures.

The first step is to refer to any standard operating procedures that apply to the whole organisation or your team and dictate the action you need to take. Following procedures is particularly important when legislation governs how employees should handle certain issues, such as workplace health and safety. These policies often identify when and how problems should be addressed, who needs to be involved and even the steps that need to be taken during the process. The same is true of some human resources issues, particularly those that involve reprimanding employees for non-performance, hiring and firing, or dealing with a grievance.

Again, depending on the problem and the type of organisation the team operates in, raising an issue may be done in a formal or informal basis, or both.

Below are some of the methods that you can use.

Formal methods

- Completing standard forms or templates that your organisation has in place to deal with this circumstance
- Writing a report that explains the problem faced by the team, the impact the problem will have and suggested solutions
- Sending an email to specialist staff in a short-report format requesting a response or assistance
- Requesting a meeting with key staff
- Reporting on the issue using a regular formal reporting or feedback mechanism such as a monthly review meeting, management presentation or report

Informal methods

- Having a phone conversation with a specialist staff member (e.g. WHS, HR, finance)
- Discussing the issue in an informal basis during a meeting or get-together
- Chatting informally to colleagues who could help or advise

When resolving conflict amongst members of your team, ensure you have a clearly defined process to follow. In a meeting with the involved team members, discuss the processes your work place must use to resolve conflicts; this often involves the team members having to complete summary documents. Ensure you use respectful and constructive language that avoids judgements of individual team members. Verbalise and document the needs of all team members and discuss solutions to the conflict. Be prepared to follow through with actions to resolve the conflict.

Not dealing with conflicts in your role as team leader can have negative impacts on your team; team morale and culture can be hampered, and staff turnover and absenteeism increases. The performance of the team suffers as they demonstrate an inability to complete work to expected standards. The Human Resources manager may need to intervene with disciplinary measures if hostility and conflict emerge.

Processes to improve team cohesion

A team's performance will improve if they function as a collective rather than as a group of individuals.

Team cohesion is when there is strong personal connection between members of a work team. Team members collaborate when required and are willing to give up individual time to ensure the tasks of others are completed. A cohesive team plans to complete many tasks collectively and each team member knows their individual role and expectations. Having cohesive work teams is the goal of every business organisation; these teams help support organisations achieve their overall objectives.

A primary role of the team leader is to embed processes that improve the cohesion of work teams. This is especially true for teams that are hindered by individualistic behaviour that shows little regard for collaborative action. However, even cohesive teams can improve their collaborative abilities.

Team leaders should embed processes into team development and work plans that improve the cohesion of the work team. Performance expectations should be documented. For example, the average time a customer should take should be made known to all team members so they are all working to the same standards. Outline problem-solving procedures to all team members; transparency supports the building of a cohesive team culture. Discuss reporting procedures with your team; outline what issues are to be reported, how they are to be reported and our process for managing reports. Document contingency plans for when work processes need to be adjusted; for example, outline steps if customer demand surges and puts pressure on your team's capacity to respond. Having plans for these situations builds confidence and cohesion within the team.

Below are characteristics of cohesive teams.

Team cohesion

- The team understands shared work goals.
- The team to seeks and provides feedback.
- The team collaborates to complete tasks and communicates openly.
- Members of the team trust each other.
- Effort, selflessness and contribution to team goals is recognised as important.
- The decision-making process in the team is clear and understood.
- The team has developed a set of guidelines on conduct and performance standards when working.
- The team jointly plans on how to complete tasks.

Example

A team leader does not address issues within their team

Prime Printing is relocating to larger premises to accommodate its rapidly expanding operations. A team is formed with representatives from the company's main departments to plan a smooth transition to the new workplace.

Lorina, the administration manager, is appointed team leader. She is full of enthusiasm and has a clear idea of how the layout of new premises should look, even having a floor plan drawn up which she presents for comment at the team's initial meeting. The other team members do not share Lorina's enthusiasm for the task. Petra from the design team and Tony from sales and marketing have been co-opted to the team. Only Terry, the production manager, keen to ensure he gets plenty of space for the new machines, has volunteered.

After two months, the organisation is experiencing a range of problems in the new workplace. It is a very chaotic scene; all team members have so much to do on a minute-by-minute basis that they do not get an opportunity to step back and analyse why things are going wrong.

Lorine realises the situation cannot be solved by her ideas alone; she will need the input of the transition team. She calls a meeting with the other members of the transition team. She sets aside two hours, off site, where the team can work through these issues.

In the meeting, she asks the team for input about what the problems are. She writes each problem down on a blank card and asks the team to agree on a ranking of these cards from most impactful to least.

She assigns a problem to each team member to spend the next week designing a solution.

The team reconvenes in a week and each team member is asked to present their solution to the group and invite feedback. This feedback refines the ideas and the team agrees to implement them.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

List five items you would include into a checklist to monitor team cohesiveness.

Question 2

Give one example of a collaborative problem-solving technique that a team leader can use.

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Ashley is a project team leader in a technology company. One of her team members, Roohee has approached Ashley saying that Josh is not pulling his weight and he is often seen playing games on his computer rather than working on the project. Roohee has tried to speak to Josh about it but Josh responded that he completes his tasks and often stays in the office late. Roohee is annoyed because she feels she is working harder; moreover, she needs some input from Josh and she is not prepared to wait.

Question 1

Should Ashley be concerned about the issue? If so, what is the problem?

Question 2

How should Ashley address the conflict in her team?

Question 3

What may happen if Ashley does not address the issue?

Question 4

Suggest one problem-solving technique that Ashley could use.

2E Model expected behaviour and approaches

Team leaders should follow the conduct standards and work processes they expect their team to.

Modelling expected behaviour and approaches means that team leaders follow the same expectations, behavioural standards and work task instructions set for team members. Modelling these key aspects of your managerial role can be performed by demonstrating adherence to a common set of guidelines that apply all of your work team.

Many organisations explicitly state that team leaders must model appropriate conduct and implement work processes that are in line with organisational requirements. This may be stated to a team leader verbally or documented within their role description. As part of your performance as team leader it is likely your performance in modelling expected behaviour and approaches will be evaluated. You should consider the following:

- the reasons why a team leader should model appropriate behaviour and work approaches
- examples of expected behaviours to model
- modelling expected behaviours within leadership styles.

The reasons why team leaders should model expected behaviour and work processes

Team leaders who effectively model conduct and work processes find their teams function more efficiently.

There are a multitude of reasons why team leaders should model the types of behaviour they would expect from their team members. The reasons below outline substantial benefits to your work team if you demonstrate expected conduct and adherence to work processes.

Workplaces must meet compliance requirements; these standards apply to behaviour exhibited by all team members within the workplace. Modelling inclusive and respectful behaviour that respects the right of team members ensures you are setting a behaviour pattern that establishes compliance with Codes of Conduct.

Modelling effectively means you establish a consistent standard of behaviour. Team members thrive when they know exactly what is expected of them, and their performance will be assessed on clear, demonstrated standards.

It also creates a sense of equality within the team as team members can see that the team leader must follow the same expectations they have to. In circumstances where team leaders choose to not model behavioural and process expectations, team members decide not to also. This creates disharmony within the work team. Demonstrating a willingness to meet the same expectations as your team boosts team morale.

Customer service will improve as processes in selling, marketing and complaints handling will be performed in a standardised manner by the team leader and other team members. Regular customers will recognise that the work team functions consistently.

Working within a framework of shared behavioural and process standards makes it much easier to manage a team. Through repetition, modelling will prompt team members to work in the same manner. Embedding expectations via modelling creates a unified work culture based on the same expectations. This is especially useful when training new team members; if they recognise their team leader is working in the right manner, they're likely to do the same.

Examples of expected behaviours to model

Team leaders should model behaviour that supports the efficiency targets and conduct expectations of the business.

Below is a range of behavioural standards and approaches to work that team leaders should model to motivate their team. Modelling these effectively as a team leader will help your team function cohesively. Ensure you seek feedback about your ability to model behaviours from relevant personnel.

Communicates effectively

└ An effective team leader can share information and communicate to the team about:

- past success (the goals that have been achieved)
- future goals
- how the team can achieve these goals
- support mechanisms for the team.

When communicating with their team members, good team leaders use a consultative approach. This entails actively listening to team member concerns and opinions before deciding on a strategy. You should document suggestions and listen respectfully to any concerns. Speak in a respectful tone that acknowledges the personal dignity of team members.

Recognises the professional development needs of team members

An effective team leader will identify the professional development needs of the team members and will initiate a process to ensure that each person's skills and knowledge are extended. This has direct benefits to the individual and the team, as it increases morale in the team and helps to ensure that the best is attained from each team member. Delegation can be an effective way of providing team members with professional development opportunities.

Sets goals and motivates the team to achieve them

An effective team leader will set clear, identifiable and achievable goals and will be able to plan and monitor a team's progress towards these goals. The steps to achieving these goals will need to be mapped out and discussed with each team member. Work to achieve results as a team; focus on group rather than individual achievements.

Provides encouragement

Effective team leaders encourage and promote creative and innovative approaches to problem-solving. Acknowledge the efforts of team members and affirm the quality of work. Also be willing to admit mistakes that you make and pledge to rectify them.

Models collaborative behaviour

Seek specific feedback on how to improve in your role as team leader. Make sure to seek the feedback of all team members and hold each other accountable. Involve your team in decision-making processes. Avoid unnecessary micromanagement. Be willing to debate ideas in a respectful manner. Model trust in your team by empowering them to complete tasks.

Modelling via suitable leadership styles

Using an appropriate leadership style can support how you model behavioural standards and work approaches.

Effectively modelling behaviour and work approaches must be adapted to your leadership style. Each style provides a template of how to work with your team and communicate with them. Your leadership should be based on the requirements of your work team. Therefore, you should choose a modelling technique that is consistent with your leadership style. Each style can be adapted to modelling behavioural norms and process approaches.

The way in which a team leader uses their skills and knowledge to lead their team can be described as their leadership style. A leadership style is the way in which a team leader provides direction to their team, implements a plan to achieve a goal or desired outcome and motivates their team to achieve. There are many views on leadership styles and names attributed to the different types of styles; four distinct styles that you will probably be able to recognise from your own experience are described below.

Team leaders will usually employ a combination of leadership styles depending on the situation and their team. The skill level and the maturity of the team, in terms of their ability to work together effectively, will influence the style a team leader chooses to apply to a particular situation. Here are descriptions of these four leadership styles.

Authoritarian

The authoritarian (or autocratic) leader dictates what is to be achieved and how it will be achieved. This style is often used when a team leader begins working with a new team or in a situation where an outcome needs to be achieved quickly. This style does exclude ideas from team members and is not inclusive of collaborative decision-making. Modelling within this style can be accompanied by regimented demonstrations and follow-up training.

Participative

The participative (or democratic) leader works in consultation with their team when making decisions. This style motivates the team and draws on the skills of individual team members to achieve goals. This style is often not suitable for crises where decisive action is required by a team leader. Modelling within this style can be performed in collaborative activities and through two-way communication.

Delegative

The delegative (or free rein) leader allows the team to make decisions with little input or direction. This style suits highly skilled and mature teams who have team members who want to be empowered. However, it is not suitable for teams with inexperienced team members who need firmer directions. Modelling within this style can be focused on broad standards of behaviour that you trust key team members to meet.

Coaching style

The coaching style outlines an active role for the team leader in training team members. It is not suitable for workplaces where there is little time to do this. Modelling within this style can be performed by extensive training sessions, and constant feedback from the team leader.

Example

Modelling behaviour standards and work processes

Merrick is a team leader of a customer service response team at large retailer. The team manages complaints from customers about faulty products, pre-orders, refund enquiries and technical support. After an organisational review, Merrick's team was found to be not performing to expected standards. Feedback from other departments and customers indicated they were performing poorly and not meeting customer expectations. After seeking further information from the organisation's manager, Merrick was shocked to learn he was not seen as an effective team leader.

Merrick's manager asked him to begin modelling the following leadership behaviours and approaches to his own work.

- Always be punctual to work in the morning and do not leave the workplace until the close of business.
- Follow the appropriate script when speaking to customers.
- Meet communication conduct standards by avoiding not using offensive nicknames in the workplace.
- Provide team members with clear summaries of their task requirements and performance.
- Set aside time to train new employees.
- Follow professional dress regulations.
- Use work email accounts when communicating with customers.

Merrick discusses these with his team and told them he'd be following these expectations and would support team members in following them also.

Practice Task 9

Question 1

List five behaviours that a team leader should model to promote team cohesiveness.

Question 2

Identify one key strength and one key weakness of the participative (or democratic) leadership style. Give one example of how to use this leadership style to lead team effectiveness.

Summary

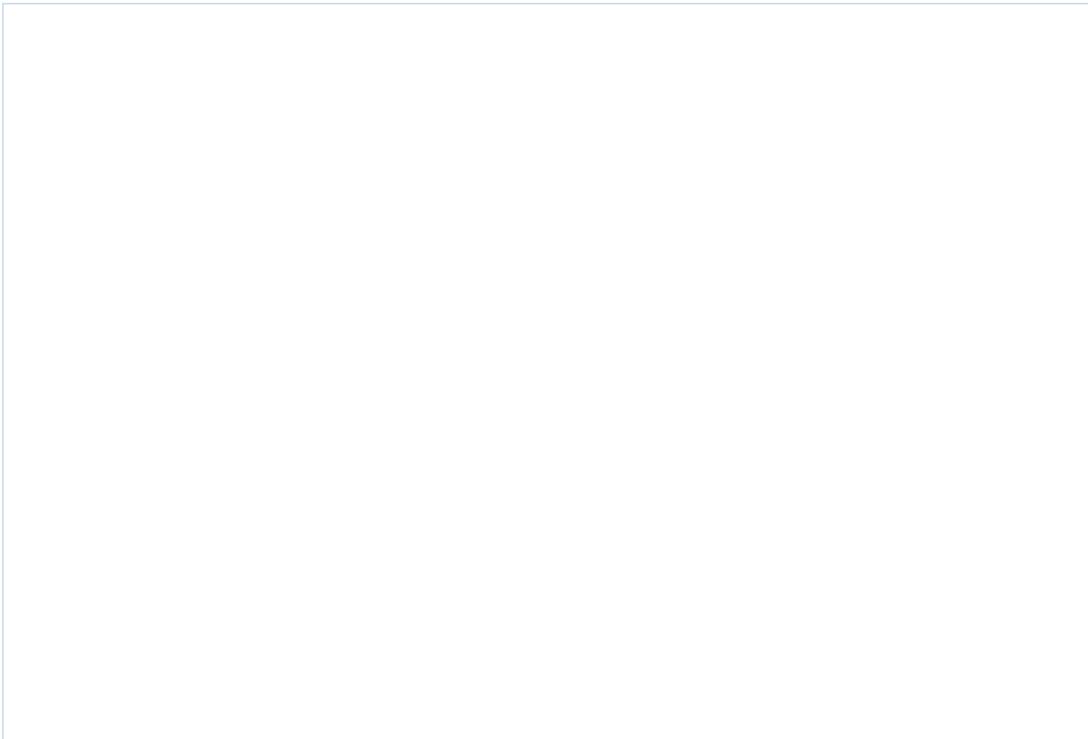
- Developing team cohesion results in team members using their particular knowledge and skills effectively to help each other, take responsibility for their actions and tasks, solve problems and use everyone's ideas and suggestions to improve team performance.
- Opportunities need to be provided for the team to give input into planning and decision-making. Meetings, planning days and performance appraisals can be used to provide these opportunities.
- Team members need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their work and understand the responsibility they have to the team to help it achieve its goals.
- Team members can be encouraged to take responsibility through gaining agreement on what is expected from them, developing a sense of pride in the team's work, and measuring performance based on individual efforts as well as their overall contribution to the team.
- Problems may arise where team members act individually and without regard for one another. The team leader will need to act to remedy the situation through counselling, discussion and coaching.
- Providing constructive feedback is a sign that a team is working together. People who do not seek or give feedback run the risk of working in an information vacuum without a complete assessment of their own and the team's performance.
- Problems can arise in the team due to any number of reasons such as personality clashes, lack of understanding of team roles and objectives, lack of resources, poor planning and excessive demands being placed on team members.
- Signs that problems may exist in the team include a lack of enthusiasm and motivation, frequent bickering, dominant team members pressuring other team members, and missed deadlines.
- A leadership style is the way in which a team leader provides direction to their team, implements a plan to achieve a goal or desired outcome and motivates their team to achieve it.

Learning Checkpoint 2

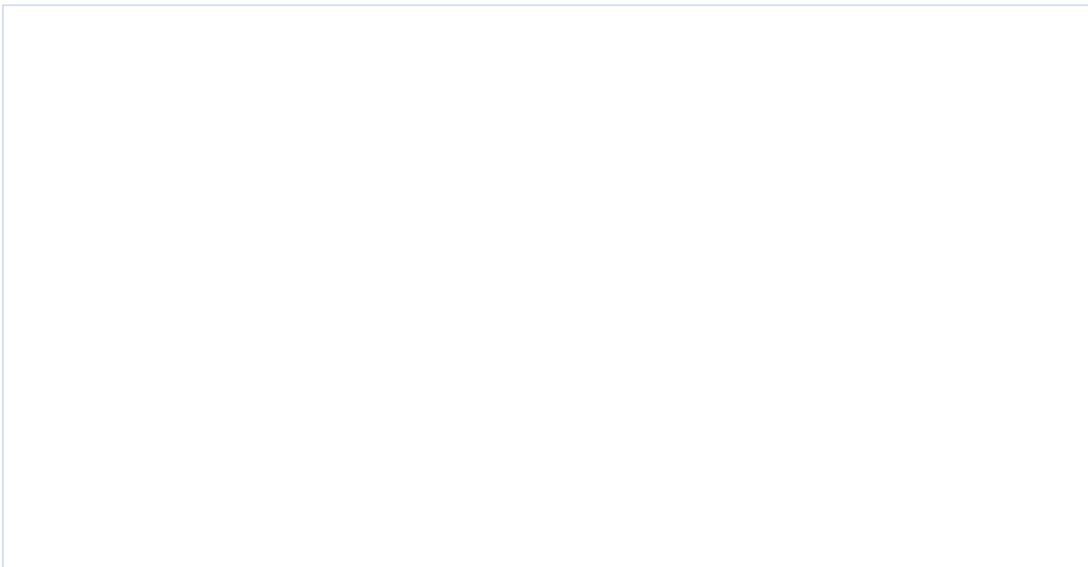
Promote team cohesion

Part A

1. List two different ways of coming to a decision as a team, and provide one example for each.



2. Identify two ways for managing team member non-cooperation.



3. Which of the following actions relate to leading an effective team? Tick all that apply.

- Asking team members to report to each other on what they have done
- Encouraging team members to share knowledge and seek assistance
- Talking about responsibilities in a constructive manner
- Avoiding raising issues in team meetings and dealing with problems with a team leader
- Ensuring the team members have the required resources and training

4. List five dysfunctions of a team and explain what causes them.

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Greg is a team leader in a warehouse and is responsible for overseeing packing and order collection operations. One of his team members, Derek, takes extended breaks during the day and doesn't finish his orders in time for a dispatch.

Sally and Nora work in customer service. They had to present a customer feedback findings report to the team meeting. However, they asked to skip this agenda item for the upcoming meeting because they weren't ready- they had been working overtime helping with preparation of orders.

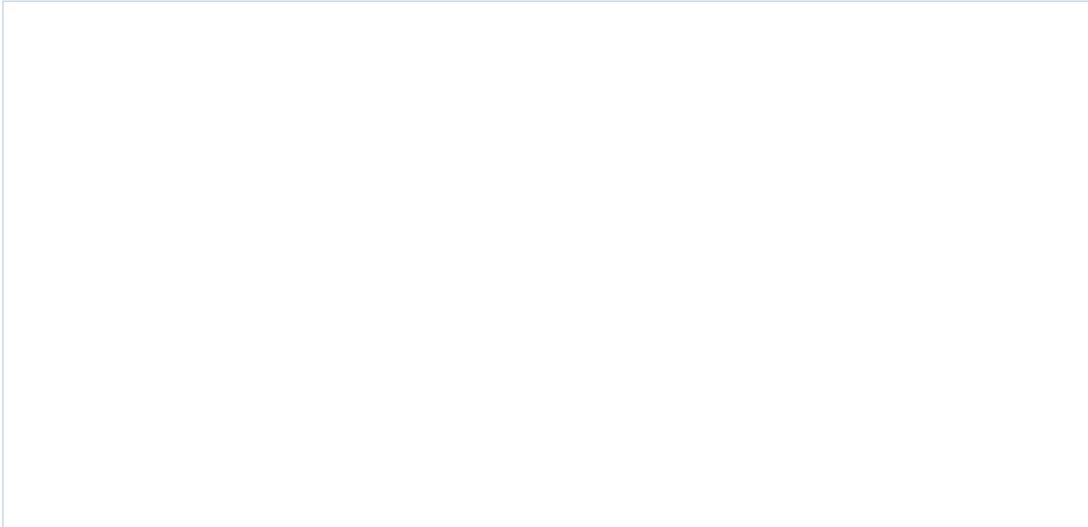
Greg realises his team needs to work more effectively together and he considers his options as a team leader.

1. What are the consequences of team members not working effectively together? Give two examples.

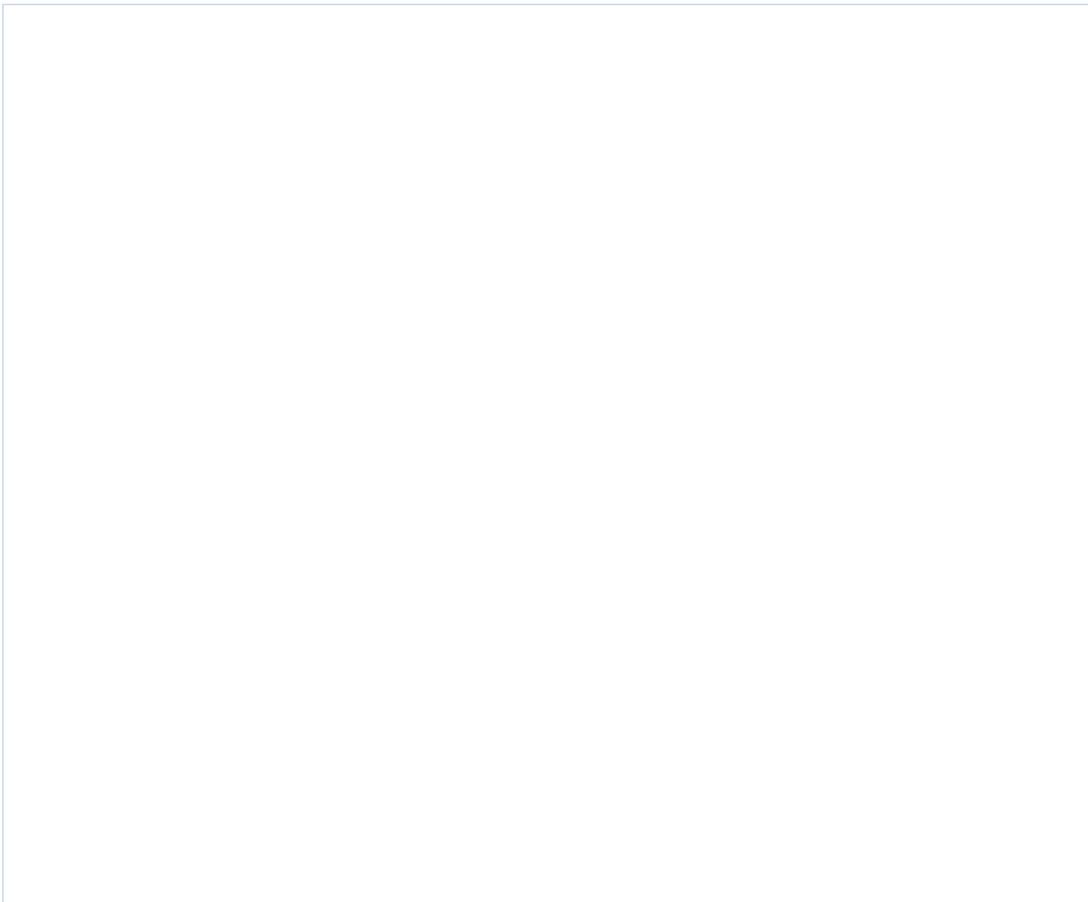
2. Suggest two approaches Greg can take to address the issues in his team.

3. List three key principles of giving feedback to team members that Greg should be aware of.

4. If disengagement of Derek is caused by avoidance of accountability, what action can Greg take to improve team cohesion?



5. Which work processes or actions could Greg include into the team development plan to improve team cohesion?



6. What are the five behaviours of a cohesive team that Greg needs to model in his team?





Topic 3 | Supervise team performance

- 3A Encourage team members to collaborate in team activities
- 3B Support team to identify and solve problems
- 3C Model work contributions to your team

3A Encourage team members to collaborate in team activities

Team leaders must devise strategies to encourage team members to participate in collaborative activities.

Work quality and innovation levels are considerably enhanced by working in teams as opposed to working alone. Teams engender a spirit of cooperation and support that makes working towards a common goal an enjoyable and stimulating experience. A team leader or frontline manager should stimulate communication between team members and encourage them to participate in and be responsible for all team activities, not only their own work tasks. Leaders should act as role models in fostering and developing an effective team.

Some team members you work with will be shy or unwilling to contribute to group activities. They may lack the confidence to put forward ideas or lack the social ability to interact in collaborative situations. Your role is to devise strategies that encourage these team members to actively participate in team activities. To accomplish this, consider the following:

- demonstrating characteristics of team members who collaborate in team activities
- encouraging participation in meetings
- developing strategies to encourage participation and the principles that underpin them.

Characteristics of collaborative team members

Creating a team of enthusiastic employees willing to contribute to group activities is a primary goal of your leadership.

As a team leader, you must be aware of what characteristics to look for in team members who are participating fully in their team. You will need to work in close proximity to your team to properly observe them; if you lead a remote team, you will have to access documentation such as performance reports and customer feedback. If you are unsure if a team member is demonstrating these characteristics, be proactive in discussing the issue with them or those they work with. Observation of their work patterns can supply you with valuable information.

If a team member is lacking in any of the behaviours that promote team cohesion and operation, encourage and guide them, and suggest ways they could improve their performance. The challenge is to do this in a way that is not threatening, so that it is received in a positive light.

Sometimes a new team can start out with the best of intentions, but it fails because some or all of the goals that were set were not realistic. Here are some behaviours that are associated with outstanding team members. As a role model, how do you rate yourself in these principles?

Characteristics of a team member who participates and works responsibly

- Takes part in team meetings and other team events and functions
- Is prepared to contribute by being up to date, knowledgeable and informed
- Communicates information and asks questions, listen to others and has a proactive attitude
- Shows concern for others, gives feedback and shows a general willingness to talk through ideas and issues
- Understands the team's goals and plans
- Helps to develop teamwork plans and set objectives and goals
- Gets to know team members and takes a genuine interest in the team's progress
- Is concerned if KPIs or other measures indicate progress is sub-standard
- Is accountable if their actions result in poor performance
- Knows their personal strengths and uses them to the team's advantage
- Knows their personal weaknesses and works to improve or overcome these

Participation in meetings

A main way of encouraging participation is organising meetings that are productive and inclusive of team member opinions.

Meetings are formal gatherings of your work team where workplace issues are discussed, instructions given and ideas canvassed. Meetings can be conducted either in person on an individual or group basis, or through a telecommunication app such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Meetings are designed to invite participation in group decision-making. They should be scheduled so that all team members can set aside their usual duties and attend. They provide a forum where the team leader can discuss important workplace issues that impact the entire team; they are more efficient than communicating this information with every team member individually.

However, staff may feel that meetings are not an effective use of time. They may believe there is too much irrelevant chatter that doesn't help them achieve higher performance standards or be informed of crucial information. Unpopular meeting formats may essentially be one-way communication, where the team leader provides directions that team members already know. Part of your role as team leader is to organise meetings that encourage team members to actively participate. Below are some strategies you should use and should not use.

Strategies to encourage participation in team meetings

- Provide clear directions on the meeting agenda. Send them out via email in advance. This enables team members to prepare information they need to participate.
- Set aside time in the meeting for team members to exchange ideas that may be implemented into work processes.
- Use affirming and respectful language to team members who participate in meetings; ensure the level of language is suitable for your audience.
- Use collaborative problem-solving techniques in the meeting.
- Be willing to facilitate a respectful debate about policies and processes within the workplace.

Behaviour that may discourage team members from participating in meetings

- You are not punctual when starting meetings.
- There is too much discussion on irrelevant subjects.
- You spend the entire meeting criticising or not listening to any feedback or exchanges of ideas.
- You disrespect the opinions of others raised in the meeting.
- You are not prepared with the required documents and information.

Strategies to encourage participation in other activities and the principles that underpin them

Knowing how to implement strategies that are guided by inclusive principles will create participatory work teams.

There are a clear set of principles which underpin the modern organisation's focus on increasing participation amongst work teams. Firstly, a team leader must work hard to create a trusting relationship with the team as a whole and with individual team members. Secondly, team members need to understand the reason they are participating in collaborative activities in order for them to work at their optimum level. Thirdly, creating participatory opportunities where team members contribute creates a sense of ownership in their job and encourages them to take responsibility. Fourthly, team members will need to know how skill-building collaborative activities will benefit them in working within the team. Lastly, team members will want to know how their individual tasks contribute to overall collaborative goals.

You can use various strategies to encourage participation. Spend time in team meetings purposefully asking people to share their knowledge or ideas and to discuss concerns. Team members should be provided with different forums in which to contribute. Establish group norms and guidelines that make all team members comfortable in contributing within group activities. Ensure you keep a written record of group discussions to avoid repetition.

Recognise people's opinions by showing the team that ideas and opinions can make a big difference. Use team members' ideas wherever possible and make sure that others in the organisation know it was their idea, not yours.

When team goals are met, reinforce that the hard work and effort have resulted in their great performance. Recognise their performance; this builds confidence and team morale. Make sure your team members see that you promote them, their capabilities and hard work to the wider organisation.

Make sure the team and team members are accountable for measurable goals and objectives. Have clear expectations and communicate them with the entire group. Below are some questions you should ask yourself to evaluate whether your team members actively participate.

Questions a team leader can ask to evaluate team members' participation

- Do team members listen attentively and communicate with each other?
- Are possible improvements discussed regularly?
- Is communication respectful and courteous?
- How often do team members discuss work informally outside usual meeting times?
- Do team members ask questions and share information and opinions?

Example

Encouraging team members to take responsibility for team activities

Michelle Williams is a team leader at a sporting goods retail business. It is a successful organisation that has developed productive commercial relationships with local sporting clubs and schools in the area. The directors of the business want to expand their operations so they can distribute products at a national rather than local and state level.

Michelle leads a relatively inexperienced team. They are productive members of the work team, but lack initiative. She finds they respond well to instruction from her, but rarely take responsibility for collaborative aspects of their job.

Michelle wants more engagement in team meetings. When team members do contribute, Michelle makes sure to thank them and explains how she will incorporate their ideas into operations. She also makes strong statements designed to elicit a response. For example, she exclaims, 'This product will never sell. Am I wrong?'. Michelle was ecstatic to find that all the team members pointed out why the product may be popular. Also, she set aside ten minutes at the conclusion of every meeting where a team member had the opportunity to share an example of an interstate sporting team they developed a partnership with. Michelle would supply each team member with an index of teams to spur the identification process.

Practice Task 10

Question 1

Which of the following statements relate to ways that team leaders can encourage their team members to participate in team activities? Tick all that apply.

- Keep a written record of group decisions to avoid returning to the same discussion.
- Establish group norms that everyone feels comfortable with and hold group members accountable.
- Recognise positive contributions to the group.
- Avoid conflict during team meetings.
- Have clear expectations and communicate them throughout the group.

Question 2

Which of the following statements about encouraging team members to take responsibility for team activities are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| a) Explaining why tasks need to be completed and why that individual team member was selected for the job | » Yes | » No |
| b) Involving team members into decision-making processes encourages them to take responsibility for team activities | » Yes | » No |
| c) Linking individual work objectives to team work plans encourages team members to take responsibility for team activities | » Yes | » No |
| d) Allowing team members to concentrate on their job and providing solutions when they encounter obstacles encourages team members to take responsibility for team activities | » Yes | » No |
| e) Investing in training and skill development encourages team members to take responsibility for team activities | » Yes | » No |

Question 3

List five questions that you could include in the checklist to confirm that team members participate in team communication processes.

3B Support team to identify and solve problems

Team leaders must know how to identify the types of problems that impact work teams and techniques to implement effective solutions to these problems.

Things can and do go wrong in team situations and team leaders need to be able to recognise warning signs of potential problems before they become major issues. Techniques such as contingency planning can go a long way toward managing and avoiding major risks to team effectiveness.

Individual team members also need to be vigilant and on the lookout for potential problems that may arise. They need to be able to communicate the problem and its potential effect on the rest of the team. Team members who identify problems and are proactive problem-solvers are highly valuable staff members who need to be encouraged in their efforts.

A team that solves problems cooperatively and learns from the experience is destined for success. Team leaders have a vital role to play in ensuring that problems are identified and resolved efficiently before they can have major impact. Be aware of the following issues:

- indicators of problems
- conflict resolution techniques
- supportive strategies.

Common problems that can impede team performance

Workplace problems will present symptoms; team leaders should be aware of potential indicators.

It is wise to have a management plan in place to identify problems as they arise. Knowing who to ask for help in identifying these indicators, such as specialists (who may be internal or external to your organisation) is very beneficial. Also, knowing the potential impact of likely scenarios gives you time to consider and implement actions and alternatives. Anticipating and planning for likely situations that could cause problems, such as team members resigning, going on leave or calling in sick ensures that you are prepared for these eventualities.

Problems take on many forms and have various levels of severity and urgency. Typical problems might fall into the categories that follow; some examples could be classified into more than one category. Below are indicators team leaders should be aware of.

People-related issues

- Team members do not get along.
- One or more team members are unusually shy or overbearing.
- Team members are not capable of doing the work.
- Team members are underused.
- Team members are bored with the work.
- Team members only focus on individual tasks and take credit for the work of others.
- There is excessive absenteeism.

Task and process issues

- Team members regularly miss work deadlines.
- The task is difficult or meaningless.
- Team members no longer attend regular meetings.
- Substandard work is produced.

Time and resource issues

- There is not enough time to complete tasks.
- There are not enough people to do the work.
- Equipment is inadequate or difficult to use.

Information-related issues

- Team members misunderstand directions or do not read or listen to information.
- Processes are not understood or communicated.
- Team members do not communicate with each other and are unsure what others are doing.
- Interactions between team members are disrespectful and often end up in unnecessary conflict.

Communication issues

- Team members do not have an opportunity to discuss their progress or share ideas about work processes.
- Processes are not understood or communicated.
- Team members do not communicate with each other.
- Feedback is not provided or asked for.

Supporting your team to resolve problems

Once problems are identified, a team leader should be proactive in implementing solutions to the problem.

As a team leader, you have more options than regular staff members to support your team in solving problems. You have access to resources, may have the authority to allocate funds and have a closer relationship to upper management to implement solutions.

To support your team in implementing the most effective solutions, ensure you have an open communication policy. If team members want to raise issues with you in a private setting, as opposed to a public team meeting, they should feel able to speak freely with you about problems involving other staff members or about sensitive issues.

A team leader should assist the team to produce a development plan that outlines a 'roadmap' to solve the problem. This plan should outline processes to decide on solutions as a group when required and how feedback should be provided. The plan should document a KPI that determines how the effectiveness of the solution should be assessed. You should also include communication guidelines explaining how and when discussion should occur. List actions that will resolve the problem.

Below are some specific strategies a team leader can use to help their team resolve issues to minimise the impact of a problem on team performance.

Support strategies

- Clearly clarify roles and responsibilities of team members
- Ensure team members are adequately trained to enable task and information sharing
- Create meeting times for team members to collaborate in finding solutions to problems
- Discuss a model work culture that prioritises collaboration over conflict with team members
- Allow regular feedback amongst team members on their input to team performance
- Identify and reduce risks at every stage of the solution process
- Monitor processes in the work plan: time lines, resources used and skills required, for example
- Collaborate to establish KPIs to measure the effectiveness of the solution

Resolving conflicts that impede work performance

Some problems can be resolved through group discussion and sharing of ideas.

Conflict is when team members become engaged in a dispute with each other in the workplace. Conflict is likely to be verbal; arguments between employees based on issues related to work or personal clashes. With the saturation of communication technology, conflict can also emerge via email or on social media channels. Conflict can distract team members from work, and in serious cases, can be based in serious intimidating and discriminatory behaviour.

A team leader will be expected to play a primary role in resolving conflicts. You may be asked to intervene and negotiate a satisfactory resolution between two or more team members that restores workplace harmony. Below are some techniques that many team leaders use to resolve conflict. The Thomas-Kilmann model specifies five key negotiation outcomes. Each option is assessed as assertive or unassertive (where power is imposed) and cooperative or uncooperative (arriving at shared solutions).

Thomas-Kilmann conflict management model

- The competing style (assertive and uncooperative) entails an unwillingness to listen to the thoughts of the parties engaged in a conflict. The team leader may resort to this strategy when they believe the conflict is not serious and should not take up any work time, or there is a more pressing concern.
- A collaborating style (assertive and cooperative) emphasises considering each opinion and arriving at a rational agreement that satisfies the interests of all parties involved.
- The compromising style (assertive and cooperative) strikes a balance between the team members in conflict. Each gains a concession that they wanted, but neither gets everything they were seeking.
- An avoiding style (unassertive and uncooperative) is where the team leader actively rejects engaging in any discussion to resolve the conflict. This does not resolve the conflict; it only prolongs it.
- The accommodating style (unassertive and cooperative) is where one party accepts they are at fault and concedes the demands of the other party.

A failure to adequately resolve conflicts can have severe impacts on the image and reputation of a business. If suppliers aren't contacted, that relationship can become damaged. Trust between team members can deteriorate and poor standards of work result. Human resources may need to intervene if conflict continues to impact work processes. Product and service production may be disrupted due to communication breakdowns. The reputation of the business amongst customers and local businesses can be damaged.

Example

Supporting team members to identify and resolve issues

The customer service work team at FastOzOfficeSupplies has undergone a radical transformation in recent months. Previously, they were performing poorly. Now, they are hitting their KPIs and team morale has dramatically improved.

The primary reason why their team has become more productive is a set of processes implemented by the team leader to become more collaborative in identifying and resolving problems.

A chat app was installed on staff computers. Discussion topics were started for various aspects of their jobs. This meant all communication occurred through the app, rather than spread out across phones texts, emails and verbal instructions. This became a collaborative medium where team members could share information that identified problems.

A weekly meeting was held where the team leader would ask a team member to describe some of the issues and problems raised in the group chat across the previous week. This role would rotate; the team leader listed a rotation that would cycle through each team member having responsibility to summarise issues and problems.

In these weekly meetings, the team leader would encourage the team to design a solution to one problem per week. All innovative and creative ideas would be welcomed; the team leader would provide any resources or materials (such as new software or technology) to implement the proposed solutions.

Practice Task 11

Question 1

List three key strategies to support your team performance.

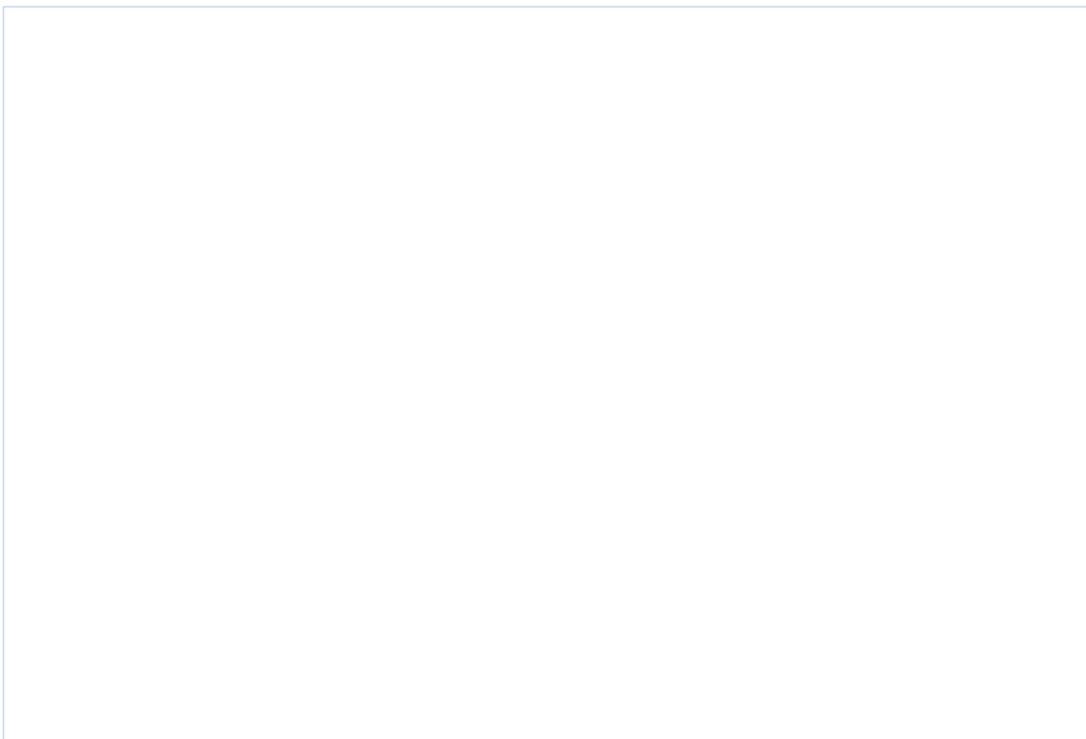
Question 2

List three common problems that impede team performance.



Question 3

List three symptoms that can help to identify team performance problems early.



Question 4

Which of the following conflict resolution strategies can be used in resolving issues?
Tick all that apply.

- Avoiding
- Accommodating
- Compromising
- Delaying
- Competing
- Collaborating

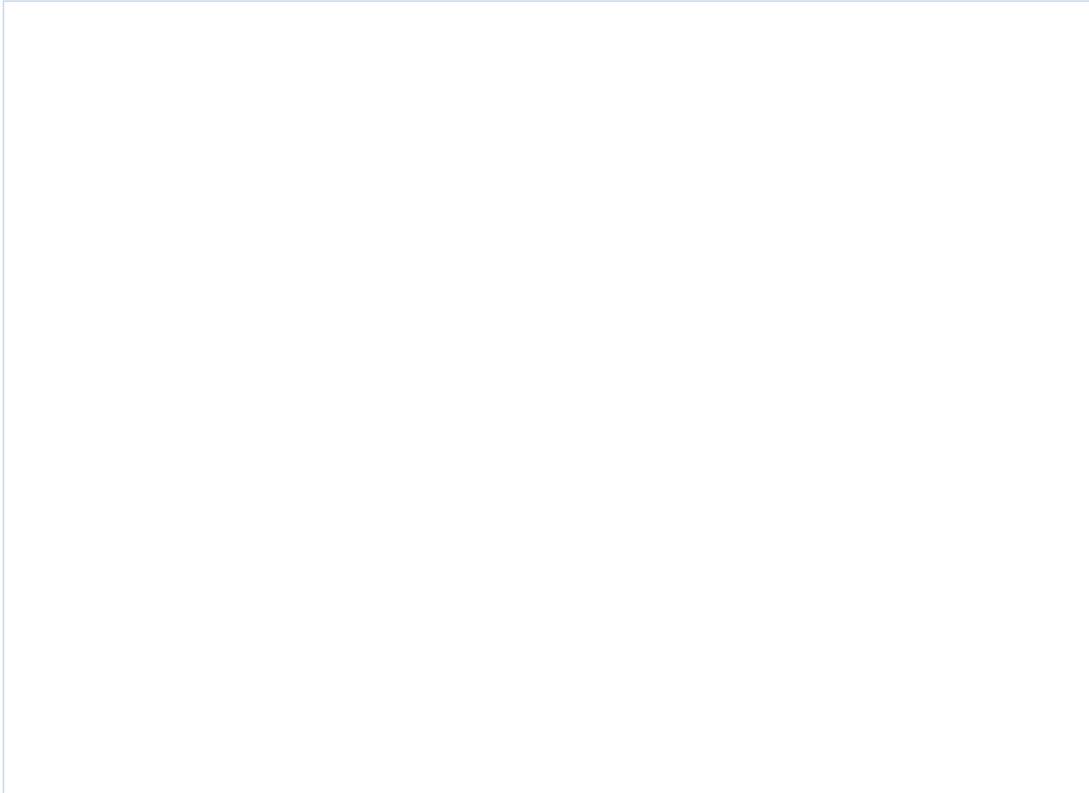
Question 5

Which of the following statements about characteristics of the group problem-solving are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a) Teams with high interest and knowledge about the problem may want more freedom to implement solutions. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Teams should be prepared to spend time researching a difficult task in order to develop a shared knowledge. | » Yes | » No |
| c) When a team encounters unfamiliar problems, they need to work individually rather than bring out experts. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Team members must consider how much buy-in they need for the solution to be implemented. | » Yes | » No |
| e) Pilot implementation of the solution to test it on a small group of customers is not a good action for problem-solving. | » Yes | » No |

Question 6

Give one example of how issues-management and problem-solving can be incorporated into a team development plan.



3C Model work contributions to your team

Ensure members of the work team see you working to organisational expectations.

Being a good leader means being many things – a motivator, a representative, a decision-maker, an information sharer, an organiser, a conduit to the outside world and a good listener. One of the best methods of building an effective team that functions well as a unit and can achieve goals is to participate in the team and lead by example.

As a team leader, you have the eyes and ears of your team focused on you, especially when you are asking the team to do something that is difficult or unpleasant. The catchphrase ‘walk the walk, don’t just talk the talk’ became popular in management circles. It means that you must be ready to lead by example – whether it be pitching in to answer calls when the phones get busy or dealing with a difficult client.

Setting an example enhances the image of your organisation among your team members. It also enhances the organisation’s image among its other internal customers and external clients. If you want an involved team, get involved. If you want team members to trust each other, trust them. A team leader must be aware of:

- role model behaviours
- strategies to improve your role modelling
- impacts on the image of the organisation.

Modelling your workplace contributions

Team leaders will reflect your contributions in their own work patterns.

The qualities of effective leaders can be debated endlessly – everyone has a preferred way of being led and can usually cite examples of leaders they admire for different reasons, whether they are from government, sport, business or the community.

Being an effective model will have a positive impact on the image of the organisation. The team members you lead will eventually work with other organisations and will discuss your role within that workplace. Customers and external stakeholders will recognise if you’re a model for the values of the organisation and will discuss this in the community and on social media. Always conduct yourself in the workplace as if the person observing you will base their judgement of the workplace on your actions.

However, there are a core set of contributions that you should focus on modelling. They are broadly applicable to most work teams and are representative of the contributions you want your team to make to improve efficiency.

Commit to organisational goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set tasks based on organisational goals Participate enthusiastically in processes such as annual reviews Follow organisational policies and procedures
Earn trust of team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be honest and consistent in decisions with team members Provide explanations for key workplace decisions you make Ensure a gossip culture does not impede team morale
Be accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the same policies that team members must follow Admit to any mistakes you've made Participate in any group training sessions
Act with integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use respectful language with team members Conduct yourself with dignity within the workplace Stay calm and rational even in stressful situations
Communicate openly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document key instructions and email them to the work team You should be willing to explain decisions to team members at most times in the work day Have regular meetings where you explain decisions that have been made
Act responsibly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up with suppliers and contractors Meet compliance requirements by following appropriate policies Treat workplace health and safety seriously; perform risk assessments and control hazards

Strategies to improve your role modelling

Team leaders must continually seek to improve how they model their work contributions to team members.

Most organisations have a goal of continuous improvement, meaning they are always looking to implement strategies to improve the performance of their staff to drive efficiency standards higher. As a team a leader you should be constantly looking to improve your effectiveness in modelling work contributions.

Along with setting the standards for your team members to aspire to, improving your ability to model work contributions will have a positive impact on the image and reputation of the business and your work team. A leader who is willing to be held accountable for the mistakes and learn from them enhances the perceived responsibility of your team within the organisation and with customers. You want your team to be seen as meeting the expectations outlined in company objectives; if you lead, your team is likely to follow. If you lead team in a 'forward facing' part of the business, customers will look to you. If you do not set the appropriate example regarding appropriate communication, abiding by policies consistently and demonstrating respect, customers will apply their dissatisfaction with you to the entire team and organisation. Below are some strategies you can use to improve your ability to model work contributions.

Strategies to be used by the team leader

- Pay closer attention to feedback so your decisions are more informed.
- Regularly encourage team members to extend their capabilities by taking on more responsibilities.
- Provide team members the opportunity to contribute to planning and feedback.
- Make a greater effort to develop relationships with team members; get to know their interests and passions outside work.
- Work in closer proximity with your team.
- Set aside time to mentor or coach newer team members.
- Document the strengths and weaknesses of team members.
- Respond to team members' ideas and suggestions, and take the time to listen when they do make these suggestions.
- Collaborate to solve problems and encourage innovative and creative solutions.
- Use language in discussions that is suited to the work team and the situation.
- Practise active listening techniques.
- Adjust your leadership and communication style to suit the team.
- Reward new staff for succeeding in new tasks.
- Be willing to help your work team during busy times.
- Acknowledge and thank your staff regularly.

Impacts on team members

Modelling impactful work contributions will have a positive benefit on team performance.

A team leader who successfully manages to model their work contributions will see several impacts on their team members. These benefits will make it easier to drive higher performance standards within the work team.

Most significantly, you will establish a culture of productivity within your work team. When your team sees the example you are setting, there is a higher likelihood they will contribute to meet their own task expectations. They will seek to reach your level of customer service, reflect the level of respect and professionalism you conduct yourself with and meet organisational expectations. Your role as team leader becomes easier to manage if team members choose to follow your work contributions.

Modelling your work contributions can effectively train team members. By observing you complete your task expectations, team members can see how a task should be completed. They may be able to replicate the way you handle a customer complaint, design a key document or contribute to a collaborative task. This also has the impact of potentially reducing the need for training.

Creating a workplace that values accountability is a key responsibility of team leaders. Your team members will be more responsible in how they act within the workplace if they know their leader is accountable. They will be more willing to concede their mistakes or weaknesses if their team leader is open about errors they have made themselves.

Practice Task 12

Question 1

List three characteristics of a role model and how they manifest in the behaviour of a team leader.

Question 2

Give one example how role model behaviour enhances organisational image for clients and customers.

Question 3

Think of a team situation that you have been involved in as a team leader and rate yourself from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest score) using the list of behavioural criteria in the table. Suggest one improvement for each behaviour.

Your score (1-5)	Behavioural characteristic	Strategies for improvement
	Listens to and supports team members	
	Encourages participation in team activities	
	Promotes team cohesion	
	Supports problem-solving	
	Communicates and engages team members	
	Keeps morale high and motivates others	

Summary

- A team leader or frontline manager should stimulate and encourage communication between team members and participation in team activities.
- Team members should be encouraged to take an active role in team meetings: to communicate information, ask questions, listen to others, help develop the team's goals, get to know team members, and commit to the team and its tasks.
- The team leader must gain the trust of team members to encourage them to share information and talk about their ideas, concerns or complaints.
- Teams need to be given the skills to solve any problems that arise, cooperatively and proactively.
- The team leader should lead by example by actively seeking to resolve problems in the team. If your efforts are unsuccessful then problems beyond your control must be forwarded to relevant others.
- Effective leaders facilitate teamwork by possessing characteristics such as being goal-oriented, innovative, calm in a crisis, having effective delegation skills and by promoting a sense of belonging.
- Team leaders need to be aware of indicators of problems that may be afflicting their work team.
- Members of the work team should be encouraged to report issues that may be impacting work performance.
- Team leaders who manage an accountable work team will create a positive image of the team amongst customers and the wider organisation.
- Use a conflict resolution strategy that is suitable for your work team.

Learning Checkpoint 3

Supervise team performance

Part A

1. Give one example each of how team meetings can be used to enhance team members' participation or hinder team performance.

2. Briefly explain how trust helps to engage team members in team activities and communication processes. Give one example from your workplace experience.

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Fiona is a team leader in an IT company StarNet and manages a team of three: Ralph, Lorenzo, and Ali. The project team starts a new Service Improvement project with enthusiasm and the best of intentions. They meet to debate their goals, create a set of team rules, and allocate tasks in a team work plan. They agree they want to achieve all their goals and work like a well-oiled machine. Fiona is thrilled and provides glowing reports to the manager, John. Everyone expects a lot from this group.

Everyone agrees on the team rules and post them on the wall: 'We will take responsibility for our actions as a team and as individuals'; 'Everyone will communicate openly'; 'We will contribute ideas and opinions'; and 'We will listen to and value all team members' contributions'. Everyone in the company admires them.

A month later the fancy statements are somewhat forgotten as everyone is working furiously on tasks and hurrying to meet deadlines. Ralph and Lorenzo declare they do not have time for meetings when they are so busy trying to meet the deadlines. However, in the emergency meeting that Fiona calls, Ali blames Ralph for not contacting the supplier and Ralph snaps back saying that it wasn't his job in the first place. Lorenzo loses his temper yelling at them how they stuffed up with the suppliers and instead of fixing the problem were wasting everybody's time.

Fiona is frustrated and uncomfortable. The project started well, but the workload was huge, and a few deadlines were missed early on. John, the manager, is starting to ask questions about how the team is working. He is very proud of the company and pins high hopes on the project because Fiona's team is expected to enhance StarNet's image in the eyes of their customers and suppliers.

1. Identify one potential problem in the communication process that Fiona should have addressed to supervise her team performance more effectively.

2. How else can Fiona support her team? Suggest three actions she can take as a team leader.

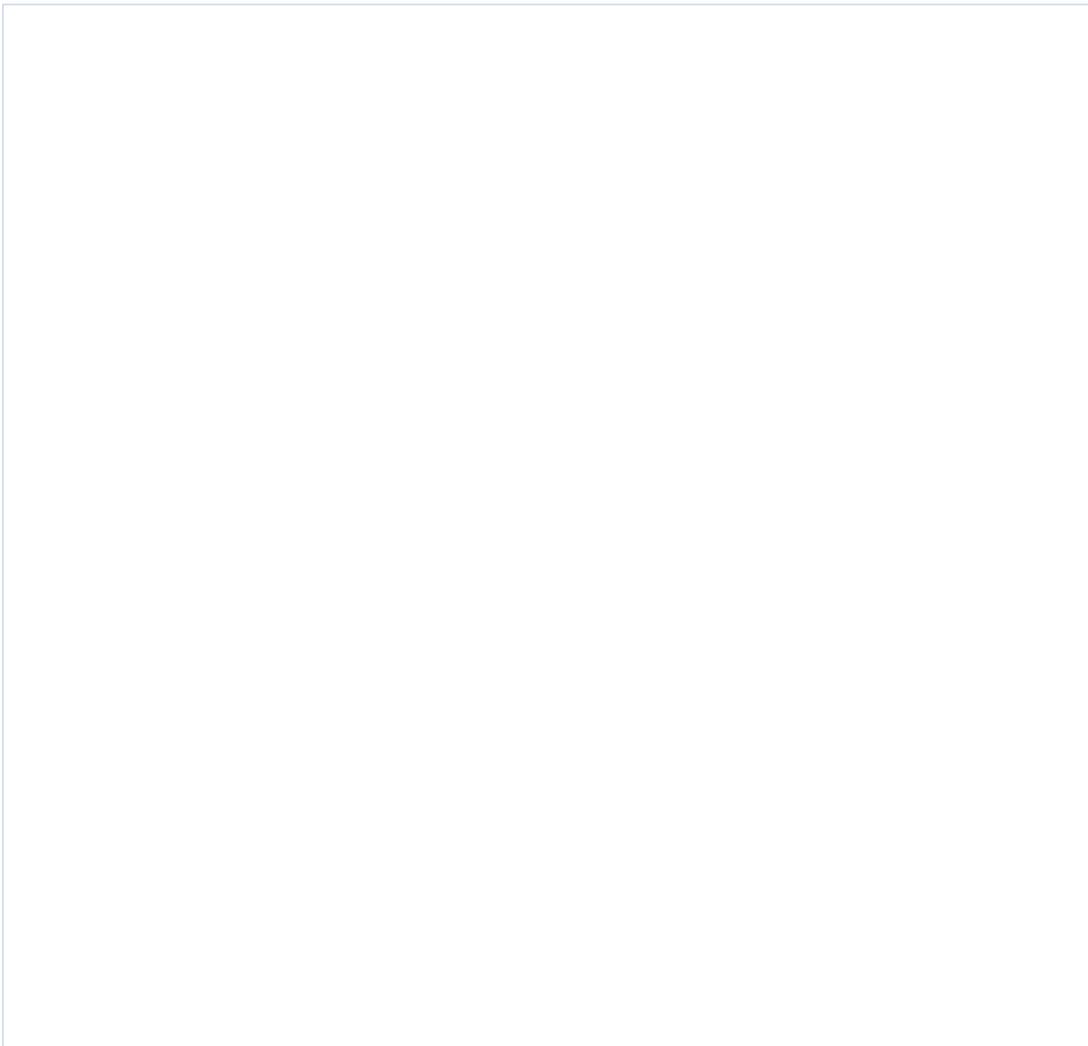
3. Which conflict resolution approach should Fiona take to resolve the issues that impede on the team's performance? Explain why you think so.

4. Identify one potential impact on StarNet's image and reputation if Fiona's team fails to resolve their issues and improve team performance.

5. Identify two behaviours that Fiona should demonstrate to serve as a role model for her team.



6. Give two examples how Fiona's team could incorporate management of issues and team effectiveness their team development plan.





Topic 4 | Liaise with management

- 4A Establish communication with line management
- 4B Communicate information from the line management team
- 4C Communicate unresolved issues that require action to line management
- 4D Communicate issues raised by management to the team to action

4A Establish communication with line management

To lead a team, the lines of communication must be open between line managers and team leaders.

Communication must be a two-way process at all times – between the team leader and the team, and also between the team leader, their line or departmental manager and senior management. An effective team manager will ensure the team's progress, concerns and any other relevant issues are relayed to management when applicable. Similarly, decisions made by management and other information that directly affects the team must be conveyed to the team as soon as practicable. Open communication develops a sense of trust between all parties.

Line managers are the managers you must answer to in your role as team leader. Depending on the organisation, you may answer to a variety of line managers. They may include financial managers, human resources managers and marketing managers. As team leaders, you should be aware of the following:

- methods you can use to establish open communication
- evaluating which methods to use
- issues a team leader should consider
- the importance of open communication.

The importance of open communication

Organisations need to be able to interact freely to achieve performance standards.

Open communication is when all team members within a business organisation have the ability to communicate with other team members. Even lower ranking members of the organisation have the option of clarifying issues or making suggestions to their team leader, or in some examples, to other line managers.

From the perspective of a team leader, it is vital that you have open communication lines with line management. Essentially, you are the link between your team and the decision-makers. You will be passing on questions and feedback from your team to line management and providing instruction and direction from line management to your team. Most organisations follow a hierarchical structure when communicating; it is unlikely your team members will talk regularly with line managers. They will communicate with them via you. In order for them to have a clear understanding of their role, you need to be able to communicate freely with line managers.

Organisations are deeply interconnected. The decisions made by line managers won't work if team members at the 'coalface' do not have a clear understanding of what to do and how to do it; it is the team leader's role to provide this information in an accurate manner. If any of those processes breakdown, the organisation will fail. Below are some specific benefits of having open communication channels with line management.

Benefits of open communication

- It enables the team leader to pass along information to their team from line managers in a timely manner. The message that needs to be communicated is conveyed immediately so that production processes are not negatively impacted.
- Open communication channels allow a sense of trust to be built between line management, team leaders and work teams. Issues can be clarified quickly so gossip and innuendo has little chance to spread.
- Channels of communication that are open enable collaboration on tasks to occur and problems can be solved on an organisation-wide basis. Complex issues require coordination between work teams, team leaders and line managers.
- It allows a work team to strengthen their commitment to organisation goals. Commitment relies on being informed about what tasks to do and how they are to be done.

Open lines of communication do not mean every employee should contact any manager. They should refer their issues to the team leader initially. Open channels do not mean everything is discussed in the open; some issues are private. For example, team leaders shouldn't discuss private medical issues with the work team. However, line managers and team leaders should be approachable and willing to schedule times to discuss issues.

Methods you can use to establish communication

Organisations need to be able to interact freely to achieve performance standards.

Communication methods are the format you use to communicate with line management. As a team you will have a variety of formats to choose. Each format is better suited to different situations based on the benefits each offers.

As a team leader you should seek to develop your skills in using a variety of communication methods, as it is likely you will have to use all of the communication methods at one time or another. For example; you may require key documents from line management, and they can only be sent via email. Below are communication methods, and their characteristics, that you can use.

Phone conversations

- These are dependent on having a clear connection and accurate contact details
- Used to provide updates on tasks
- Used for time-sensitive, real-time communication

Meetings

- Can be meetings either with individuals or in teams
- Face-to-face verbal communication
- Can communicate via facial gestures and body language

Memorandums

- Written task summaries or key information
- Distributed to relevant team members
- Usually intended for line managers and team leaders

Email

- Formal digital communication
- Can offer almost real-time interaction and communication of documents
- Dependent on having appropriate hardware and email accounts

Voicemail

- Used when you cannot communicate with line manager via phone
- Used to send very brief (often less than one minute) verbal messages
- Dependent on having voice mail set up on your phone

Web conferencing

- Meetings via video link
- Used mainly for teams working remotely
- Dependent on having functional hardware and software

Text messages

- Short messages sent via phone
- Dependent on having contact details
- Used to send informal messages about work

Evaluating which methods to use

Ensure your chosen methods can achieve your communication goal.

When communicating with your line manager, you want to ensure that the communication channel you choose provides the chance of the message being received and understood successfully. Different communication methods are appropriate for different situations.

When communicating with line managers, determine the objective of your communication and then evaluate which method is best suited. You may have a range of methods to choose from. A major consideration is the organisational protocols to be followed. Many workplaces stipulate what communication method is to be used in certain situations. For example, some organisations have policies guiding how safety incidents are communicated to line managers. They must be verbally informed, and a written form must be completed. Ensure you are aware of your organisation's communication policies. Below are issues you should evaluate.

Complexity of message	Some messages contain a lot of information or detailed and complicated information. For example, you may be discussing a procedure for completing financial documents with a line manager. You should choose a communication method that enables you to refer back to it later, such as an email.
Confidentiality	Some information should be kept between yourself and your line manager. Private meetings are a good choice, provided nobody is in listening vicinity. Emails are better at protecting privacy than written memos as passwords are required to access emails. Avoid discussing confidential issues in group settings.

Urgency	Urgent matters can include safety issues, conflict between team members and customer issues that require immediate attention. You want to use a communication method that allows you to contact a line manager on the spot. Emails can sit in their account and may not be read. A phone call is a good option; ensure you have the line manager's phone number saved to your phone. Leave a voicemail but continue trying to get your call answered.
Formality	Formality is where communication with your line manager is conducted through official channels. Formality is required when communicating about workplace decisions, financial issues, safety issues, amongst other things. Use your work (not private) email account or memorandums with the business's logo. Do not use text messages, as this is an informal method of communication.
Language skills of your team	Choose a method of communication appropriate to your team's language skills. If they have excellent reading and writing skills, an email is appropriate. If not, use a team meeting so they can clarify issues in person.

Communication conventions to follow

Team leaders should consider the following communication protocols to use when communicating with line management.

When communicating with your manager, you need to ensure the information is in context, accurate, timely and presented in a way that is easy for them to understand and act upon, if action is needed. Consider the following conventions when communicating with line management.

Message content

What do you want to communicate? Is it something incidental that might be of interest to others, or something important, such as a major problem or achieving one of your set goals? If it is incidental or not very important, a non-urgent email or quick chat in the tearoom might be most appropriate. Urgent or high-priority information might need to be handled with a phone call or face-to-face conversation with one or two key people, followed up with a clearly written email or memo to others who need to know.

Purpose of communication

Be clear with what you want to achieve from the communication. A good strategy is to initiate your communication with the line manager by informing them of what you want to achieve. For example, 'Hi Nathan, I'd like to get your approval for the meeting agenda I've designed'. This uses time effectively and compels the recipient to focus on your objective.

Recipient/s

Who needs to get the information? Is it just one person or a group? If just one person needs the information then maybe a phone call is sufficient; however, groups of people are best communicated with by email or in a meeting – then everyone gets the same message.

Written communication

Written communication can be challenging for some people, especially if they worry about using complicated language or documents. Ensure your written communication will be able to be understood. Only include the information readers need to understand in order to act on the issue. Provide background information if it is needed and include actions to follow-up.

Verbal communication

Verbal communication can be just as challenging as written communication, in both formal and informal situations. Again, guidelines to effective communication apply, which include being logical, choosing an appropriate time and place, being direct, brief and providing actions for the manager to complete. If you are nervous or have some detailed information to share, be prepared: make notes for yourself, outline the key points in writing and distribute relevant documents to your team.

Communication format

Regular reports are more easily absorbed if they have the same format each time and are divided into sections, so readers can easily find the information they need. Many organisations provide templates of reports and forms you need to complete.

Example

Communicating with line managers

Ruth has recently been promoted to the role of team leader at a franchise organisation that provides garden and handy-person services. She leads a team of customer service agents that book in appointments, get updates from their 'tradies' and gardeners on the progress of the job and confirm approval and departure times for customers.

In Ruth's first month as team leader, the team was making lots of errors. Gardeners were being sent to wrong addresses, or to jobs that had already been completed. Jobs weren't being correctly logged into the system.

Ruth was aware of this. She was reluctant to tell the Customer Service Director, who was her line manager, as she thought her initial struggles to lead her team might see her position put at risk.

She eventually decides these issues need to be raised with the line manager. Ruth decides she wants to request customer service training for her and the team.

This is a formal communication, so Ruth decides to send the request via email. To properly inform the line manager, Ruth attaches a brochure for the training course which explains the skills the team will learn, assessment methods and costs involved.

Ruth decides to follow up with a private meeting in the line manager's office to provide further information about why the training is justified.

Practice Task 13

Question 1

Which of the following statements about the importance of open communication with line management are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a) Decisions made by management that directly affect the team must be conveyed to the team as soon as practicable. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Open communication develops a sense of trust between the management and teams. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Open communication with managers promotes collaboration and problem-solving in the organisation. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Everyone needs to be included in the communication with the line manager. | » Yes | » No |
| e) To keep communication lines open with teams, management needs to be approachable at all times. | » Yes | » No |

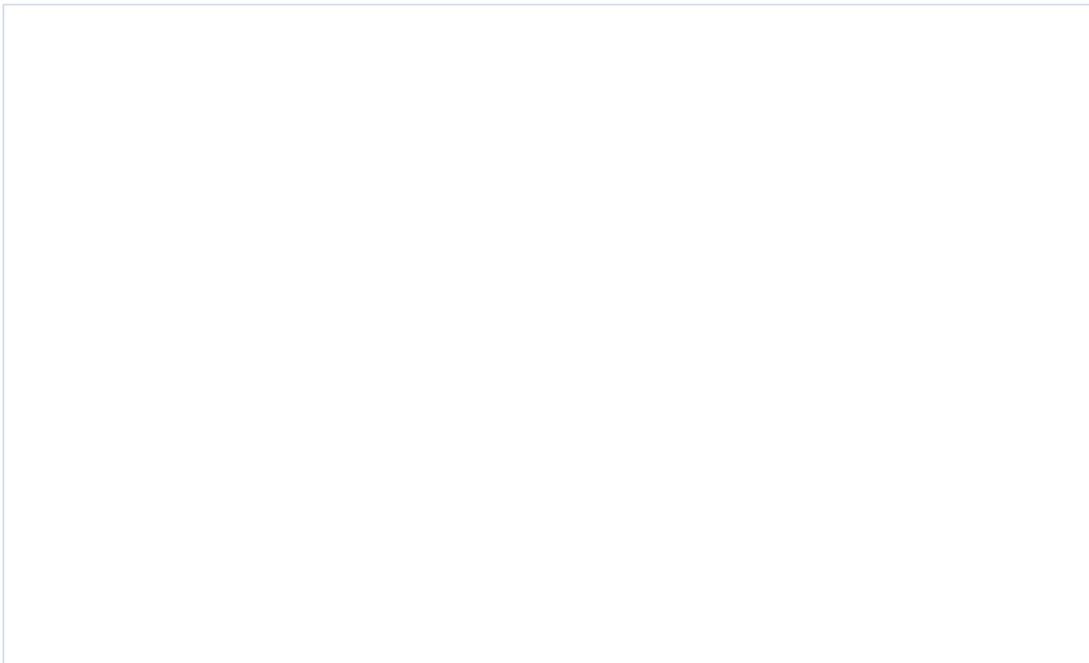
Question 2

List five factors the team leader needs to consider when communicating with the management.



Question 3

List five communication methods the team leader can use to communicate with the management.



Question 4

List five criteria team leaders could use to evaluate the communication methods with management.



4B Communicate information from the line management team

Team leaders must pass on information to the work team from line management accurately and in a timely manner.

There will be occasions in your meetings with management when issues, concerns or problems regarding either your team or the organisation as a whole are raised. It is your responsibility to convey this information to your team or individual team members.

Communication in a team and liaising with management takes many forms. These may be verbal or written forms and may require the use of electronic communication techniques such as email or written reports. They may be formal or informal and could include methods of communicating to entire groups or to individuals.

When communicating important issues from line management to your team, consider the following:

- strategies to communicate effectively
- procedural steps to take within your role as team leader
- organisational protocols you must comply with
- challenges when communicating information from line management.

Strategies to communicate information from line management to work team

Determine the best strategy that allows you to communicate information accurately.

As team leader, you are the conduit between your work team and line management. The performance of the work team you manage is dependent on you communicating information accurately from line management to them.

It will be a regular occurrence that you will be asked to convey information from line managers to your team. The information could be about policy changes, a restructuring of staff roles, information on new products or services, directives about discipline issues and a host of other possible issues. Below are some strategies you can use to accomplish this.

Communication to your team from line management

- Team leaders need to use meetings to communicate information to their team. Because it is a rare opportunity where you have the attention of your entire team, the meeting should be used to pass on key information from line management.
- Not every management issue needs to be reported at every meeting. Only communicate the issues relevant to your work team and information that is required knowledge for them to complete their tasks. Some information you receive from line management is intended to be confidential; clarify this if you are unsure.
- Conducting team meetings is more time-efficient when passing on information from line management.
- One-on-one meetings should be used when line management passes information to you that concerns only specific team members, or privacy concerns mean it should not be communicated in a group setting.
- Provide written and verbal communication where possible to accommodate all styles of understanding that your team members are likely to have.
- Focus on how the communication impacts the work goals of the team.
- Filter out any information you believe is irrelevant. This motivates team members and creates a sense of comradery.
- Use written memos or emails for longer more complex communications that require team members to read documents or instructions.

Challenges when communicating information from line management

Team leaders may encounter some difficulties when communicating between line management and their team. These challenges must be resolved.

Communication is a skill that must be learned, improved upon and adapted to different situations. Passing on information from line management to your team poses a number of potential challenges that test your communication skills.

These challenges can have a severe impact on your work team. If not delivered accurately and on time, your team may miss key deadlines, not understand changes to products or services, violate organisational policies and procedures or provide inaccurate information to customers. It is crucial that you overcome the communication challenges listed below.

Sharing information prematurely	Avoid sharing information to your work team before it has been confirmed from line management. This will help to prevent rumours. For example, avoid telling a team member their shift times may be changed until that has been officially decided.
Lack of information	Your team may want you to elaborate on communication from line management. They may not understand fully why a decision was made or they may want to express their displeasure. Be prepared to follow up this communication.
Team member language skills	When passing communication from line management, use language that is appropriate to your work team. The members of your team need to be able to understand the phrasing you use.
Conflicting information	You may receive conflicting information from different line managers. For example, you may speak to two company directors who provide you with information that opening hours are changing, but one says 6am and the other says 8am. Ensure you confirm that information is correct with these line managers prior to informing your team.
Incomplete information	Avoid providing your team with incomplete information. If you need to pass on information about a roster change, for example, do not just tell them there will be a roster change. This can cause needless anxiety. Only discuss it when you have confirmed details about whose roster is changing and what the times will be.

Communication procedures

Ensure you follow a communication process that allows open two-way communication.

Workplaces are very busy and you are stretched very thin as a team leader. The number of issues you must deal with may always seem large and ever-growing. Communication is more efficient when you follow a process; this creates repetition in your routine. The line managers and team members you are in communication with will work within your routine and communication is made easier.

Below is a process you can adapt to your own role and organisation. This process will allow you to gather relevant information from line management and pass on the required advice to your team. Specific parts of the process may not be possible in your organisation or may require subsequent steps; this is a broad process that can be adapted to your workplace.

Line manager communicates to team leader

- └ You will receive communication from line management about team members, work processes, customers, products or services. You may receive multiple communications every day; ensure you regularly check your emails.

Team leader receives information and acknowledges it

- └ Acknowledge you've received the communication. Sending a return email or verbally acknowledging the communication accomplishes this.

Team leader shares information with work team

- └ Pass on the information using the strategies already discussed while overcoming the communication challenges described.

Team members acknowledge reception of information

- └ Ask for your team members to acknowledge they received and understood the email. This can be accomplished in face-to-face meetings where you can ask for verbal acknowledgement. You can send a 'receipt request' that confirms that staff members received an email from you.

Team members share information with relevant stakeholders

- └ Team members may have to pass on information to customers they interact with or to suppliers and contractors they engage with in the workplace.

Team members act and follow up on information

- └ Some of the information you pass on will require the team members to perform a function or complete a task. Provide clear task expectations and the time line in which it should be completed.

Organisational procedures that must be complied with

Workplaces establish rules regarding how employees communicate; you must follow them.

It is very likely that your workplace will outline a set of communication protocols regarding how those who work within the business communicate with each other. These rules may outline language expectations, frequency of communication, what issues are to be communicated and when.

These will often be documented in organisational policies and procedures. You can access copies of them from line managers. Usually, the Human Resources manager will retain these and will be able to answer any questions you have. Many organisations keep digital copies of policies and procedures on a staff intranet or database.

Some of the protocols you may have to follow are listed here.

Communication protocols to follow

- All written communication of formal documents must follow an organisational style guide that stipulates use of logos, watermarks, fonts and sizes, contents pages and acknowledgements
- Use of email signatures when sending communication from your work email account
- Times suitable for meeting; some organisations provide a block of time outside usual working hours
- Booking procedures of rooms for team meetings
- Processes for running a meeting; setting and sending an agenda, taking of minutes and distribution of these minutes
- Privacy policies that stipulate personal information must not be communicated
- Ensuring all written communication is written in clear and correct grammar
- All communication must comply with guidelines regarding harassment and discrimination
- Use of appropriate tone with communicating verbally; it must be respectful towards team members

Example

Effective communication methods

Ben is a team leader of a goods inwards team in a warehouse that stores and distributes imported furniture and homeware items. He has six people in his team. Some are young and inexperienced; others have been working for years and know the warehouse procedures well. Ben's team is known as the best in the warehouse. Ben makes sure everyone in his team knows what's going on. He listens to his staff, takes their ideas on board, and allocates time each week for the team to talk about what they've been doing.

Every Monday morning Ben updates the team noticeboard, which has his team members' photos on it. He uses the weekly report from the managing director, as well as noting how many pallets the team processed, if they had zero injuries, training courses completed, and individual team member achievements. He also holds a meeting to tell the team what's coming up for the week. Any emails or reports he receives from line management about incoming shipments are posted onto a job board that is split into sections for each day of the week. Team members can see exactly what they are doing each day.

Ben is always talking to his team, and they do the same. He makes sure to have a word with every team member every day. Everyone has fun but they also make sure everyone is included and informed, with the more-experienced members helping the newer ones.

Ben gives his own manager a short weekly report summarising the team's achievements and progress against KPIs. He also meets with his manager each week, one-on-one, to work through a list of topics. Ben participates in a management meeting each fortnight where he gives a formal presentation on his team and its achievements.

Practice Task 14

Question 1

Sequence the flow of regular communication process across the organisation between management and teams. Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow to communicate information from line management to the team.

- Team members acknowledge the information received.
- Team members act and follow up on information.
- Management communicates to the team leader.
- Team leader shares information with the team unit.
- Team leader receives the information and acknowledges it.
- Team members share information with stakeholders according to the organisational procedure.

Question 2

List two organisational conventions and protocols relevant to communication with team members.

Question 3

List three potential challenges in communicating information from line management to the team.

Read the case study and answer the question that follows.

Case study

Angelina has just been called into her manager's office. Changes are coming and the company is going to be restructured. Her manager thinks that it is best that people aren't told anything until the new structure has been decided. Angelina disagrees. She knows that rumours are already circulating, and people are scared they will lose their jobs. She convinces her manager that she needs to let her team know as much as possible.

Question 1

Suggest three ways Angelina could communicate the news to her team. Recommend one preferred approach for Angelina.

4C Communicate unresolved issues that require action to line management

Issues that can impact the efficiency of the business should be referred to line management.

Team leaders must keep line management regularly informed of their team's performance in meeting objectives relating to productivity or innovation. The organisation's management will have various methods to monitor performance, and may determine you or your work team is not producing innovative ideas. They may also determine the team has not met production standards, is failing to deliver adequate customer service or is not meeting conduct expectations in the workplace, for example. You may need to provide progress reports in written form, at formal meetings, or in informal face-to-face discussions. By keeping the lines of communication open, the team leader and other managers will stay aware of performance progress of the team, and whether issues need resolving. Management must be confident that its goals are being met, so it is crucial that information is forwarded on a regular basis.

Your role as a team leader or frontline manager in facilitating the flow of information depends on you giving accurate information when it is needed. Do not think that you will avoid problems by only reporting good news. Censoring information, disguising problems or intentionally limiting information are tactics that will backfire eventually. You should consider the following:

- how to communicate unresolved issues to line management
- reasons to escalate issues
- challenges when escalating issues.

Reasons to escalate issues to line managers

Refer issues to management when you require assistance to resolve them.

Escalating an issue means you have referred a workplace concern to a line manager so they can support you in finding a solution. Sometimes, raising an issue with your own line manager will be necessary after you have tried to solve the problem or discussed the situation in your team. Dealing with problems (current or potential) by raising them with those more senior in your organisation is a necessary and important part of every manager's role. Line managers do not want you withholding information they need to know. It is imperative that you maintain open lines of communication with them. If they do not know about an issue, they cannot support you in resolving the problem.

Most organisations outline escalation procedures within their policies and procedures. Below are some specific examples of issues you will need to escalate.

When escalation procedures need to be activated:

- severe conflict with customers, especially incidents that the work team has not been able to adequately resolve
- personality clashes, verbal altercations and public conflict between team members – it is especially urgent that conflict in view of customers or suppliers is escalated
- persistent under-performance of a team member that is impacting the ability of the work team to meet expectations
- severe misconduct involving team members who bully, harass or act in a discriminatory manner towards others; other examples of misconduct can include violations of law such as stealing
- if you have evidence that team members require personal support to manage stress, illness or dependency
- safety hazards around the workplace that are dangerous to the physical wellbeing of team members or customers
- if you find evidence of errors or faults with the products or services that the business sells
- faults with the premises that require tradespeople to attend – for example, plumbing or electrical issues
- if you know the solution to a problem but do not have the authority to implement the solution – for example, you may need to request funds from the finance manager to implement a solution.

There are two types of escalation. Horizontal escalation is where you escalate an issue to other members of the work team. Hierarchical is more common, and involves you notifying line management of an issue that demands their attention.

An escalation path is a description of which issues are escalated to the various leaders and management within the organisation. This is best represented in a flow diagram where the types of issues a workplace encounters are presented and connected to the relevant person or role to whom they should be elevated. This is useful for a situation that demands urgent resolution. Ultimately, the role identified in an escalation chart must have the authority to approve of a solution to the problem.

Communicating unresolved issues to line management

Utilise a range of communication methods to communicate issues in detail.

Be open and honest and keep everyone informed of positive and negative news. Teams do not function smoothly all the time. Regularly informing management of performance issues ensures there will be no surprises, such as projects running seriously behind schedule or problems with staff.

From time to time, your team or team members will identify issues, concerns or problems in their work or workplace and bring them to your attention. For example, 'the time lines are unrealistic' or 'we need another team member for this project'. Similarly, you may experience difficulty with a team member that you cannot resolve, or you may have concerns you wish to raise with management, such as the need for more resources or more time to complete a project. Team members may also have concerns about operations in the wider organisation. The issues raised may not be complaints but could reflect a genuine need for information.

Use your judgment, and consider the options presented below as you solve your issues.

How to communicate issues with line management

- Discuss issues in meetings with line managers. Ensure you are adequately prepared to discuss an issue with any documents or information you need.
- Provide descriptions of which resources are required, including stocktake lists or supplier contact details.
- Be constructive in your communication; present alternatives for management to discuss.
- Provide useful information, rather than just opinions. For example, rather than quote team members who claim they are being overworked, present details of the number of hours worked per team member per week.
- Communicate regularly with management; develop a constructive professional relationship with them so you can raise issues team members ask you to.
- Discuss issues honestly and provide an accurate overview to management.
- Keep management updated about subsequent actions you've taken to resolve the initial issue.
- Keep all stakeholders informed about the process and the steps that may need to be taken.
- Ask that issues about illness and workplace stress pertaining to an individual team member be kept respectful and private.
- Utilise a range of communication methods; email, meetings and memorandums.

Difficulties when escalating issues to line management

Escalating issues to line management can create challenges in managing relationships with your work team.

While it is a team leader's responsibility to report certain issues to line management, there are still some challenging issues to consider. These issues relate to how you need to present the issues to your line manager and the potential impacts on your relationships with these managers and your work team.

Firstly, you need to consider when to escalate an issue. Urgent issues such as safety concerns or conflicts need to be escalated immediately. Other concerns around performance of team members that can be rectified should not be escalated immediately. Your role as team leader includes an expectation where you support and train team members about how to improve their performance. This is your first course of action. If under-performance persists, then you should escalate the issue.

You should consider the types of evidence you need to provide when escalating an issue. You may need to offer management performance reports when discussing team members, or risk assessments when highlighting safety concerns. Be well prepared with appropriate documents.

Present solutions to line management where possible. Some managers do not just want a description of the problem, they want the line manager to outline potential fixes. Pre-empt this request and enter the meeting with a range of suggestions that the managers can sort through.

You want to preserve the confidence of the line management team in your leadership ability when escalating issues. Ensure you are well prepared and have attempted to resolve the situation, where appropriate. Demonstrate that you have sought to devise a solution within your scope of authority.

Maintaining trusting relationships with your work team is essential. Be open and honest if you must escalate an issue concerning them to line management. Explain why you must take this course of action and offer support where possible.

Example

Escalating issues to line management

Jasmine, in her role as team leader at a packaging company, has been battling to improve the performance of her work team. Throughout her four weeks in the role, the team has continued to be late to work, have extended lunch breaks, fail to respond to customers within the specified time frames and have continued to use email for inappropriate purposes.

Jasmine decided to escalate the issue. She consulted the organisation escalation policy which provided her guidance on the process. Firstly, the process indicates she should support the team by ensuring they have a clear understanding of their work expectations. To accomplish this, Jasmine has the team sign agreements that they understand the policy that requires them at their workstation during designated hours. Jasmine further supports the team by organising two separate meetings to clearly outline the expectations that each member of the team should meet.

This does not adequately resolve the issue, so Jasmine follows the escalation process by informing her line manager. The next step in the policy is for the line manager and Jasmine to meet with team members individually, to determine if there are specific reasons why they are unable to meet expectations. If there are, Jasmine will put suitable supports in place.

After meeting with team members, Jasmine finds that the workload is contributing to 'burn out' amongst team members. She escalates this issue to the Human Resources director to find strategies to support team members in managing workload.

Practice Task 15

Question 1

List three things team leaders can do to effectively communicate concerns or problems to line managers.

Question 2

Specify two reasons for using escalation policies or procedures in the team environment.

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Luke is concerned about his team as some team members are not doing well against their KPIs, which may impact on project delivery time lines and revenues. Luke has already had professional conversations with one member in his team, Josh, who is not achieving targets. Luke allocated additional resources, but the situation hasn't improved. Josh seems to put his personal interests above the team, and this is also affecting the team's morale.

Two other team members, Ariana and Carina, are progressing well with their part of the project, but they requested a new software which would considerably improve productiveness. Luke needs to ask Sally, the line manager, for authorisation to approve the acquisition of the software.

Luke feels he needs to discuss the concerns raised by the team with his line manager, Sally.

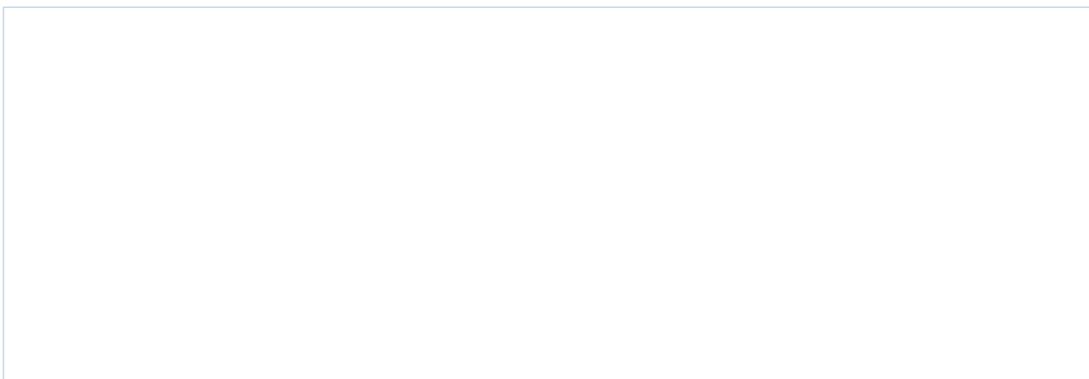
Question 1

Which communication method should Luke use in this situation? How would he need to prepare?



Question 2

Give one example how Luke can use organisational escalation policy in his team.



4D Communicate issues raised by management to the team to action

An effective team leader needs to proactively inform their team of actions that need to be completed.

After communicating with line management, the team leader will often be asked to communicate issues with their work team about tasks or actions that need to be completed. These tasks or actions are identified by line management as contributing to the productivity of the business. These actions may be new tasks that have to be completed, customer-related strategies to be used or a renewed focus on a part of the work process that has been ignored, among a wide variety of possible actions. Follow-up actions refer to the sequence of steps taken or the tasks that must be completed for an activity to succeed. After an initial communication, follow-up actions describe what is to be done, who will do it and when it will be done by. Often follow-up action is required to achieve a designated outcome.

As team leader, you will be expected to communicate issues to your work team about what actions they need to complete as directed by line management. This will place demands on your capacity to communicate accurately and organise documents. Depending on the types of follow-ups, you may have to set up separate meetings or speak to other managers.

To effectively follow up and resolve issues, you should consider the following:

- how to communicate required follow-ups
- communication tools you can use
- principles underpinning this type of communication.

Communication tools you can use

Team leaders should use a variety of communication methods to convey directions.

Directed actions are the tasks identified by management that you are expected to complete. The specific actions your team must perform will depend on the needs of the organisation you work for and the specific instructions from management. Below are some examples of different communication situations and the follow-up actions that may result.

The communication method you choose depends on the type of follow-up action you require the team to perform, the available resources at your workplace and organisational policies. Choose the methods that allow you to describe the follow-up in the most accurate way possible that your team will understand.

Team meetings

These meetings can be face-to-face, individually or in teams, or via telecommunication apps such as Zoom.

Meetings can be used to provide specific follow-up requests from line management. You may have to demonstrate to your team how to complete a follow-up action and meetings can be useful for this.

Members of your team may have questions about the follow-up action and meetings allow you to answer in real time.

A potential weakness is that you can receive questions you are not able to answer immediately.

Phone calls

Phone calls can be used to organise follow-up actions if you are leading a team remotely or require an urgent follow-up action when you are not on site. For instance, you may need to call a team member to organise a delivery before you've arrived at the worksite.

A weakness of phone calls to organise follow-up actions is that your work team cannot see your face or any nonverbal body language you are conveying. You cannot demonstrate a solution if required and can only talk to one person at a time.

Email

Email is a convenient way to communicate follow-up actions to your team. Messages move quickly, and information can be readily shared in the body of the email or through attachments. Emails are also easily archived and searched. They can be sent to multiple people and groups for use as a collaboration or project management tool. Using emails means that a record of communication is maintained for future reference. Follow-up action can be documented in emails. However, written text can sound harsher than the spoken word. You should not write an email when you are upset; you may later regret it and there is no way to take it back.

Communicating required actions

Team leaders need to communicate information from line management about required actions accurately.

Be prepared to use multiple communication methods to inform your team about follow-up actions they must perform. There are many tasks or issues at work which cannot be resolved via a solitary email, conversation or phone call. Some issues will require monitoring and multiple conversations with numerous team members. An effective manager is very willing to thoroughly discuss issues to ensure they are resolved.

Most formal workplace communication between team leaders and line management results in follow-up action being taken. Always follow instructions from line management to ensure the stated outcomes are achieved. Identify people you need to contact; this may be to gather further information from them or to provide them with documentation such as results, minutes or reports.

Part of your responsibility and accountability as a team leader is to inform others of the follow-up actions they need to take and then to monitor them to make sure the actions happen.

Communicating required actions:

- Pass on requests from line management that are accurate reflections of what they want.
- Describe the follow-up actions clearly and provide instructions about how to complete them.
- Gain acknowledgement from team members that they understand the instructions.
- Answer clarifying questions or demonstrate how to complete the follow-up questions.
- Record key information from line management so you can provide an accurate summary to the team.
- When running a meeting, ensure that time is set aside to discuss the required follow-ups from the previous meeting. Seek updates, results of the follow-up and any further action that is required.
- Ensure the minutes of the meeting are distributed to all relevant personnel via email.
- Clearly identify which team member is responsible for the issues that require follow-up.

Communicating required actions in a timely manner

Communicating required actions should be completed as soon as possible so operations remain efficient.

Informing your team in a timely manner of the actions they must complete based on line management instruction helps to detect any problems early on and to ensure time lines are met. It reduces the likelihood and consequences of something going wrong, as it allows time to solve issues or adjust plans. It is a proactive way to ensure goals are met and objectives achieved.

Timely communication means you know where each person is up to in their required tasks and you can support them with further resources if needed. An effective workplace leader is accountable for tracking the progress of any assigned task based on line managers' instruction. Never assume a follow-up will be completed just because you have provided instructions. You must be proactive in monitoring a task to ensure it has been suitably followed up.

Use a range of strategies to track tasks and plan for timely follow-up.

Use a journal or diary	Set a reminder in your calendar or diary so you will remember to manage follow-up actions. Record the date and name of the person responsible for the follow-up task; the specific actions they must take; and the date or dates for completion.
Use email folders	In your email account, create a folder called 'Actions to be completed'. Put a copy of the email that covers the task in the folder. Set reminders to check for completion before the due date. You can then forward the original message as a reminder and ask for a progress report. When the task is completed, you can delete it from the folder.
Organise progress meetings	Organise brief progress meetings on a regular basis, either daily or weekly for people to report on where they are up to. Use the information that comes from these meetings for any re-planning and adjustments. Keep those who need to know of any changes to the original task or time line updated.
Provide sufficient time	Give people an appropriate time to respond to a request to complete the required action. Some actions may be immediate, but some may take time and effort to complete.
Utilise digital technology	Smart phones have a range of diary functions, such as digital note pads and alarms, which allow you to monitor required actions. You can use these functions as well as chat apps to stay updated on the progress of follow-up requirements.

Practice Task 16

Question 1

List three communication tools you can use to communicate issues raised by management to the team to action.

Question 2

Which of the following statements relate to communication principles for communicating issues to the team to action? Tick all that apply.

- Engage team members in a discussion of actions.
- Be clear about your message and instruction.
- Follow up with team members to check their understanding of the action required.
- Take notes when information is passed on from senior management for action.
- Provide opportunities for team members to discuss alternative solutions.

Summary

- The team leader or frontline manager acts as a link or liaison between management and the team.
- An effective team leader will ensure that the team's progress, concerns and issues are relayed to management, while also relaying information and decisions made by management to the team.
- Effective communication with management or team members must be in context, accurate, timely and presented in a manner that is easy to understand and act on.
- You need to be clear about what you need to convey and who you need to tell.
- When communicating verbally, choose an appropriate time and place. Prepare what you want to say beforehand. Be clear and brief and include a call to action if appropriate.
- There will be occasions when senior management requires you to communicate information regarding the team or the entire organisation to your team. It is your responsibility to convey this information sensitively, honestly and accurately.

Learning Checkpoint 4

Liaise with management

Part A

1. Give two examples how open communication with management may have a positive effect on the team.

2. Which of the following statements about facilitating communication from management to the team are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| a) Attending management meetings is a good way to communicate information from management to the team. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Reporting on management issues at every team meeting is an effective way to communicate management issues. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Communicating information from management on how they work on achieving business goals helps to motivate team members to work towards their goals. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Using one-on-one meetings to raise issues with individual team members is a way to communicate information from management to the team. | » Yes | » No |

3. List two approaches a team leader can use to communicate concerns raised by the team to line management.

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

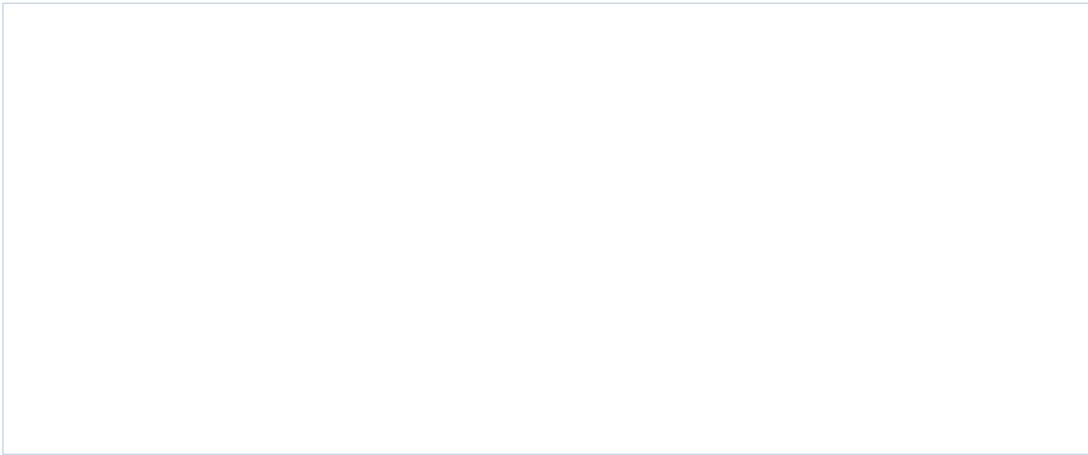
Ann is leading a customer experience team of ten people in an insurance company. Recently, most of her team members raised their concerns about the Customer Relationship Management system, which is slowing down, and customers experience a long wait on the line. This is becoming a reason for their dissatisfaction with the company. The team are frustrated as the operational system impacts on their ability to achieve their KPIs.

Ann's line manager Fiona mentioned to Ann that the CRM will be upgraded. Ann is not sure when this is going to happen and decides not to mention this to her team, and she would prefer Fiona to send a memo in the organisation.

Meanwhile, some of the functions on insurance claims need to be typed in by hand and after the recent storm this created a backlog of claims. The team are raising their concerns and are asking Ann to check with the senior management if additional resources could be allocated to deal with the issue short-term.

1. Whose responsibility is it to inform the team of the CRM system upgrade?

2. Suggest two options of how Ann can approach the situation of a backlog of claims with her line manager.



After Ann reports the issues with manual data entry in the management meeting, Fiona asks Ann for the estimate of how much time the team spends on these additional tasks. Fiona says that currently, the scope of additional resources is unclear.

3. What does Ann need to communicate back to her team?

