BSB 7.0

BSBXTW401

LEAD AND FACILITATE A TEAM

Aspire Learning Resources

BSBXTW401

Lead and facilitate a team

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1

Learning Resources

BSBXTW401 Lead and facilitate a team, Release 1

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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBXTW401 Lead and facilitate a team*, 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
Interact with others	▪ Uses appropriate communication practices when communicating with team members and facilitating activities ▪ Establishes and builds relationships and rapport with team members to foster a positive team environment ▪ Recognises the perspectives of team members and diversity of opinion, and manages conflict as required
Navigate the world of work	▪ Understands and explains ethical and legal, regulatory and organisational responsibilities to team
Get the work done	▪ Plans, organises and implements work activities in line with organisational policies and procedures

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	Identify common objectives of workplace team	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B	Establish expected outcomes and accountabilities for team members	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C	Plan for contingencies	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2: Coordinate team and individuals	2A	Communicate objectives and allocate tasks	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B	Facilitate open and respectful communication and collaboration	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 3: Support team members	3A	Provide coaching and support individuals	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B	Facilitate team to resolve issues using problem-solving skills	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 4: Monitor team performance	4A	Measure team member performance and provide feedback	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	4B	Identify specific opportunities for improvement and implement action plans	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1 | Plan team outcomes

1A Identify common objectives of workplace team

1B Establish expected outcomes and accountabilities for team members

1C Plan for contingencies

1A Identify common objectives of workplace team

A workplace team can be defined as a group of people organised to work together towards a common goal.

Most people are familiar with the idea of being in a team and have worked in teams of some sort – whether it was 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 has to work together to achieve its common goal.

In a team, people work interdependently, communicate often and see themselves as part of a specific group. Successful teams also need effective team leaders.

The team must have a clear purpose and objectives

To shape the team in a positive and constructive way, it must have a clear focus or purpose. It is important to ensure that your team's purpose is connected to the organisation's mission, values and strategies. When employees understand how their jobs align with organisational goals, plans and objectives, they are more likely to produce work that is effective and exceptional.

Team purpose can be fostered by establishing goals for individuals and overall group performance. As a team leader, you should invest time and effort into developing, refining and reaching agreement on purposes that inspire your team members. Ask: 'What is the team here to do?' and 'How do its activities link with the organisation's plans, goals, and objectives?'

To set a clear purpose for your team, you need a shared understanding of:
▪ who the team's customers are – internal and external – and the team's role with these customers
▪ measures of success – how you will know when you have succeeded
▪ how your team's results contribute to other departments and the organisational goals.

Team objectives

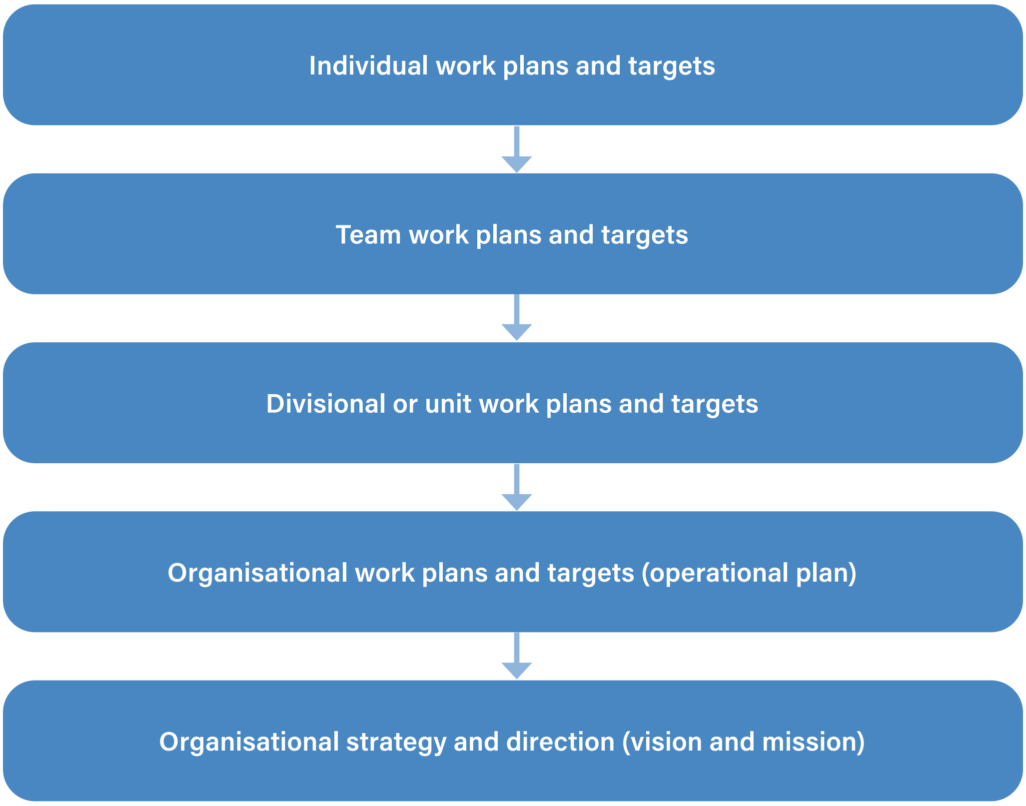
Team objectives will lead towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the organisation as a whole.

Organisational goals can come from the following sources.

Strategic goals	▪ Broad goals for targets the business hopes to achieve ▪ Can include short-term goals (to be achieved within a year) and long-term goals (to be achieved within a five- to 10-year period)
Operational/ functional goals of the department	▪ Each department sets its own operational goals to support the achievement of strategic goals.
Team goals	▪ Each team in the department has its own goals to support the achievement of the operational goals. ▪ Usually quite broad and do not relate specifically to day-to-day tasks ▪ Overall goals usually have set targets, but a team should have specific goals that identify tasks to be completed along the way. ▪ These goals may be written as a team charter with defined team goals.
Team member goals	▪ Individual team members have their own personal goals to support the team to achieve its objective and perform well in its role.

Teams are the building blocks of an organisation. Team's members work together to achieve a common goal, which, when achieved, contributes to the organisation's goals and objectives. This is true of permanent teams, project teams and cross-functional teams. All the activities of individuals, teams and the organisation division, department or unit to which they belong should reflect and contribute to the goals of the entire organisation.

This diagram illustrates how individual and teamwork plans are like building blocks that together contribute to an organisation's goals.



Team outcomes

Different goals hope to achieve different outcomes for both the department and organisation as a whole.

Here are some examples.

Internal team goals	▪ Team motivation ▪ Team satisfaction ▪ Innovation
Operational goals	▪ Quality standards ▪ Efficiency of operations ▪ Productivity ▪ Risk management ▪ Customer service and experience
Marketing and sales goals	▪ Data collection and analysis ▪ Conversion of inquiry to sale ▪ Marketing exposure ▪ Number of sales

Financial goals	▪ Cost saving ▪ Profit ▪ Investments
Sustainability goals	▪ Involvement with community ▪ Recycling ▪ Sustainable practice

Example

Objectives and goals

The following table shows the main goal of a business, the objective that will help it meet this goal and the specific goals of three teams in the business.

Organisational goal	Organisational objective	Team goals
To successfully grow the business	Identify new opportunities and increase the range of products and services	**Finance:** Optimise use of resources and cash reserves **Sales**: Explore new market opportunities **HR:** Build dedicated staff with appropriate skills and knowledge

Team responsibilities

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 or position 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. Often, one or two responsibilities outlined in a position description (PD) may be particularly important to the success of the team. Extra responsibilities created because of a team goal may need to be added to an individual job description or performance plan.

In particular, this may be the case in cross-functional teams, where it is each team member's responsibility to share knowledge and information with others. It may also be the case in project teams, where team members may be working on a special project in addition to their usual duties.

Position description

A PD is an organisational document that defines the role of an employee, including their work tasks, and the expectations and responsibilities of their role.

A typical PD includes the following sections:

- description of the role, including role title, pay rates, reporting lines and work hours
- information about the company, such as its values or strategic goals
- purpose of the role – a general description of what the role does and what it is responsible for
- job duties and responsibilities – a list of the work tasks and responsibilities of the role
- essential skills and qualifications – any qualifications, training and/or experience needed to perform the role.

Example

Position description

Here is an example of a PD for a receptionist role.

Role title	Receptionist
Department	Client Services
Reports to	Client Service Manager
Direct reports	NA
Employment term	Full time, ongoing
Work hours	Monday to Friday 8am–5pm with one-hour lunch break

Our company is Australian owned and is renowned for consistently delivering value to clients through innovative and successful marketing activities.

Our range of marketing services include:

- branding and design
- event marketing
- social media marketing
- web development
- market research
- content marketing
- digital advertising
- integrated marketing planning.

We pride ourselves on always being at the forefront of marketing services and commit to giving our clients a profitable return on investment.

We work with integrity and honesty, value creativity and celebrate diversity.

Purpose of the role
The purpose of the receptionist role is to provide our clients with timely response to inquiries and basic administrative support.
Key responsibilities
▪ Open and close reception area ▪ Tidy and maintain reception area ▪ Meet and greet clients ▪ Provide excellent customer service ▪ Fully respond to enquiries: face to face, by telephone and over email ▪ Escalate inquiries as needed ▪ Manage the schedule of the Client Service Manager ▪ Coordinate meetings and organise catering for the Client Service Department ▪ Prepare correspondence and documents ▪ Data entry as instructed by the Client Service Manager ▪ Maintain operation, maintenance and security of record-keeping systems and software ▪ Ensure adequate supplies of consumables, such as stationery, printer supplies and kitchen supplies for the Client Service Department ▪ Assist with equipment management and maintenance ▪ Participate in relevant training and development as required ▪ Other duties consistent with the position as required by the Client Service Manager
Skills and personal attributes
▪ Advanced written and verbal communication skills ▪ Professional personal presentation ▪ Information and record management ▪ Initiative ▪ Reliability and stress tolerance ▪ Good organisational skills ▪ Customer service focus ▪ Interpersonal skills ▪ Ability to multitask
Professional experience and qualifications
▪ This is an entry-level position that does not require previous work experience in similar roles. ▪ Certificate II in Business Administration or similar – Essential ▪ Advanced knowledge of MS Office suite (Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint)

Team roles

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. However, a team role can be quite different from a job function, depending on the situation and the type of team.

For example, the role of manager or team leader is clear. Usually, these people will have management, leadership and motivational responsibilities included in their job description. Similarly, people who work as administration or support staff for a team will have these responsibilities included in their job description. It can be easy to understand some roles in a team, just from people's position titles.

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.

A team's objectives are usually self-evident; for instance, a sales team's job is to sell products or services. Or the goals and objectives may have been set by management. However, there is usually an opportunity for teams to come up with a simple vision or mission statement that describes what they do. Managers often use this process, known as collaborative goal setting, as it has many benefits, particularly when new teams are formed.

Team charter

You may already have a team charter or can use the information you have identified to create one. A team charter defines the direction and purpose of the team, agreed behaviours and internal rules, as well as how the team's success will be measured.

The charter provides clarity to the team, and supports the induction of new team members, who can readily access key information on how the team operates.

There are different templates available to design a team charter, which should include the following aspects:

- Team purpose – This includes the mission and key objectives of the team
- Team members' responsibilities – Summary of what each team member is responsible for, captured in a RACI chart
- Team values – What the team sees as necessary or important
- Group norms – Agreed behaviours and internal rules
- Metrics of success – Agreed measurements of team success
- Resources available to support the team.

A RACI chart assists in defining the roles and accountabilities of team members:

- R – Who is responsible for completing a task/function
- A – Who is accountable for the completion of a task/function
- C – Who needs to be consulted in relation to a task/function
- I – Who needs to be informed in relation to a task/function

Example

Team charter

Here is an example of a team charter for the front desk team at a marketing company.

Team Charter	
Team purpose	The purpose of the front desk team is to provide exceptional customer service to customers and to provide administrative support to the Customer Service Department. Our vision is to always find innovative ways to serve customers. Our objectives are: ▪ To respond to inquiries promptly, correctly and consistently ▪ To make customers feel that the Company is partnering with them so that they can succeed in achieving their own business goals ▪ To be an ambassador for quality customer service ▪ To complete all tasks within set deadlines and according to the Company's standards.

Team members	Jim Smith – Front Desk Supervisor Sarah White – Receptionist Mark Black – Receptionist

RACI chart

Task/Function	Jim	Sarah	Mark
Respond to clients' enquiries	A/C/I	R	R
Organise and tidy up reception area	A	R	R
Provide administrative support	C	R	R
Open and close reception area	A	R	R
Meet and greet clients	A/R	R	R
Respond to and/or escalate inquiries	A/C/I	I	I
Organise meetings and catering for the Customer Service Department	A	R	R
Plan meetings for the Customer Service Department with the Customer Service Manager	R	I	I
Ensure adequate supplies of consumables such as stationery	A/C/I	R	R
Assist with equipment management and maintenance	A/C/I	R	R
Manage the schedule of the Customer Service Manager	A/R		
Complete administrative tasks to support the Admin Team as instructed by the Customer Service Manager	R/A		
Data entry as instructed by the Customer Service Manager	R/A/I	R	R

Team values	Our team values are: ▪ Accountability ▪ Integrity ▪ Customer focus ▪ Quality first ▪ Respect for diversity ▪ Collaboration.
Group norms	Our group norms are: ▪ We meet every day for 15 minutes for a stand-up meeting to discuss the tasks of the day. This is an opportunity to share our workload. ▪ Lunchbreaks are taken in turns and may vary depending on how busy the reception area is. Lunchbreaks must be taken between 11am and 2pm. ▪ Lunch is consumed in the kitchen area. ▪ The reception area should always be covered by at least two team members. ▪ Team members must complete their daily tasks first and then any extra tasks assigned to them in order of urgency.
Metrics of success	Metrics of success for individual roles are stated in the performance plan for each team member. The team's metrics are as follows: ▪ All enquiries are responded to within 24 hours (working day) ▪ Feedback from clients to average 95 per cent in positive feedback ▪ All tasks assigned to team members to be completed according to timelines.
Resources	▪ Desktop computer ▪ Microsoft Office suite ▪ Access to customer relationship management (CRM) software ▪ Ergonomic furniture and equipment ▪ Stationery ▪ Monthly budget of $500 for professional development

Legislative requirements relevant to the workplace

Teams must work in accordance with relevant legislation, codes, national standards and work health and safety (WHS) rules. Managers should note that laws and standards are complex and amended regularly. Also, while there is national legislation on many issues, states and territories have their own laws. Your organisation should give you details of legislation and guidelines that are relevant to your team, but it is still the manager's responsibility to ensure the team follows correct procedures.

Many of these laws – as well as ensuring workplaces are safe, equitable, respectful and nonthreatening – are designed to improve the experience of work for employees. Adhering to them will help managers promote the effectiveness of their teams.

You can find more information on Commonwealth WHS requirements on the Safe Work Australia website at: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au

Legislation that you need to know about as it applies to your team is outlined below.

WHS	Employers have a duty to provide a safe work environment for their employees. A breach of the act may result in prosecution and substantial fines. If a breach results in the injury or death of a worker, the employer may also have to pay compensation to the worker or their legal representative. This is legislated at the federal and state/territory level. WHS relates to the mental wellbeing of employees as well as their physical safety. For example, employers have a responsibility to prevent bullying.
Anti-discrimination	Managers and team leaders must prevent and eliminate discrimination in the workplace. Employees must not be treated differently on the grounds of race, colour, gender, sexual preference, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, nationality or social origin.
Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment is broadly defined as an unwelcome sexual advance or unwelcome request for sexual favours, or any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, principally in circumstances where the perpetrator would have anticipated that the victim or victims would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Laws regarding sexual harassment fall under the relevant equal opportunity and discrimination legislation in your state or territory. The prohibition against sexual harassment applies to management and employees. Make employees aware of the provisions of the relevant Act. Have a clear policy against sexual harassment and a complaints procedure. Employees should understand that engaging in sexual harassment may be grounds for dismissal.

Policies and procedures are important because they outline the legislative and regulatory requirements that a business must follow. They also give you a set of clear expectations on how you should work and behave.

Workplace policies

A policy is a system of principles and guidelines that support decision-making and work practices in an organisation.

Each department must refer to these policy documents to ensure consistency across the organisation. In the area of human resources and managing people, policies are essential for providing staff with clear guidelines if they need to question their work conditions or if there are issues or conflict with other employees.

Structure of a policy
▪ Title of the policy ▪ Purpose of the policy – a statement on what the policy aims to achieve ▪ Scope of the policy – what the policy covers and what it applies to ▪ Definitions – some key terminology used in the policy document that may need explanation ▪ Policy statement – a general description of the policy ▪ Procedures – how the policy should be applied ▪ Related policies and procedures – a list of policies and procedures addressing related issues, and any other relevant documents

The following gives examples of common workplace policies you may come across.

Policy	Details
WHS	Responsibilities and norms around health and safety in the workplace, such as what personal protective equipment (PPE) you may be required to wear when you work
Anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity	Norms and responsibilities that ensure all employees are treated respectfully, equally and fairly no matter their age, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, religious belief, etc.
Performance management	Details how you will be given feedback, how your work will be evaluated and the consequences of poor performance, as well as potential reward for high performance outcomes
Dress code	How you are expected to dress at work, e.g. business attire Monday to Thursday and casual Fridays
Quality management	Outlines quality standards of the organisation and the level of quality you are expected to implement in your work
Communication guidelines	How to communicate with others internal and external to the organisation, including how to write and structure emails and how to represent the company on social media
Standard operating procedures	How to perform a particular task or function – includes step-by-step procedures and quality standards with measurement of performance

Other policies that may affect your job role include:

- use of company property, such as IT equipment or vehicles
- leave applications
- marketing guidelines, such as format and style guides for promotional information.

Sample policies are available at: http://aspirelr.link/business-victoria

Codes of conduct

A code of conduct gives guidelines on organisational values and what it expects from its employees.

A code of conduct generally includes:

- Ethical principles – a guide for employees on how to respect colleagues and customers
- Standards – may include standards of practice (how the organisation operates) and standards of conduct (how employees conduct themselves when performing tasks)
- Values – key values that are embraced and championed by the organisation
- Accountability – how employees at all levels take responsibility for their actions.

Example

Code of conduct

The following is a sample code of conduct.

Code of Conduct Policy
Purpose This policy affirms the Company's belief in responsible social and ethical behaviour from all employees. It clarifies the standards of behaviour expected of all employees.

Code of Conduct Policy

Principles

Our employees contribute to the success of our organisation and that of our clients. The Company strongly opposes any employee being deprived of their basic human rights.

Our employees have an obligation to the business, our clients and themselves to observe high standards of integrity and fair dealing. Unlawful and unethical business practices undermine employee and client trust.

Policy

This policy applies to all employees and provides the framework of principles for conducting business, dealing with other employees, clients and suppliers. The Code of Conduct does not replace legislation. If any part of it is in conflict with the law, legislation takes precedence.

This policy requires employees to do the following at all times:

- Act and maintain a high standard of integrity and professionalism.
- Be responsible and scrupulous in the proper use of Company information, funds, equipment and facilities.
- Be considerate and respectful of the environment and others.
- Exercise fairness, equality, courtesy, consideration and sensitivity in dealing with other employees, clients and suppliers.
- Avoid apparent conflict of interest, promptly disclosing to a Senior Manager anything which may constitute a conflict of interest.
- Promote the interests of the Company.
- Perform duties with skill, honesty, care and diligence.
- Abide by policies, procedures and lawful directions that relate to your employment with the Company and/or its clients.
- Avoid the perception that any business transaction may be influenced by offering or accepting gifts.
- Under no circumstances may employees offer or accept money.

Any employee who in good faith raises a complaint or discloses an alleged breach of the Code, while following correct reporting procedures, will not be disadvantaged or prejudiced. All reports will be dealt with in a timely and confidential manner.

The Company expects cooperation from all employees in conducting themselves in a professional, ethical and socially acceptable manner of the highest standards.

Any employee in breach of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including employment termination.

Should an employee have doubts about any aspect of the Code of Conduct, they must seek clarification from the Human Resource Manager.

This policy will be regularly reviewed by the Company and any necessary changes will be implemented by the Human Resource Manager.

Organisational culture

Work culture refers to how staff in an organisation behave, what they value and how they conduct business.

Understanding the organisational culture of your workplace is essential to working to the best of your abilities. In some organisations it is a written and formalised statement about the environment the business wants for its employees, such as high performance, collaboration and respect for each other. In a less formal workplace, the work culture is based on unwritten rules that help colleagues bond and carry out their work.

Many aspects of an organisation's environment contribute to the culture, such as leadership styles, values, interactions and relationships, behaviours and attitudes. A company's policies, procedures and codes of conduct provide direction and guidelines for staff so they can operate in a way that reinforces a positive work culture.

An organisational culture includes the elements outlined below.

Artefacts	Values	Assumptions
▪ Ceremonies and rituals, such as celebrating the birthday of a team member ▪ Awards and symbols, such as a certificate for a job well done ▪ Stories about past events and experiences told by existing employees	▪ Ethical beliefs ▪ Type of leadership from the top ▪ Accountability for individual and corporate action	▪ Assumptions about what the organisational culture is from its employees ▪ Actual behaviours and values that have not emerged or become visible

There are many different types of organisational culture and many are unique to the organisation. Here are four examples.

Market	The organisation is result-driven and focused on achieving its goals.
Hierarchy	The organisation has a very formalised, stable and top-heavy structure with senior management.
Adhocracy	The organisation values an innovative and flexible work environment.
Clan	Employees are very close to each other and feel part of a family.

Reputation

There have been some famous examples in the business world where companies have experienced issues and scandals that have permanently damaged their reputation. Lehman Brothers was the fourth largest investment bank in the US that went bankrupt during the Global Financial Crisis due to a loss of confidence from customers. BP lost credibility when it was responsible for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, considered to be the largest marine oil spill in the world. Unethical behaviour can destroy a company because the company loses the support of its internal and external stakeholders.

How a company is seen internally by its employees and externally by its customers is based on past actions and how these might influence future behaviour. Many businesses spend large amounts of money maintaining and developing their reputation through marketing and promotional activities. They will invest a great deal of time and effort making sure that policies documents and codes of conduct reflect the reputational values that they want reinforced.

As an employee of an organisation, you become its ambassador. The way you behave and the way you perform your work can reflect positively or negatively on an organisation. This will be seen in the ways you interact with others in your team, people in other departments and outside stakeholders. Conversely, you can choose to work for an organisation that you feel you can respect because of its commitment to values that you also hold, such as a company that respects and values its employees.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Give an example of a team objective aligned to an organisational goal.

Question 2

Explain how workplace policies are relevant to the outcomes of workplace teams.

Question 3

Give an example of how workplace legislative requirements are reflected in individual and team responsibilities.

1B Establish expected outcomes and accountabilities for team members

Just as goals need to be understood by all team members, plans need to be agreed on, clearly stated and easy to follow.

Like team goals, plans are subject to change depending on the success of the organisation, the focus and strategic goals it sets for itself and external influences such as competitor behaviour and economic and legislative changes.

As a manager, you need to ensure all members of your team understand the plans they need to work with. They should know that plans are workable documents that help the team reach its full potential. Many of the rules that apply to goal setting also apply here.

Here are some of the forms that team plans may take.

Team plans	Team plans are developed by the team and describe how the team and individual members will achieve their goals.
Individual performance plans	Individual performance plans are developed by each team member in consultation with their manager. These plans align with other team members' plans and, as a whole, describe how the team will achieve their goals.
Operational plans	Operational plans are developed by senior management and passed down to teams in the organisation.
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 goals, and do not include a lot of operational detail.
WHS plans	WHS plans describe how the team should work to create and promote a safe workplace.

Performance plans

The first stage of managing an effective team is the planning stage. As a team leader you will be required to administer performance plans for your team members.

A performance plan is a method of documenting an agreement between the team member, the team leader and the rest of the team that stipulates the scope of their involvement in the project. Performance plans may refer to individual performance plans linked to team goals or team plans based on work assignments and responsibilities.

Performance planning is an ongoing process where expected outcomes, outputs, goals and objectives are established for the work team and key performance indicators (KPIs) are measured to gauge progress and improvement and ensure accountability.

Performance plans for individuals or teams generally contain:
▪ performance measures such as KPIs ▪ specific goals to be achieved by each team member, or the entire group ▪ the actions required to achieve those goals ▪ a schedule outlining how long it should take to achieve each goal ▪ the methods that will be used to monitor, evaluate and reward performance.

Incorporate input from team members

It may seem counter-intuitive to negotiate a KPI, but this process has several benefits. Negotiation can highlight the strengths and weaknesses of individual employees or the team as a whole. As a manager, you can allocate the right work to the right team member based on the outcomes of this process.

The benefits of collaborating in the development of KPIs include an increased level of personal commitment and a better level of understanding of team member perspectives by the manager. The collaborative process allows for feedback and critical analysis of the role and the performance measures applied to it.

The following steps provide a guideline for developing an effective performance plan using input and agreement with your team.

Developing a performance plan	
Define expectations	Provide and clearly explain the list of expectations about conduct, behaviour and performance of individuals within the team environment. Gather feedback and gain agreement on these expectations before moving on to the next step.
Determine milestones	Break down the performance goals into smaller milestones to help you in monitoring progress towards the end goal. You do not want a surprise when it is time to evaluate a person's overall performance, so build in checkpoints to stay on top of performance before it gets too far off track.
Agree on terms	In a consultative process, create an agreed set of terms that outline the specific performance of each team member. It is generally established that performance improves when the terms are mutually agreed.

Developing a performance plan	
Establish accountability	Accountability requires some form of benchmark. As a team leader, you should schedule regular meetings to keep your team members accountable. Use the time to review goals, discuss issues or difficulties and make adjustments as necessary. Regular milestone meetings also improve your contact with the team and the project, which allows for better leadership.
Document required outcomes, results and consequences	An effective performance agreement requires clear documentation of the requirements of the individual, the benefits to the organisation by achieving these requirements, and the results and/or consequences of not achieving these results. This may include any punitive measures for non-performance or rewards for outstanding performance.
Agreement	Ensure that you and your team members sign and date the performance plan. Once the plan is established, you can refer to the agreement as the benchmark for monitoring and controlling performance throughout the project.

Outcomes, outputs and KPIs

Outcomes, outputs and KPIs generally refer to individual requirements, organisational benefits and consequences of not achieving results. They may also refer to the areas listed here.

Outcomes, outputs and KPIs may also refer to agreed:

- changes in work roles and responsibilities
- improvements to individual and team performance and participation
- improvements to systems or operations
- measures for monitoring and evaluating the efficiency or effectiveness of systems or services
- quality standards and expectations
- targets for productivity improvements such as reduced downtime, higher production levels, decreases in absenteeism
- targets for training and development.

Once a performance outcome is agreed to and is in line with organisational needs, it must be worded so the team members and the manager are clear on the objectives to be achieved. To be clear and unambiguous, KPIs need to be written as ‘SMART’ objectives. That is, they should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time framed.

For example: 'Attain $1 million in sales of widgets per quarter'. Assuming that $1 million in sales is achievable and supported by production capacity, marketing, competitive pricing and so on, the KPI is realistic and achievable. Keep the KPIs concise: concise KPIs are less likely to be misunderstood.

To write SMART objectives, make sure they are:

- **S**pecific: Target and clearly define a specific area that you want to improve.
- **M**easurable: Suggest an indicator of progress; quantify if possible. Determine how you will know the goal has been achieved.
- **A**ttainable: Agree what the goals should be and keep them achievable in the time frame.
- **R**ealistic: Identify what results can realistically be achieved given the available resources, knowledge and time.
- **T**ime framed: Specify when the result can be achieved; make sure there is enough time to achieve the goal, but not too much time.

Example

Performance plan

Here is an example of a performance plan template with one row completed. You can also use this template to state expected behaviours.

Performance expectations
• Project information is regularly updated, accurate and available to all.
Agreed performance indicators/required outcomes
• Project software is used to update projects. • Projects are updated when each milestone is achieved. • Project status is reviewed and updated before project meetings. • Information is accurate and current.

Time frames to complete tasks
▪ Daily ▪ As required ▪ Weekly ▪ As required
Support available to meet goals
▪ Software tutorials, peer support.

Responsibility in the team environment

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. Also, 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 to achieve goals.

Mutual accountability

Mutual accountability is a phenomenon that occurs when members of the team see themselves as interdependent; that is, the success or failure of one member of the team has implications for the whole team. All members of a team must feel a sense of personal accountability for the outcome of the team's efforts.

Accountabilities may include responsibilities as defined in PDs, codes of conduct or behaviour, duty statements, and statements of conduct outlining responsibilities, actions and performance expectations. These documents include measurable performance indicators that allow the team leader and the member to monitor and adjust performance to meet the agreed expectations.

You should reach agreement through consultation and it should be formal; that is, you should create a signed document to guide the performance of the member for accountability purposes. Accountability occurs when the team member accepts the responsibility for achieving their performance requirements, and willingly adjusts their performance when needed to meet expectations.

Accountability

When team goals are met or individuals in a team meet their own objectives, reinforce that their hard work and effort have resulted in their great performance. Ask them if and how they think they could have done things better, what they would do if they had to do it all over again and what experiences they could share with other teams or their colleagues.

Make sure your team members see or know that you promote them, their capabilities and hard work to the wider organisation. The team should be proud of its achievements.

Make sure the team and team members are accountable for measurable goals and objectives. Consider a recourse action if members are not being accountable or do not take responsibility for team goals. Consult with your team as to what form such action might take.

Promote team accountability

The level of individual commitment is often the key determinant of whether a team meets its targets. As team leader or supervisor, your job is to provide regular opportunities for team members to account for their contributions to team outcomes.

To be effective at fostering team accountability and ownership, an organisation's systems must be designed with three basic principles in mind, as outlined here.

Focus

Teams need to share a clear goal that links directly to the organisation's goals. Each team member should be clear on their roles and responsibilities, including agreements on individual expectations and standards of performance. To ensure ongoing focus, consider:

- clearly communicating and continually emphasising the team's goals and purpose
- linking individual performance requirements to the overall purpose
- avoiding unnecessary distractions by assigning work priorities.

Influence

Teams need to be able to influence and control their systems of operation and how they achieve their goals. Similarly, team members need to have influence over those with whom they are interdependent. Holding teams jointly accountable for their combined results will only work if the people in the team can influence each other's behaviour. Consider the following strategies for establishing influence:

- Promote self-management of problem-solving.
- Empower team members to select and remove others if necessary.
- Foster an environment where regular feedback can be given between team members.

Consequences

If a team is to be held accountable, then they must accept the consequences of their own actions together. This means the whole team is held accountable for the performance of each member. In a team-based organisation, coaching and correcting individual performance problems is as much a team responsibility as a management responsibility. Ensure that teams get direct and regular feedback from those involved with the project and link rewards to team output.

The following tips may help:

- Use RACI charts to identify current areas of accountability and responsibility.
- Set clear KPIs that show what individuals and teams are accountable for.
- Discuss accountabilities and seek confirmation and acceptance by individuals and the team.
- Explore and discuss the consequences of a lack of accountability.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

What might be the consequences of not have SMART KPIs or objectives?

Question 2

Give an example how behaviour of an individual team member may affect the expected outcomes of the workplace team.

Question 3

List three strategies to ensure team members' accountability for their roles and responsibilities in the work team.

1C Plan for contingencies

One of the important aspects of any planning process, and an area that is particularly important from a manager's perspective, is contingency planning. Contingency planning addresses risks; that is, uncontrollable events that could affect the work of a team.

Contingency planning is one way that risks to a team can be anticipated, minimised and, if possible, avoided completely. It has extra benefits in a team situation as the process itself encourages teamwork and cooperative problem-solving.

One way of managing risks is to allocate major risk areas to individuals or subgroups in the team. This also builds team involvement, gives team members new challenges and promotes a sense of ownership in the team. In many teams, though, much of the responsibility for contingency planning will fall on the team leader or manager.

Team-based contingency planning is comprised of five basic steps, which are outlined below.

Team-based contingency planning
Run a dedicated brainstorming session. Ask team members to come prepared to develop a list of things that could stand in the way of the team achieving its goals. Be exhaustive and listen to everyone's concerns. Write down every issue raised and group the issues into logical chunks or major areas. You might want to use a structure such as talking about team issues, then resource issues, and so on. You can categorise the risks based on how likely they are to happen and their potential effect.
Develop solutions. Either as a team or in smaller subgroups, work through the major areas you have identified as being a threat to the team's progress. If there are a lot, do it in order of priority. Come up with one or more solutions to the problem should it occur, with a view to minimising impact on the team.
Develop avoidance strategies. For each of the major risk areas, develop strategies that could help you avoid the problem completely.
Incorporate strategies into team plans, procedures and guidelines. Make sure all team members know their roles in planning for and managing risks.
Prepare checklists to help you identify and record potential risks. Work systematically to identify possible risks, determine their likelihood, and state the consequences if they did happen. Document the results in a simple-to-access, easy-to-follow format. Intranet sites are handy for storing this information, but a ring binder, kept in a central location, can be just as useful.

Example

Workforce contingency strategies

Tyra manages a team of 10 people. She has two team leaders who each manage four people. They have a major project coming up and Tyra's manager has asked her to plan for the following contingencies:

- unplanned leave or absence of workers
- reallocation of work tasks
- succession planning for important team roles.

Tyra knows that in each team there are the skills and knowledge to cover for unplanned leave or absence of workers up to a certain point. Work could be reallocated to other team members temporarily, but if absences were likely to exceed a week, she would probably need to source temporary staff or outsource the work. So Tyra calculates the budget needed to cover one staff member for up to three weeks and also considers whether there are other people in the organisation who could help if needed. Tyra adds these points to her contingency plan.

If either of her team leaders were to leave, Tyra knows this would be problematic. They are essential to delivering the project on time and have considerable skills and experience. Tyra thinks about whether any of the team members have the capabilities to step up into a team leader role. She discusses this with her team leaders and, as part of her succession planning, they outline plans for mentoring and further skills development to better equip some team members to take that next step. Tyra also must consider who could take on her role if necessary and discusses succession planning and developing the capabilities of her team leaders with her manager.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Outline two typical contingencies that affect teams.

Question 2

Outline approaches that team leaders can use to reallocate tasks.

Summary

- It is important to ensure that your team's purpose is connected to the organisation's mission, values and strategies.
- Team members work together to achieve a common goal, which, when achieved, contributes to the organisation's goals and objectives.
- Individual job or position descriptions usually set out the responsibilities of a particular role.
- A team charter defines the direction and purpose of the team, agreed behaviours and internal rules, as well as how the team's success will be measured.
- Teams must work in accordance with relevant legislation, codes, national standards and WHS rules.
- Policies and procedures are important because they outline the legislative and regulatory requirements that a business must follow and also provide a set of clear expectations on how employees should work and behave.
- A performance plan is a method of documenting an agreement between the team member, the team leader and the rest of the team that stipulates the scope of their involvement in the project.
- Performance planning is an ongoing process where expected outcomes, outputs, goals and objectives are established for the work team and KPIs are measured to gauge progress and improvement and ensure accountability.
- Accountabilities may include responsibilities as defined in PDs, codes of conduct or behaviour, duty statements, and statements of conduct outlining responsibilities, actions and performance expectations.
- Contingency planning is one way that risks to a team can be anticipated, minimised and, if possible, avoided completely.

Learning Checkpoint 1

Plan team outcomes

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

DazzleMe is a jewellery company which sells its product in a range of chain fashion stores as well as through its own website. Its main market has been 25–35 year old women, but the firm wants to expand to focus on the 15–24 year old market. DazzleMe has released a new range of products and its goal is to have a 10 per cent share of this market within 12 months of launching the new products.

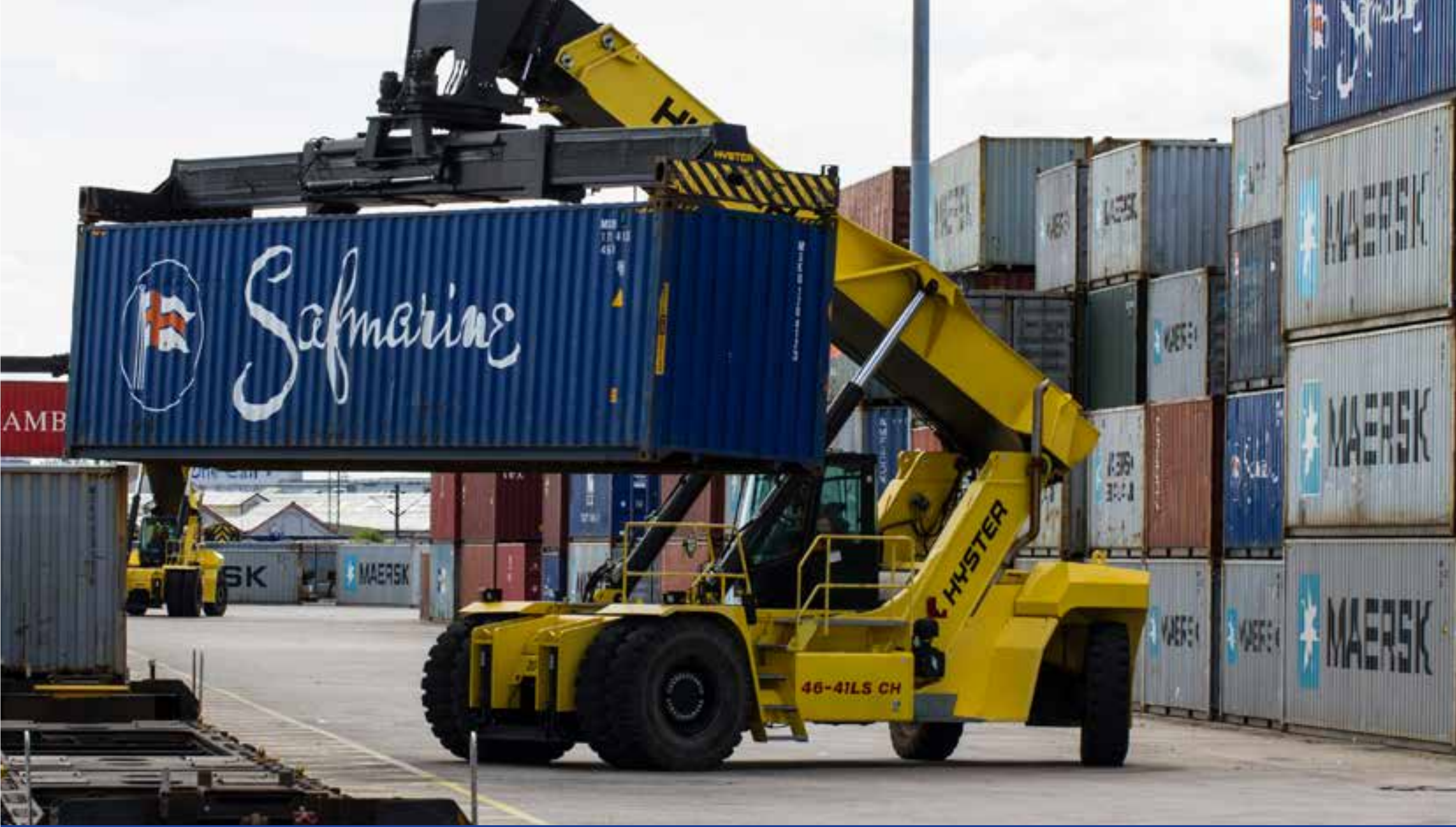
1. You are a team leader of the marketing team for DazzleMe. Write an objective for your team.

2. Create a possible individual goal and a behavioural goal for a marketing officer in your team.

3. Your team members use social media at work.
   - Identify one workplace policy that may be relevant to your team member's behaviour.
   - What are the implications of misusing social media for the organisation's reputation?

4. Suggest ways in which your team can be held accountable for their responsibilities.

5. What contingency plan would you make to deal with the resignation of a team member with specialised social media knowledge?



Topic 2 | Coordinate team and individuals

2A Communicate objectives and allocate tasks

2B Facilitate open and respectful communication and collaboration

2A Communicate objectives and allocate tasks

Effective team leaders understand the importance of communication, and use a range of strategies and techniques to manage their team and ensure the work is understood and that workflow is efficient and meets designated outcomes.

As a team leader, you will communicate often, in a variety of ways and deliver many different messages. It is important to understand communication methods and styles to ensure that you are able to communicate your message effectively and for it to have the desired impact on your audience.

Communication style is the way in which you communicate. Workplace communication may require the use of formal style with customers and informal style with colleagues. This will be reflected in the verbal and nonverbal language, grammar and approach you to take to communication.

Here is a list of communication characteristics and styles commonly held by effective workplace leaders. These have an impact on the success of communication.

Check which ones you are confident you possess and consider those you may need to improve.

Self-awareness

Communicate consciously and with intent.

Each communication, no matter how small, should be thought out and considered. Have a clear picture in your head of your purpose.

Be aware of factors that can affect your message.

Well planned

Know your audience and understand the context of communication, who you are communicating with and what their needs are.

Organise your thoughts and present ideas and information logically.

Anticipate the receiver's viewpoint and feelings, and take this into consideration when planning the communication.

Accommodating
Adjust your style but not the message. Express yourself with conviction and communicate in an appropriate way. Tune in to your audience and seamlessly adjust, rephrase and tailor the message to meet their needs.
Active listening
To be an effective communicator, you need to talk less and listen more. Maintain your focus and attention on the speaker throughout any exchange. Consciously choose to listen to understand the other person's point of view. Be attentive, pick up on subtle clues, modify and adapt accordingly.
Respectful
Always be courteous and professional in your communication and repeatedly check that the other person (or people) understands. Use language they are familiar with. Be empathetic, keep an open mind and think from other people's points of view.
Constructive
Use positive and inclusive language. Facilitate constructive communication. Preserve positive relationships while addressing problems.

Techniques for conveying communication

Multiple communication methods may be necessary to get your message across and to allow for discussion and feedback. Many important messages are missed by assuming everyone reads their email; sometimes a meeting is more appropriate.

Communication involves more than speaking and writing. It should include opportunities for two-way interaction, listening, exchanging ideas, consultation and negotiation, as well as nonverbal communication. In some cases, you may simply want to convey a decision that has been made. In other cases, it is helpful to invite input from team members or others in examining the implications of decisions or involving them in the process to ensure they are committed to the outcomes.

Your choice of communication technique will largely depend on the characteristics of your purpose, audience and audience's needs.

There are advantages and disadvantages of various communication techniques, as shown here.

Verbal – individual	**Examples:** face-to-face contact, telephone conversation **Advantages:** ▪ Clear message ▪ Direct and instant ▪ Provides opportunity for interaction **Disadvantages:** ▪ Inconsistency of message across similar exchanges ▪ Message may be misunderstood if communication skills are poor ▪ Time-consuming
Verbal – group	**Examples:** meeting, discussion group **Advantages:** ▪ Sends consistent message ▪ Provides opportunity for questioning and sharing ▪ Provides chance for agreed approach **Disadvantages:** ▪ Time-consuming ▪ Can be hard to organise ▪ Different personality types can dominate or withdraw
Written – electronic	**Examples:** emails, intranet posting **Advantages:** ▪ Quick and efficient ▪ Sends consistent message ▪ Visually effective **Disadvantages:** ▪ Cannot be sure message is read ▪ Message may be misinterpreted

Written – open	**Examples:** display notice, instruction sheet, system documentation, report, minutes, newsletter **Advantages:** ▪ Sends consistent message ▪ Provides a record ▪ Reaches a wide audience **Disadvantages:** ▪ No opportunity for response ▪ Impersonal ▪ Cannot be sure message is read ▪ Production time and costs involved
Written – targeted	**Examples:** memo, letter **Advantages:** ▪ Can be carefully worded ▪ Direct ▪ Allows for confidentiality ▪ Clear record **Disadvantages:** ▪ Formal and impersonal ▪ Does not encourage discussion
Presentation	**Examples:** exhibition, public address **Advantages:** ▪ Visual as well as verbal ▪ Captures interest **Disadvantages:** ▪ One-way communication only ▪ Not always correctly interpreted ▪ No clear record ▪ Uncertain whether message is accepted by all parties

Communicating team objectives and responsibilities

When you have decided on how you are going to communicate objectives and responsibilities to your team, you need to plan your communication to ensure that at the end of your message, your team understands what their objectives and responsibilities are.

Being clear in your own mind about what you want helps you to make informed choices about how you will communicate. This process helps you to anticipate any issues that may arise during or after the communication, and to adjust the communication as needed.

When communicating effectively, a key element is to plan beforehand using outcome-based thinking. This means knowing your objective before communicating. It is difficult to communicate effectively if you do not know what you want from the communication.

For example, if you are communicating objectives and responsibilities, then the outcome should be the team's achievement of their objectives by carrying out their responsibilities. As this is a long-term outcome, the initial outcome you would look for is team members confirming their understanding of their objectives and responsibilities and reflecting on what these mean to them.

Outcome-based thinking means being able to answer a set of questions.

Questions may include:
▪ What do I want to get out of this communication? ▪ What does the other person or group want? (If you do not know, you can anticipate.) ▪ What problems could come up in the process? ▪ How can I deal with problems to ensure a successful outcome?

By asking questions you are able to more thoughtfully structure the message you are about to give. So take the time to think through this process in a logical, step-by-step fashion so you become more comfortable in expressing your thoughts.

Another advantage of this process is that it makes you more aware of the wants and needs of others. It is important to consider the desired outcomes of your audience as well as your desired outcomes before communicating. If you get the response you want, this indicates you have communicated effectively. For example, if you are preparing to run a brainstorming session to identify improvements to team processes, the desired outcomes may include active participation by all members, innovative ideas and suggestions for implementation.

Using outcome-based thinking helps you to be clear about this from the start. The outcomes you are looking for become a reference point for you to evaluate your communication during or after the exchange. You are able to adapt and adjust your message throughout the process.

Example

Communicating team objectives

Elaine sends an email to her team of five. It reads:

Hi everyone! Thank you for your contributions in Tuesday's team meeting to our objectives for the next financial year. I've used your input to create the final objectives, which you will find attached to this email. I look forward to working with you to achieve them.

Elaine receives a thanks in response from one team member, and emails from two other team members who are unclear what the objectives mean for their role and the impact on their work. Elaine is concerned and confused as the objectives reflected what was discussed in the meeting. She decides to call another team meeting to discuss how the objectives were finalised and answer any questions her team may have. In the meeting, Elaine explains each objective and asks each team member to reflect on how they can contribute to achieving the objective. She asks them to capture these thoughts and comments so they can be used as actions. The meeting also gives the opportunity for the team to discuss how they can work together to achieve the objectives and who has responsibility for which actions. Elaine concludes the meeting by summarising the discussion and seeking confirmation that the objectives are fully understood. Afterwards, Elaine reflects on the email she sent and the meeting. She realises that the email was not an effective communication for all team members, but it did allow the team time to consider the objectives before they met to discuss them. Elaine concedes that if she had employed outcomes-based thinking, she may have been able to better communicate her intentions and meet the needs of her team.

Allocating tasks to team members

Outcome-based thinking is also a useful strategy to employ when allocating tasks and providing instructions to ensure your message is clearly conveyed and fully understood. For example, if you are giving instructions, then the outcome should be a correctly completed task. Consider how tasks need to be allocated and explained to ensure you achieve your desired outcome.

You must be certain that employees understand important work instructions. However, they may be reluctant or unable to indicate when they are unsure, particularly if there are language barriers. Seek feedback by questioning and practical demonstrations or testing. Make sure team members understand the basics before moving on to something more complex.

When communicating task allocation to your team members, use plain English, short sentences and paragraphs with consistent terminology. Make sure all necessary information is provided. Use diagrams or photographs where appropriate.

Many people need more than verbal messages to understand instructions. You can use pictures, symbols and diagrams as well as demonstration and role-play to cater to the needs of all your audience members.

A misunderstood message or instruction can result in lost productivity and may put someone's safety at risk or adversely affect workplace relationships.

Use a skills audit to allocate tasks

When determining how to allocate tasks, it is helpful to consider the expertise and development potential of your team members. You want to ensure the team member is capable or has the potential to complete the task, and a skills audit can help you identify current capabilities.

A skills audit gives an overview of the person's job role, their work and how they perform it. Some audits also ask employees to record any training they have recently completed outside their current job that might benefit the organisation.

The most common way to conduct the audit is to develop a survey consisting of general questions relating to the position and job role and a questionnaire listing a bank of skills and knowledge required by the organisation. Ask each team member to acknowledge which skills they have and how well they think they use them. The skills are generally grouped into categories. Some audits use broad headings such as technical skills and knowledge, administrative skills and knowledge, management skills and experience, and personal development. Others are more specific; for example, information technology (IT), administration, finance, research and planning, and teamwork.

When conducting a skills audit you must be clear about the purpose of the process and what you want your team to do. Be aware that the process is not entirely error-proof, as it relies on each person completing the audit honestly and objectively.

A skills audit identifies the following features:

Current skills	The skills and knowledge a person has at the time the audit is carried out
Competence level	The level of competence the person has achieved
Relevance	The importance of the person's skills and knowledge to their job role
Required skills	The skill level required by the person holding the job

Example

Skills audit

Evan manages a small finance team. After a meeting with his director identified the need to implement a new financial software package, Evan considers the tasks that need to be done and how to allocate them to his team. He creates a skills audit table for his team members which captures the main competencies and current skill levels of his team.

	Yusef	Una	Kate
Competency	Current level (H/M/L)	Current level (H/M/L)	Current level (H/M/L)
Excel skills	High	Medium	Medium
Tax compliance knowledge	Low	Medium	High
Written communication	Medium	High	Medium
Ability to adapt to and learn new software	High	Medium	Medium
Time management	Medium	Low	High
Accuracy and attention to detail	Low	High	High

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Explain your choice of communication method for the following messages:

- Early closure of office on Friday
- Adding extra responsibilities to a team member's role
- Querying a delay in a team project

Question 2

A team has an objective to complete a project on time. It is experiencing a delay, which will affect the company's profitability. Explain how you would communicate the team objective to team members.

Question 3

Refer to the skills audit example. Which of the following tasks based on expertise would you allocate to each team member and why?

- Implementing new financial software
- Documenting the processes related to the new financial software
- Ensuring new processes are tax compliant

Question 4

Which organisational communication practices can be used to communicate new team responsibilities to team members?

2B Facilitate open and respectful communication and collaboration

The way a team leader handles communication in their team and the wider organisation can have a major impact on the relationship between them and individual team members, and the effectiveness of the team as a whole.

As a team leader your main job is to get tasks done by using the resources available to you. You set the tone and provide the model for others to follow.

Check that you understand your responsibilities when communicating.

It is your responsibility to do the following:
▪ Follow organisational procedures for communication. ▪ Be respectful, courteous, positive, empathetic and professional at all times. ▪ Know your audience and understand the context of communication and what people's needs are. ▪ Consider other people's points of view. ▪ Pay attention and pick up on subtle clues, then modify and adapt communication accordingly. ▪ Present your ideas effectively and appropriately by being brief, succinct and clear. ▪ Be emotionally literate and understand how your emotions may affect how your communication is received. ▪ Always follow up communication to confirm understanding.

Open and respectful communication

Communicating respectfully means you are willing to show consideration or appreciation to the person you are communicating with.

Open and respectful communication is about choosing words and phrasing that communicates what you want, not what you do not want.

The goal of positive communication is to deliver a message in an uplifting and constructive manner so others feel empowered. Incorporating positive communication techniques into all your messages, no matter if the receiver is going to like them or not, helps to ensure you achieve the outcome you are looking for without damaging the relationship.

If you make a habit of always communicating positively and respectfully, you will minimise misunderstandings and continue to build and maintain effective working relationships. Team members will have the confidence to raise workplace issues if they know their communication will be treated in a positive manner.

Respectful communication
Be mindful of the other person.
Accept that everyone is different and has the right to be so.
Value their point of view.
Be polite, sincere, professional and empathetic.
Use common courtesies such as please and thank you; know and use the other person's name.

Use appropriate language

Be a positive role model in using appropriate language and correct any team member who uses unsuitable terms or disparaging expressions.

It is important to note that language and society change continually, so terms deemed acceptable at one time may no longer be acceptable, either because the language itself has changed or because the communities referred to have objected to some terms used to describe them. Working with diversity means that you have a responsibility to refer to people with respect and consideration, and this means using terms that are acceptable to them. For example, an acceptable general reference for First Nations Australians is 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'.

Characteristics of appropriate language
▪ Clear and straightforward with minimal use of technical terms, jargon or acronyms, or, if these are necessary, then they are clearly explained
▪ Non-discriminatory; instead of using 'him' or 'her', use 'they'
▪ Free of sexist language and stereotyping such as 'He's behaving like an old woman'; avoid terms that are demeaning, such as referring to women as 'love' or 'dear'
▪ Free of sexist terms; for example, avoid 'tradesmen' and 'chairman'; use 'tradesperson' and 'chairperson' instead
▪ Inclusive and respectful of the audience; do not use derogatory terms such as 'loony bin'; use terms such as 'people with disability' rather than 'disabled people'

Behave appropriately

Modelling by team leaders is a powerful way to promote diversity in the workplace. If a team leader routinely tells jokes that are offensive to certain groups (such as women, people born overseas, members of religious groups or people with disability), the message that staff receive is that the organisation does not actively support a diverse workplace. On the other hand, team leaders can actively promote diversity by modelling appropriate behaviours such as basing decisions on ability rather than characteristics like age and gender, never telling offensive jokes and acting promptly whenever the diversity policy is breached.

Tips for modelling inclusive behaviour
▪ Always try to be inclusive of everyone in your workplace and allow people to contribute in the best way they know how. ▪ If you know that a newcomer is having trouble fitting in, let them know they are valued and that the team is interested in finding out about them. ▪ Find opportunities to remind all team members of the benefits of diversity and the organisation's approach to diversity.

Use inclusive communication

Always consider the diversity of the workplace when communicating. Use your interpersonal skills to develop professional rapport. Present information in different ways to suit people's language abilities and communication styles, and adapt your interactions to accommodate the ways that other people like to work. Speak and write clearly using plain English and then confirm that everyone has understood your message. Always allow time for people to ask questions.

Some ways to use inclusive communication:
▪ If someone's English language skills are low or they have a physical or mental impairment, include demonstrations in your explanations, use symbols or signs, translate documents into other languages and/or engage an interpreter. ▪ Assist team members who use augmentative and adaptive communication aids (such as electronic devices with speech output, signing or a text telephone) to ensure that they are always included in discussions and decision-making. ▪ Ensure that your body language matches your message. If your body language does not reflect what is being said, this can create confusion; for example, smiling when giving negative news. ▪ Respect people's traditions, such as bowing when greeting, having personal space between people when speaking and addressing people correctly, such as by their title, first or last name. ▪ Translate workplace policies and procedures into other languages and check that workplace signs use universally understood symbols.

Your team can benefit from the different skills, knowledge and experiences of the workforce. However, people must feel comfortable to share their perspectives. As a team leader, it is part of your role to foster an environment where individuals feel able to share these views. If there is a hostile environment or an environment where people do not feel that they can express themselves, this may affect work output or working relationships between team members. In many cases it is best to deal with issues as a whole team, rather than directing a warning to a single person.

Always be aware of enabling activities that you may need to implement if there are particular barriers preventing people from participating or providing feedback.

Provide team level support

As a team leader, you need to be aware of the diverse make-up of your team and the opportunities and challenges this brings. Implement a range of strategies that help team members and give access to the kinds of support they may need, in line with the organisation's diversity policy and procedures.

Here are some examples of access and inclusion challenges, and the specific support that you can give to your team.

The organisation's approach to diversity	▪ Ensure that your team members have received diversity training. Check your team members' understanding of what was covered in the training and ask them to share their learning with the rest of the team. ▪ Use performance evaluation processes to check that diversity is accepted and integrated into work practices.
Cultural or religious challenges	▪ Celebrate cultural/religious holidays. ▪ Arrange sessions in which team members talk about their cultures, traditions and life experiences. ▪ Ask members of specific cultural or religious groups to speak to the team to increase the team's awareness of that particular group. ▪ Inform staff of the consequences of using offensive language or inappropriate jokes.
Flexible hours	▪ Consider scheduling key meetings during core business hours and on days when all staff are present (if possible) so that no-one misses important meetings. ▪ Review your work plans to accommodate flexible hours and leave requests over school holidays where possible.

Age	▪ Consider how you can use the experience of your mature and young workers. ▪ Do not discount mature-age workers for lack of a particular skill if appropriate training can bridge this skill gap. ▪ Encourage mature workers to share their skills and relevant life experiences with the team. ▪ Provide challenges to younger team members; do not regularly allocate basic tasks to them.
Physical or intellectual disability	▪ Provide targeted assistance as required to meet the individual requirements of staff with specific needs. ▪ Consider how reasonable adjustments can be made with assistive technologies, such as using large print and screen-reading/dictation software, and a buddy system. ▪ Ensure that you take prompt, appropriate action if offensive language is used or inappropriate jokes are told about people with disability.
Gender	▪ Let your team know about mentoring programs that you are aware of, either in-house or external to the organisation. ▪ Support equality of access to job roles regardless of gender.
Language	▪ If working with a team member who is struggling to understand English, consider extra support that could be given to them, such as a colleague or support person to coach them; or access to the Australian Government's Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) or commercial translating services.

Collaboration

Collaboration involves communicating and supporting each other by sharing skills and knowledge.

By collaborating effectively, you can be an active team member. Good collaboration in the team allows the team to achieve its goals.

There are three main types of collaboration:

- Team collaboration: collaboration in the team to achieve team objectives
- Community collaboration: building a strong team community based on learning from each other to increase the overall knowledge and skills level in the group
- Network collaboration: collaborating with individuals and teams outside the team, internal and external to the organisation.

The main opportunity for cross-collaboration occurs when there is an obvious skill deficit in one team that can be filled by another team or an external source. However, here are some other opportunities to be aware of:

- You need new ideas – a fresh perspective from another team or an external consultant can fire the imagination and help with problem-solving
- You are drowning in work – another team, external freelancers or temporary staff may be able to help make your team's workload manageable as well as adding to the skillset and knowledge of your team
- You can only solve part of the problem – you might need another skillset to complete the picture and help you achieve objectives
- There are knowledge gaps – you might not have the budget for training but another team, employee or external expert may have the knowledge you need to help complete projects and achieve objectives
- There are conflicts between teams – conflicts can arise due to poor communication and conflicting priorities. Cross-collaboration and alignment of priorities may promote better communication and better results.

Actions to promote collaboration
▪ Lead by example; be the first one to collaborate.
▪ Have agreed and clear roles and responsibilities so everyone knows who does what and why.
▪ Use technology effectively when collaborating, and make sure staff have the training and skills to use the technology.
▪ Build trust in the team.
▪ Celebrate the strengths of diversity in the team.
▪ Communicate openly and be transparent by sharing information as this will build an environment of trust.
▪ Listen to the feedback and ideas of others.
▪ Share your experience, knowledge and feedback with generosity.
▪ Resolve conflicts promptly and fairly.
▪ Encourage random interactions with team members from other teams.
▪ Pair subject matter experts with subject matter novices.
▪ Align incentives so all teams reap the benefits from cross-collaboration.
▪ Celebrate achievements in the team to create a sense of accomplishment and make the team feel appreciated.

Example

Respectful communication and collaboration

Alexis leads the product development team in a medium-sized company. The company is considering expanding into new international markets and Alexis calls a meeting to discuss what market research they need to do in each of the potential markets. One of the markets is India and Alexis asks if any of her team have ever travelled there. Only Tony has, but he admits that does not make him an expert on India. Alexis suggests that they could invite Kadhi, a member of the IT team, to their meeting to answer some of their questions about India. Alexis explains that he has lived most of his life in India, visits regularly and will have a good grasp of the technology issues they might face. Alexis is surprised that her suggestion is met with no enthusiasm and a few frowns, so asks her team how they feel about the idea. Jonah admits that he finds Kadhi's accent quite hard to understand. Dana agrees and suggests that they could ask him to write down answers to their questions instead.

"I'm glad you've expressed your concerns," Alexis tells them. "However, we could really benefit from having a conversation with Kadhi and written questions and answers might hinder that and take too long. What if I asked him to prepare a brief for us and then he can come to a meeting and answer our questions? It would be silly not to use his expertise and I'm sure we can come up with a way to reduce the communication barrier."

The team agrees and they work together to outline the requirements for the brief. Alexis talks to Kadhi's manager, Clay, who agrees to allow Kadhi to participate in the briefing. Together they discuss the suggestion with Kadhi, who is very pleased to be able to contribute. He expresses his own concern that Alexis' team may struggle to understand him, but Alexis and Clay reassure him and suggest some strategies for clear communication that could help.

When Kadhi attends the team meeting, Alexis is pleased to see her team engaged and attentive. They listen closely to Kadhi and encourage him through positive body language and active listening. Jonah asks clarifying questions when he's uncertain and when he reflects Kadhi's ideas back to him, both are pleased that understanding has been attained. Kadhi gives a lot of valuable information to the team and Alexis hopes to collaborate further with Kadhi and the IT team as the project progresses.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

How can you role model respectful communication with team members from different backgrounds in the workplace?

Question 2

What techniques can you use to facilitate team cohesion?

Question 3

Where would you look for opportunities for cross-collaboration?

Summary

- It is important to understand communication methods and styles to ensure that you are able to communicate your message effectively
- Your choice of communication technique will largely depend on the characteristics of your purpose, audience and audience's needs.
- Plan your communication to ensure that at the end of your message, your team understands what their objectives and responsibilities are.
- When determining how to allocate tasks, it is helpful to consider the expertise and development potential of your team members.
- You must be certain that employees understand important work instructions. Prepare instructional material using plain English, and use short words, sentences and paragraphs with consistent terminology.
- Communicating respectfully means you are willing to show consideration or appreciation to the person you are communicating with.
- Be a positive role model in using appropriate language and correct any team member who uses unsuitable terms or disparaging expressions.
- Present information in different ways to suit people's language abilities and communication styles, and adapt your interactions to accommodate the ways that other people like to work.
- Collaboration involves communicating and supporting each other by sharing skills and knowledge.
- The main opportunity for cross-collaboration occurs when there is an obvious skill deficit in one team that can be filled by another team or an external source.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Coordinate team and individuals

1. Describe the communication style and method you would choose to communicate common team objectives and responsibilities to team members.

2. Explain why tasks should be allocated according to staff expertise and development potential.

3. Give examples of communication methods and styles you would use with team members from diverse backgrounds.

4. Describe how you could be a role model to cater for the needs of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing.

5. What are the benefits of cross-collaboration?

Topic 3 | Support team members

3A Provide coaching and support individuals

3B Facilitate team to resolve issues using problem-solving skills

3A Provide coaching and support individuals

In addition to ensuring your team has the resources they need to do their jobs well, team leaders must support team members and enhance workplace culture.

Many studies have been done on what teams expect from their leaders. A common finding is that honesty is one of the most critical requirements. Leaders need to fine-tune the balance between keeping their teams properly informed and not 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, keeping promises, the ability 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.

Research shows that team members expect their leaders to be:	
▪ honest	▪ competent
▪ forward-thinking	▪ inspiring
▪ intelligent	▪ fair-minded
▪ broad-minded	▪ courageous
▪ straightforward	▪ imaginative.
▪ dependable	

Coaching and mentoring

A valuable way of supporting your team is to take advantage of coaching or mentoring opportunities in the organisation. It may be your role to seek a coach or mentor for team members, or you may act as someone's coach or mentor yourself. Coaching can enhance the workplace culture by building the team's unity; the sense of oneness that fosters accountability, cooperation and support, while simultaneously reducing competition, angst and backstabbing. By encouraging team members to work together, you make every task a team-building exercise that has positive results for each participant as well as the project as a whole.

Coaching and mentoring may mean giving guidance on:
▪ fair and ethical practice ▪ non-discriminatory processes and activities ▪ presenting and promoting a positive image of the group ▪ problem-solving ▪ providing encouragement ▪ providing feedback to another team member ▪ respecting the contribution of all participants ▪ giving credit for achievements.

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 (mentee) is usually someone in a more junior role who is keen to learn and capable of achieving more than they are currently. However, anyone can benefit from being mentored.

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. Formal and informal mentoring may differ as shown here.

Formal	Informal
▪ Goals are defined and established at the outset	▪ No goals are specified
▪ Desired outcomes are specified and monitored	▪ No outcomes are specified
▪ Available to those who apply and qualify for the program	▪ Limited access
▪ Mentors and mentees are paired based on their experience and learning needs	▪ Mentors and mentees are attracted to each other through friendship or shared interests
▪ Mentoring training and support is provided	▪ Mentoring happens over a long period of time

A mentor is someone with experience or expertise who acts as a role model or leader for less-experienced staff, offering advice, information and friendship. Many people can recall at least one person who set them on a particular career path or helped them make a lifestyle or relationship choice.

A mentor may also offer emotional and psychological support, particularly to a new staff member who may be reluctant to share feelings of uncertainty with their peers, manager or team members. The mentor listens to their concerns and provides encouragement. Generally, the mentor relationship is a long-term one.

The mentor role may also involve coaching and training. However, a good mentor does not provide the answers but, rather, helps the learner find their own solutions to a problem. The relationship between the mentor and the learner fosters openness, trust and mutual respect. The characteristics of a good mentor are shown here.

A good mentor is someone who:
▪ leads, advises and is a role model ▪ encourages and guides the individual on a learning path ▪ supports and responds to the individual's needs ▪ is a trusted counsellor ▪ treats the employee with respect.
A successful workplace mentoring relationship:
▪ clarifies the goals of the organisation ▪ develops skills and knowledge (competencies) ▪ improves communication ▪ increases productivity and innovation ▪ encourages career development ▪ increases confidence ▪ shares experiences.

Example

Effective mentoring

Karla works in administration at the local council offices. She completed some subjects in office skills in Year 12 and now wants to further develop her skills and knowledge in the administration field. She wants to be an office manager one day, and realises that she will have to do some career planning to reach her goal.

Karla approaches her manager for advice on how to become an office manager. The manager advises Karla that she will need to do at least a Diploma of Business Administration and suggests that she undertakes a Level 3 Business Services traineeship at work. The manager explains the learning competencies of the qualification and informs Karla that if she wishes to do a traineeship the company will support her learning and development.

In this example, Karla perceives her manager as a leader and role model and feels at ease seeking her advice. Karla's manager acts as a mentor and offers helpful career counselling. Because the manager knows the industry competency standards in business qualifications, she is able to provide Karla with the right information about what she could do to further her studies and pursue her career goal.

Coaching to enhance workplace culture

Coaching is a two-way procedure whereby the coach and learner are both committed to improvement. Coaching should follow a structured, well-defined plan with logical steps and clear outcomes.

In most workplaces, coaches are sought from within the organisation, although coaching has become a discipline in itself and many people have become coaching consultants. Coaching is an excellent way of using workplace expertise to improve the performance of staff when needed.

Coaching gives the learner an opportunity to:
▪ identify a desired goal by clarifying the current situation and the learning skills the individual wants or needs to develop ▪ link individual needs by identifying current workplace challenges and the skills needed to meet these challenges ▪ establish a time frame for acquiring necessary skills ▪ identify and resolve development issues with the coach, such as time off for study, attending seminars or job rotation.

Coaching is a systematic procedure with specific objectives, so it is not a relationship that should be approached without commitment by coach and learner. The coach and learner must undertake a process, such as that shown below, for a coaching program to be successful.

Coaching process
Identify the skill or knowledge need.
Identify the reason for the learning need.
Discuss the expectations of both parties on what the coaching program can achieve.
Determine the expected goal or learning outcomes of the coaching program.
Establish the time frame for the program.
Establish learning strategies.
Implement the coaching program.
Regularly monitor performance and review progress.
Evaluate the coaching program.

To be motivated to take on the coaching role, a person must believe that another person will benefit from their assistance. Good communication is vital, as are interpersonal skills, extensive technical skills and knowledge in the area the learner needs to improve, expertise in training and assessment, and the ability to encourage workplace learning.

An important feature of coaching is to challenge the learner to take control of their learning and to remind them that they are responsible for asking questions. A good coach provides a safe environment where the learner can learn from their mistakes without feeling threatened. The tasks required of a coach are shown here.

Coaches are responsible for:
▪ providing encouragement and support ▪ giving guidance for achieving specific skills ▪ offering advice and suggestions ▪ giving constructive feedback ▪ empowering, guiding and motivating ▪ celebrating the learning achievements of the team or individual.

Support individual team members for common team goals

As a team leader, your team members will often look to you for support and direction. You should monitor individual and team progress and approach methods of support on an individual case-by-case basis. You should also consider utilising the skills and knowledge of the team in dealing with some of the issues that arise. You do not need to be an expert on all matters, but you are expected to monitor progress and facilitate the process of finding solutions to problems within organisational guidelines.

Here are some of the support strategies you can use.

Keep the purpose, goals and approach sharp and fresh

Team leaders need to keep the team's purpose, objectives and approach clear and fresh in the team's mind. Regular team meetings to discuss progress and generate new ideas for goal accomplishment will greatly assist.

Communicate clearly and often

Ensure your communication is clear and understood by all team members. The communication needs will be different for each team member, so ensure you are giving each team member the level of communication they need to carry out their work. Employ active listening techniques to ensure you are understood and your team finds you approachable.

Build commitment and confidence

Team leaders should encourage individual and mutual accountability among team members. Giving constant, relevant and meaningful feedback to team members on their individual and group performance helps to achieve this.

Manage relationships with the rest of the organisation

Team leaders need strong communication skills to manage the team's relationship with the rest of the organisation. The team leader must ensure that key stakeholders are aware of the team's purpose, goals and plans so that they understand the limitations placed on team members and identify opportunities to contribute or become involved.

Remove obstacles to performance

Team leaders need to remove barriers that impact the team's performance. This often involves negotiating better terms with management for increased funding or access to resources. It may involve removing a team member who is stifling the progress of the team.

Take responsibility for team guidance, monitoring and control

Team leaders must take responsibility for the team's guidance, monitoring and control. Teams often lose sight of the bigger picture, and the team leader needs to show their willingness to control and guide the team as it works towards its goals. It is the team leader's responsibility to ensure measures and milestones are in place, and to produce reports needed by the team and the rest of the organisation.

Use existing organisational policies and processes to offer support

Your organisation is likely to have policies in place for supporting staff who need extra skills or training to achieve their objectives. Talk to your manager or HR to find out more about learning and development opportunities, performance management processes, mentoring and coaching and job shadowing. There are likely to be organisational structures in place that will help you to support individual team members.

When supporting individuals, the situation may need to be handled sensitively as there are some issues and problems that are best discussed in private one-on-one. If you are unsure of the appropriate forum to discuss an issue, consider using the following questions as a guide.

- Does the issue involve one or a number of team members?
- Is the issue relevant to the ability of the team to meet its goals and targets?
- Is the issue sensitive or personal?

When using this approach to resolve issues, you should:

- keep people and problems separate
- listen first, talk second
- pay attention to body language and other nonverbal cues
- clarify ambiguities or mixed messages
- establish the facts
- explore options together
- develop a set of actions.

Respond to performance deficiencies

If you need to support a team member who is underperforming it is important to act swiftly. Do not let the problem become bigger or affect other areas of teamwork or interpersonal relationships. Having an effective performance plan allows you to separate your feelings from the performance issue, and to deal with the problem without allowing emotion to negatively affect you or other team members. Consult with your manager or HR about the organisational policies and processes that are in place for dealing with performance issues, and ensure you follow these.

Here are the steps to consider when dealing with performance deficiencies.

Gather information	▪ Gather information about the deficient performance from as many perspectives as needed. For example, if there is a customer-related issue, collect information from and about the customer as well as other witnesses, before confronting the team member.
Meet with team member	▪ Meet with the relevant team member to discuss the performance issue. Ensure you set aside enough time to collect the facts and the view of the team member. It is usually worth having a copy of the performance plan or job requirements with you to make notes of specific performance breaches or areas for improvement.
Develop a performance improvement plan	▪ Develop a performance improvement plan with the team member. Identify and document clear steps to rectify the issue and gain agreement from the team member so you both know what is needed.
Monitor performance	▪ Follow up the consultation with a scheduled meeting to discuss improvements and performance in relation to the agreed improvement plan. Depending on the project, this should be done no later than one week after the improvement plan has begun.

Example

Supporting individuals

Eli manages the HR team at a firm with more than 200 employees. They are always busy and he tries his best to regularly meet with individual team members as well as hold monthly meetings, but most of his time is spent in closed-door meetings with senior management. When a manager from another team provides some negative feedback on the work performance of Jules, one of his HR officers, Eli is concerned. Jules has been with the firm for six months, is highly experienced and is not doing tasks outside her skillset.

Eli arranges a time to meet with Jules to discuss her performance and she quickly becomes upset. She explains that the culture and processes are quite different from where she previously worked, but everyone has just assumed she knows what she is doing. When she tried to ask colleagues for guidance or advice, their responses were brief and they assured her that she would 'figure it out'. Jules understands why someone has complained about her performance, but she feels she has not been adequately supported in learning the new processes. Eli realises that poor communication has created this situation and he apologises to Jules. They discuss the areas that Jules is struggling with and put together a plan to support her and give her the extra knowledge she needs to carry out her role.

Eli reflects on how he and his team communicate and realises that he needs to address this to identify any other issues and prevent situations like this from occurring in future.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

How does mentoring differ from coaching, and what coaching techniques can you use to support your team members?

Question 2

Explain how coaching can enhance workplace culture.

Question 3

Describe what organisational processes or policies exist in your workplace to support individuals to work towards common team goals.

3B Facilitate team to resolve issues using problem-solving skills

Facilitation means 'making a process easier'. In the context of team development and improvement, facilitating a team involves helping team individuals to operate more effectively as a group.

A team leader needs to be familiar with the goals of their organisation and their team. The group needs to be continually guided towards both of these aspirations. Ways to do this include to help everyone generate ideas; encourage engagement; maintain the overall energy to keep things moving; and ensure that decision-making is fair, effective and efficient.

There are many group facilitation methods that you can use to plan, guide and manage a group event. Below is a selection of some of the more common approaches.

- Using brainstorming tools and techniques to generate ideas
- Involving everyone in meetings, encouraging quieter members and gently controlling those who dominate
- Establishing ground rules for the team to operate by
- Using action planning methods to get things done
- Using democratic methods to make decisions (when appropriate)
- Having group reviews of meetings

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 towards 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. How do team leaders help their teams do this, particularly if each working day presents a suite of challenges for your team to overcome?

Role of a leader in group problem-solving

The first issue for a leader is to define their style. This could be anything from completely autocratic to full participation. If the leader opts for some form of group problem-solving, it is important that one individual be assigned as the process leader, or facilitator. This person has responsibility for guiding the group through the problem-solving process. Here are some guidelines:

- The leader should decide if they want to take an advocacy role for a particular solution. If so, they should have someone else facilitate the problem-solving process.
- The leader must decide if they have the skills to facilitate the process. If not, once again, someone else should take on this role.
- Sometimes a process leader (facilitator) emerges as the process progresses. It is important for the leader to turn over the process reins explicitly rather than leave group members confused as to who is in charge of the process.

It is wise to have a management plan in place for when problems arise in your team. Knowing who to ask for help, 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.

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

Task and process issues

An important process is not in place
- The process does not work
- The task is difficult or meaningless

Time and resource issues

Not enough time to complete tasks
- Not enough people to do the work
- Equipment is inadequate or difficult to use

Communication and 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
- Feedback is not provided or asked for

Cultural issues

Team members do not respect and value diversity
- There is a lack of teamwork and cooperation

Leadership issues

The team has no direction
- The team does not understand or accept goals
- The decision-making process is unclear
- Team members do not feel valued

Participate in solving problems

Encourage a proactive attitude in your team. Do not wait for problems to occur that will cause major operational issues for your organisation and result in your team not meeting goals. Demonstrate the benefits of avoidance strategies, early detection and swift action.

One way to encourage your team to take a proactive approach to problems and challenges is to lead by example. If you have problems that you think your team members could help you with, ask them for assistance. You could include a regular five-minute session in team meetings where you ask if members have seen or anticipated any problems that might impede their progress or the team.

Ensure that team members are recognised and rewarded when they identify a problem, think proactively about solutions or use their initiative to avoid potential issues.

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 sensitive issues.

In today's organisations, team and group decision-making and problem-solving has become a part of everyday organisational life. Group problem-solving can potentially produce superior solutions through one or more of the following aspects.

Criteria

As group membership increases, more stakeholders will be represented and their interests can be incorporated into the criteria used in the problem-solving process.

Cause/effect

By including people with specialised expertise, we tend to increase the likelihood that more accurate knowledge will be used in the problem-solving process.

Alternatives

Groups tend to develop a greater number of options than individuals; groups also come up with more creative solutions by working on a problem together.

Commitment to decision

Individuals contributing to a problem's solution tend to feel greater ownership of the solution, especially when their identities are tied to it. Motivation to properly implement the solution can be increased through team participation, and resistance to change can be decreased.

Group problem-solving situations

Generally speaking, we can differentiate two types of group problem-solving situations, as outlined below.

Group model	▪ In the group model, members of the group attempt to arrive at a solution that is satisfactory to each group member; that is, satisfactory with respect to individual interest. There is no need or expectation of a common group goal or focus. The only issue is that the decision satisfies the interest of the members acting as individuals or representatives of stakeholder groups.
Team model	▪ In the team model, there is an overriding group goal independent of the goals and interests of the individual members. When the team operates effectively, each member focuses on the unifying team goals, placing their interests subservient to the group goal.
Other variables	▪ The degree of status differentiation among group members can affect the problem-solving dynamic. Are all members at the same organisational level? Is the leader of the team the formal leader of the organisational unit? ▪ Is there an agreed upon decision process? Over time groups tend to develop a problem-solving schema or script. This may be an effective or ineffective process. ▪ Is the group an actual unit in the organisation's structure (for example, all members are part of a department reporting to the same supervisor) or is the group an ad hoc group with members representing many functional areas?

At the outset of the meeting or process the leader should lay out the process being used so that members have an idea of where they are headed. This should include the following points on problem identification.

Problem identification
Define the problem in situational or behavioural terms.
The problem definition can make reference to causes or fault.
Be careful not to invoke defensiveness on the part of group members.
The problem definition should invoke mutual interests.
The problem definition should culminate in a clear primary objective.
A set of criteria or constraints for a successful solution should be developed.

A number of methods or styles of group problem-solving can be adopted. The choice of style to use will be dependent on the problem, the time frame needed to resolve it, and the work group or team. Good leaders will choose the most appropriate style to use when problems are encountered. Some styles, if adopted often, are less effective for maintaining a consultative team environment.

Some of these styles are described below.

Autocratic or directive style

The leader defines the problem; diagnoses its causes; and generates, evaluates and chooses among alternative solutions. The leader does not seek information or feedback from their team.

Autocratic style with input

The leader defines the problem and diagnoses the cause of the problem with information input from the group. Using their list of potential solutions, the leader may once again obtain data from the group in evaluation of these alternatives and make a choice among them.

Autocratic style with review and feedback

The leader defines the problem, diagnoses its causes and selects a solution. The leader then presents their plan to the group for understanding, review and feedback.

Individual consultative style

The leader defines the problem and shares this definition with individual members of the team. The leader solicits ideas regarding problem causes and potential solutions. They usually seek out team members with relevant expertise. Once this information is obtained, the leader chooses which solution to implement.

Group consultative style

This style is similar to the individual consultative style, except the leader shares their definition of the problem with the group as a whole.

Group decision style

The leader shares their definition of the problem with the team. The team then proceeds to diagnose the causes of the problem. The team then generates, evaluates, and chooses among solutions.

Participative style

The team as a whole proceeds through the entire decision-making process. The team defines the problem and performs all other functions as a group. The leader facilitates the process.

Leaderless style
The team has no formal leader. If no substitute for task leadership or process leadership is present, a process leader often emerges. This person may change from problem to problem. The team generates its own problem definition, performs its own diagnosis, generates solutions and chooses among alternatives.

When issues arise, effective teams solve the problems efficiently and as a part of the team's overall processes. Issues should not derail a project or put undue pressure on team cohesion. If risks have been adequately assessed, the team should carry out contingency plans when risks arise.

Problem identification is a process of considering where the project is positioned along its time line, looking for gaps in performance and determining possible causes for delays, underperformance, quality or financial issues. The strategies outlined here give you ways to support your team in identifying problems.

Regular meetings	▪ Meetings provide an excellent forum for discussing and sharing information. When planning meetings, you should allow time for consideration of past issues, present issues and any risks that team members may have identified during their work. Regular reviews allow you to adjust, react or plan for work tasks and issues in advance. This assists in the efficiency of resolving problems in the future.
Feedback and quality control	▪ In most organisations, feedback from customers, colleagues, data systems and managers is commonplace. Where formal feedback processes have been created, you should have access to information sources to enable you and others to identify current or possible future issues. ▪ The purpose of quality control processes is to provide a system of regular feedback for managers and staff, to recognise opportunities for improvement before problems arise. By providing regular feedback, you are also able to identify trends over time. These trends provide important information about the success or failure of various aspects of the organisation.
Problem-solving	▪ To support your team to solve problems, you need to provide effective tools and techniques. Many techniques are available to suit a variety of contexts. You may need to research further to establish techniques useful in your situation.

In many teams, plans and decisions are made by consensus. If a faulty decision or plan results in underperformance, 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.

Address problems

A good team leader is a sounding board for ideas – someone who can empathise with and help staff solve problems. Even so, staff should not become over-reliant on the team leader's intervention; this could lead to them presenting a constant stream of minor problems to their manager that they could deal with themselves.

Depending on the problem or situation, the team leader may need to raise the matter with their colleagues, manager or other senior managers, or consult with specialist staff.

When issues arise, team members need to identify the type of problem and the potential impact it could have if it is not resolved. Here are some questions that may help to identify the problem in the team.

Questions to consider when analysing a team problem
▪ Is the problem related to the way in which the team works? ▪ Is the problem an external problem? ▪ Is the problem a result of another problem? ▪ What effect is the problem having (or likely to have)?

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.

Two suggestions for managing team member non-cooperation are shown here.

Individual consultation	▪ If a team member is not fulfilling their role, 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 get 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.

Remove workplace conflict challenges

Workplace conflicts are likely to be a challenge that every team leader or manager faces at one time. In all cases, the conflict must be removed as quickly as possible so as not to negatively affect others including clients, customers, workmates or observers. This shows effective leadership, gains the trust and respect of those around you and ensures time and space needed to resolve the conflict properly.

Workplace conflict may arise due to:

- workloads; for example, team members may feel they have too much work to do and are unable to meet deadlines
- office environment; for example, team members may be uncomfortable with the air conditioning or noise
- disputes; for example, between team members or with other people in the organisation
- training needs; for example, team members may need help to understand a new operating process
- work health and safety (WHS) issues; for example, an employee may be having difficulty lifting heavy objects or need an ergonomic keypad
- work hours; for example, requests regarding rosters, leave or flexible working arrangements
- employment conditions; for example, concerns about salary or responsibility.

Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann (1974) identify five main styles of dealing with conflict. They contend that people typically have a preferred conflict resolution style. They also note that different styles are most useful in different situations. Read each of the conflict resolution styles shown here and consider how you might adjust your current approach.

Competing	People who use a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise or persuasive ability. If used consistently, it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful. **Use when:** ▪ the decision needs to be made fast ▪ the decision is unpopular ▪ defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly.

Collaborating	People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. **Use when:** ▪ you need a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution ▪ there have been previous conflicts in the group ▪ the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.
Compromising	People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something and the compromiser also expects to relinquish something. **Use when:** ▪ the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground ▪ equal-strength opponents are at a standstill and a deadline is looming.
Accommodating	This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. **Use when:** ▪ the issues matter more to the other party ▪ peace is more valuable than winning ▪ you want to be in a position to collect on this 'favour' you gave.
Avoiding	People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. **Use when:** ▪ the controversy is trivial ▪ someone else is in a better position to solve the problem.

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 WHS. 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 formally or informally, or both.

Below are some of the strategies that can be used in each approach.

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 on an informal basis during a meeting or get-together ▪ Chatting to colleagues who could help or advise

Problem-solving strategies and tools

When challenges occur, rapid problem-solving and decision-making can prevent challenges escalating into major issues. Consider these steps to identify and resolve workplace challenges.

Identify the problem	Define what the problem is and seek agreement that the problem has been properly and comprehensively defined.
Identify the cause	What is causing the problem? Consider communication barriers and gather all the facts, undertaking research as needed.
Consider solutions	What actions could resolve the problem? Ensure you do not include options that will side-step or leave the problem unresolved. Do research and seek advice as needed.
Decide on a solution and implement it	Choose the best option, justify this as required and put in place actions to address and resolve the problem.

Identify the problem

A workplace problem or difficulty may be something that you have personally experienced or observed, or it could also be something that a team member or a person outside the team has raised with you.

Examples of workplace problems:	
• Work not completed on time • Authority disregarded; instructions and regulations not followed • Breaches of legislation, including WHS and anti-discrimination guidelines • Clash of personalities • Difficulties meeting team or organisational objectives • Difficult customers • Uncooperative suppliers or contractors • Excessive workloads • Low staff morale	• Lack of punctuality; absenteeism • Poor performance or inadequate work standards • Breakdown of communication or cooperation between staff members • Breaches of trust or privacy • Unclear expectations or insufficient information • Equipment failures or inadequacies • Budget restrictions • Lack of necessary work skills

Identify the extent of the problem

There are many simple problems, such as a malfunctioning printer, and much more complex problems, such as a culture of bullying or harassment, that can arise in a workplace. Your goal should be to accurately identify the extent of the problem using the guidelines below.

Guidelines for accurately identifying the extent of the problem:
• Gather the facts. • Do not act on hearsay. • Speak with relevant people. • Establish the causes. • Avoid making assumptions. • Analyse the problem before taking action.

Gather the facts

What is the problem? The answer to this question lies in gathering details about the issue, both objective and subjective details. It can be easy to jump to conclusions and base your response on incorrect information, so you should make the effort to gather as much information about the problem as possible.

Aim to establish the facts by referring to any available data or written records, as well as employee comments. Base your knowledge on information that has been relayed to you and on your own observations. Always focus on the facts rather than relying on guesses, opinions and second-hand reports.

Depending on the extent of the problem, you may need to make notes about the known facts based on verifiable information before speaking to the people involved. The questions below will help you ascertain the background and circumstances surrounding the problem.

Questions to help gather the facts
▪ How long ago did the problem arise? ▪ When and where does it occur? ▪ Who is involved? ▪ Who else is affected by the problem? In what ways? ▪ Is the problem temporary or long term? ▪ What are the symptoms of the problem? ▪ What evidence do you have of the effect it is having? ▪ What are the likely consequences if the problem is not addressed?

Do not act on hearsay

You need to consider if it is appropriate for you to step in and act, especially when the problem concerns a particular person. It may seem straightforward for you to take immediate action but that is not always the best approach. While a third party may be correct in bringing a matter to your attention, if you take action based only on that report, you run several risks.

For example, by implication you are encouraging staff to inform on each other. This often leads to a climate of distrust and negativity. There is also a strong chance that you will not have all the facts at your disposal and may make allegations that are unfounded or antagonistic.

Those at the centre of the complaint are likely to feel that there has been a breach of confidence, in that people are not communicating openly and genuinely.

If a member of your team speaks to you about another staff member and you act immediately on the accusation, you are neglecting your leadership responsibility of guiding the first party to resolve the problems they encounter. Has the person tried to raise the issue openly and directly with the other person? If so, is there another approach they could take to resolve the matter?

Speak with relevant people

Once you have decided that it is you who should handle the issue, speak as soon as possible to each of the individuals at the centre of the problem. Do this in a non-accusatory way, avoiding any inclination to jump to hasty conclusions. Your aim at this stage is to seek the views of those with first-hand knowledge of the problem and to be clear about what actually occurred, taking into account each person's perspective.

Employ active listening techniques to encourage each party to speak openly, without premature judgment. This includes listening to everything that is said with the intention to understand, and asking open-ended questions such as: 'What do you think happened that caused the equipment to malfunction?' Use your communication skills to manage uncommunicative employees. Do not interrupt unless you want to ask a question to clarify a point.

Hints for effectively seeking views of others are provided below.

Hints for effectively seeking views of others
Use your interpersonal skills to ensure your manner helps the person to trust you and be inclined to explain the situation honestly.
Make sure you do not betray an employee's trust in any way through the problem-solving process.
Give the person time to express their point of view.
Remember, different people may have very different ideas about what the issues are.
Avoid reacting emotionally if the person becomes upset or angry.
People are more inclined to speak openly and positively about problems when there is already a culture characterised by trust-based working relationships.

Establish the causes

By asking relevant questions and listening carefully to what people have to say, you should be able to determine most of the causes of the problem. Be prepared to take some time to diagnose the symptoms behind the problem.

Causes of problems can be complex and varied. To understand the issues and get to the root cause, it is useful to break the problem down to avoid confusing the symptoms with the actual problem.

For example, whatever the surface reasons, the fact that a person misses deadlines is a symptom of a deeper problem. It is possible that: the deadlines are not realistic for the task; organisational processes are too cumbersome; performance standards are too high to enable the task to be completed on time; or unforeseen circumstances have arisen, such as a workplace emergency.

Avoid making assumptions

Common traps are: making assumptions based on an insufficient grasp of the facts, an unwillingness to understand the parties involved and their particular perspectives, or a tendency to form generalisations. Many people make generalisations to explain away a problem; for example, 'mature-age people aren't into technology' to explain the problem of an older employee's lack of computer skills. Addressing the individual person or specific issue is more appropriate. For example, 'Margot seems to be lacking in computer skills'. Asking appropriate questions leads to finding out why this is so and what can be done about it.

We are all prone at times to look for easy answers. Always take the time to think through an issue thoroughly to ensure you reach conclusions that have a solid foundation.

Example

A team leader makes an incorrect assumption

An employee reports that some items have gone missing from her workstation recently – some tools and a few personal effects. The team leader assumes that the site cleaners are responsible, as the items have been taken overnight and the contractors have employed some casual workers over that period of time.

The manager of the cleaning firm is approached and informed that he needs to take responsibility for the actions of his workers. Notice is given that if the thefts continue, the cleaning contract will be terminated. Unfortunately, the thefts increase and the contractor is replaced.

However, the thefts continue and it is then revealed that a member of staff has not been properly activating the security system when he leaves at night. This means that the site has been vulnerable to members of the public. When the staff member is instructed to follow the correct procedures for locking up, the problem of the thefts is overcome. By this time, the relationship with the cleaning contractor is irreparable.

Analyse the problem before taking action

Sometimes the biggest challenge to overcoming a problem is the urge to act immediately. A kneejerk reaction or automatic response often ignores other potential responses and can create more problems in the longer term by overlooking the possible consequences of the action taken. It is therefore best to think before you act.

Problems arising in a workplace can range from small everyday difficulties, such as an air conditioner that keeps breaking down, to more serious situations, such as a competing business opening up nearby and offering cut-price merchandise. Some problems seem straightforward but, on investigation, a whole range of causes and implications may surface.

Determine the extent of the issue and potential implications

Until you have fully analysed the issue and its implications, you should avoid making any promises to an individual or a group about a particular outcome. You need to define and evaluate your options and start a course of action before you can be sure of what will eventuate and how it will affect the people involved.

Steps to follow are outlined below.

Who is affected?	Consider the needs of those involved, including your own. The best solution is one that satisfies the interests of all parties wherever possible. You may have spoken to the parties directly involved in the issue, but you need to consider whether other people are or will be affected by the issue and its resolution. For example, if you grant a pay rise to a number of employees, there will be implications in terms of parity with other groups of employees.
Problem extent	How significant is the issue? Are there any wider ramifications in terms of its potential effect on work productivity and the ability of the organisation to meet its objectives? How many people does it affect and in what departments? What organisational areas are affected; for example, staff turnover, profits or public reputation? Determining the extent of the problem involves looking at the bigger picture and the long term, rather than just the issue as it exists now, to determine whether any likely solutions may pose a greater problem. For example, in response to a series of computer problems, a production company may decide its systems need a complete overhaul. However, with a busy Christmas period approaching, consideration needs to be given to whether this would jeopardise the handling of orders to such an extent that it could be counterproductive.
Problem context	The context of the problem involves the circumstances that surround the situation. It points to specific organisational operations that are affected by or impact on the problem. The context may relate to: ▪ employment contracts or enterprise agreements ▪ organisational policy or standard operating procedures ▪ organisational standards, such as a customer service charter, code of workplace conduct or ethical guidelines ▪ WHS requirements ▪ legislation or regulations governing anti-discrimination, equal opportunity, industrial relations, financial management, environment protection, trade practices, product liability and privacy ▪ effective functioning of the team.

Define and evaluate your options

An important point to remember in problem-solving is that in almost every case there is more than one way to achieve your goal.

Whether large or small, most difficulties need to be addressed promptly. They must be managed to ensure they do not disturb work processes and put operational objectives in jeopardy.

You should always follow organisational policy and procedure, and consult with your own manager when changing working conditions.

Many common reactions to difficulties are far from ideal, such as becoming angry or abusive, being critical, suppressing feelings, withdrawing from or ignoring the situation, aiming for a victory at someone else's expense, or placating another party at your or another's expense.

Some appropriate responses are outlined below.

Stay calm, take your time, listen

Remain calm; take the time to fully investigate the situation; listen carefully to the person or people at the centre of the problem; and explain clearly what you expect from employees.

Aim for win–win

Always aim for a win–win situation, in which a solution is reached that satisfies all parties and helps them feel that they have worked together or collaborated for their mutual benefit. This may not always be possible, but it should be the objective.

Consider allowing those involved to work the problem out

Sometimes it may be appropriate to let people work through a problem by themselves and so learn from the process. However, if the problem is affecting the work of the team or falls within a legal context, you should take prompt action.

Methods of defining and evaluating your options

Some methods you can use to define and evaluate strategies to solve problems are outlined below.

Trial and error

Once you have identified some options for solving the difficulty, try one option and then, if necessary, another, in an attempt to solve the problem. Trial and error can be an effective way of approaching some problems, such as administrative processes or minor technical problems, but it can be risky and time-consuming. Those involved need to carefully consider the potential implications of each approach at the outset.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming promotes creativity. Collaborative problem-solving encourages lateral thinking and helps people accept compromises and work with the solutions devised. Remember to welcome all ideas without judgment. Evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of each solution should only be carried out after all the ideas are on the table. Make the session action-based rather than focusing on the symptoms of the problem.

Consulting experts

Consult with experts such as a human resources officer, industrial relations adviser or safety consultant to discuss possible courses of action. Depending on the issue and any predetermined processes, you may need to ask the people at the centre of the problem if they are comfortable with involving others. Remember to respect the person's confidentiality and trust.

While reviewing the options for solving a problem, keep an open mind and choose a strategy that is appropriate for the specific situation. There are a number of factors to consider. Weight these according to their relative importance.

Factors to consider when choosing a strategy are whether:
▪ the proposed solution is possible to implement ▪ the solution will be enough to effectively solve the problem ▪ the solution is fair to those involved ▪ the time involved in implementing the solution is appropriate ▪ the resources needed are cost-effective in terms of people and finances ▪ any flow-on effects of the solution are controllable and not detrimental ▪ the solution has enough support from the various stakeholders.

Some issues can be resolved by examining the possibilities and remaining flexible.

You can make fairly simple changes by implementing some of the strategies outlined below.

Information flow	▪ Do people need more or better information? ▪ Should there be greater opportunities for feedback? ▪ Should there be more regular reporting?
Structures and procedures	▪ Should the work group be smaller or larger? ▪ Should reporting lines be changed? ▪ Are more staff needed? ▪ Can tasks be done a different way?
Equipment and services	▪ Is new equipment needed? ▪ Can technology be used to make processes easier?

Strategies sometimes fail because solutions to problems are not properly implemented. Your hard work in identifying and evaluating the issue must be followed through with action. As soon as a course of action has been determined, you must ensure the resolution strategies are applied.

You can ensure resolution strategies are applied by:
▪ developing an action plan and circulating copies to all parties ▪ clearly documenting the actual tasks that need to be done ▪ indicating who will do each task ▪ setting time frames for the completion of each task ▪ indicating how progress will be reviewed.

A variety of problem-solving tools that you may find useful are outlined below.

SWOT analysis
Analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting your project in a competitive environment. By thoroughly considering each aspect of the competitive environment, you are able to develop answers to help maintain your advantage.

Cause and effect diagrams
These line diagrams linking outcomes to potential causes (and vice versa) allow you and your team to consider possible causes and effects that represent potential risks to your work. By generating these causes and effects, you are in a better position to rectify any potential risks.

Affinity diagram
Organises your ideas, problems and/or solutions into common themes. This helps you and your team identify common issues that may be the cause of problems or that may lead to future issues.

Risk analysis
Analyses the probability and consequences of risks you and your team have identified. This helps to place a priority on those risks that you determine as high or the most likely to cause an issue.

General appreciation
Uses the experience and observations of you and your team to consider methods of solving problems and identifying potential issues.

Brainstorming techniques
When problems are difficult to solve, consider brainstorming multiple solutions using the input of capable team members and stakeholders. Once a range of ideas is produced, you or your team can then analyse each by applying criteria such as cost versus effect or risk probabilities.

Common teamwork challenges

The table below outlines some common teamwork challenges that you may encounter and suggests some strategies for addressing them.

Challenge	Strategy
Experiencing conflict with clients or team members	Use problem-solving steps to uncover the basis of the conflict. Consider if communication barriers are causing the conflict. Take immediate action and meet with affected parties to resolve the conflict.
Potential risks or safety hazards	Use problem-solving skills to identify the issue. A common cause may be due to poor communication. Determine if safety procedures have been properly communicated and understood. This requires immediate attention to protect the health and safety of everyone at work.
Unethical or inappropriate communication	Use problem-solving skills to identify the cause of the issue. Are communication barriers a factor? Is the person aware that their communication is unethical or inappropriate? This requires immediate attention to ensure everyone is working to organisational and legislative requirements. Use organisational policies to support you in addressing this challenge.
Difficulties performing tasks	Use problem-solving skills to identify the cause of this issue. There may be a communication breakdown or a skills deficit or an impairment you are unaware of. Use organisational policies and procedures to help you address this issue and support the team member.

Negotiation strategies

To resolve workplace conflicts, you might need to negotiate a solution. Understanding the other party's interests and tactics is integral to good negotiating.

Selecting a strategy that best responds to their interests and tactics will help managers and workplace relations professionals to achieve the best outcomes.

Negotiation strategies should be matched to the situation. The strategy a manager selects depends on who they are negotiating with and the type of relationship they have with them. For example, identifying the level of cooperation and common interests that exist between the parties and how each party will behave during the negotiation will also depend on what is being negotiated, and the time frame and setting in which negotiations are taking place.

Negotiation strategies	
Problem-solving/ collaboration	▪ Win–win strategies result in situations where both parties are satisfied with the settlement negotiated. ▪ Each party commits to examining and discussing issues closely when entering into long-term agreements that warrant careful examination.
Dominating/ competing	▪ Win–lose strategies result in situations in which one party is satisfied and one is dissatisfied. It focuses on the resolution of one party's issue to the exclusion of others, until one side is defeated. ▪ It involves persuading your negotiating party to concede to your outcome if you are bargaining in one-off negotiations over major 'wins'.
Accommodating/ yielding	▪ Lose–win strategies result in situations in which one party is dissatisfied and the other is satisfied. One party withdraws or makes a number of concessions while the other party wins. ▪ Conceding a point that is not vital to you but is important to the other party is valuable in ongoing negotiations.
Avoiding	▪ Lose–lose strategies result in situations where the objectives of both parties are too rigid, or when both parties are unable to compromise, problem-solve, or are unaware of the opportunity to do so. ▪ Both parties forgoing their ideal outcomes, settling for an outcome that is moderately satisfying to each participant.
Compromising	▪ A compromising negotiation style is a form of bargaining. Compromisers split the agreement's value between the two parties versus finding a solution so that everyone benefits from an agreement's full value.

Example

Resolving workplace conflicts

Kyleigh has been asked to mediate for two team members who have been having an ongoing conflict. Jamie feels annoyed and upset because he believes Shelley takes all the credit for the projects they work on together. Shelley does not understand the problem, as she believes that people should be more like her and just get on with the job.

Kyleigh wants Jamie and Shelley to reach a win–win solution to the problem. She has worked with them both for a long time and knows that they view things quite differently. Shelley is confident and task orientated. Jamie, on the other hand, needs recognition to help with his confidence and he tends to dwell on things.

Kyleigh wants to ensure her communication is respectful and positive to both of them. She knows that this issue has caused tension in the team and it needs to be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties to get the team back on track.

Kyleigh decides to use a process she learnt about recently called collaborative problem-solving. She is confident that by using this process the relationship between Jamie and Shelley will be stronger because they will learn more about how the other person sees the world.

- She asks each person to share their thoughts and feelings on the issue.
- She encourages both of them to actively listen to each other by not interrupting and keeping an open mind.
- When each person has expressed their views, the other person summarises what they have heard and understood.
- This process continues until each person confirms that the other person has understood their viewpoint.
- They brainstorm solutions and she facilitates a discussion that leads to a win–win solution.

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Describe how your present or previous team approaches problem-solving.

Question 2

Identify two organisational requirements that you would need to consider in managing an interpersonal conflict between team members.

Question 3

List four negotiation strategies that could be used in conflict resolution.

Summary

- A valuable way of providing support to your team is to take advantage of coaching or mentoring opportunities in the organisation.
- Coaching can enhance the workplace culture by building the team's unity.
- Coaching is a two-way procedure whereby the coach and learner are both committed to improvement. Coaching should follow a structured, well-defined plan with logical steps and clear outcomes.
- You should monitor individual and team progress and approach methods of support on an individual case-by-case basis.
- Communication needs will be different for each team member, so ensure you give each team member the level of communication they need to carry out their work.
- Facilitation means 'making a process easier'. In the context of team development and improvement, facilitating a team involves helping team individuals to operate more effectively as a group.
- Ensure that team members are recognised and rewarded when they identify a problem, think proactively about solutions or use their initiative to avoid potential issues.
- Problem identification is a process of considering where the project is positioned along its time line, looking for gaps in performance, and determining possible causes for delays, underperformance, quality or financial issues.
- Workplace conflict must be removed as quickly as possible so as not to negatively affect others including clients, customers, workmates or observers.
- When resolving conflicts and challenges, refer to any standard operating procedures that apply to the whole organisation or your team and dictate the action you need to take.

Learning Checkpoint 3

Support team members

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Laksi leads the product development team. She has just received the market research results from their prototype testing and calls a team meeting to discuss the results. Laksi asks one team member, Bazra, to set up a laptop to the projector in the meeting room so she can display the research results. When everyone arrives for the meeting, the laptop and projector is not set up. Laksi asks Bazra to set it up now but he becomes so flustered that another team member steps in to do it while the others sigh and wait impatiently. Laksi runs through the market research results and encourages the team to identify the major issues with the product prototype. When one of the issues identified is the name of the product, two team members start arguing about whose idea it was. Laksi needs to step in to take control of the meeting and steer it back on track.

Bazra may have forgotten to set up the equipment or he does not know how to. He became flustered when asked so it is likely he does not have the technical skills and knowledge to set up the equipment and became embarrassed in front of his colleagues.

1. How can Laksi support Bazra to work towards team goal?

2. How can coaching help the team members and enhance workplace culture?

3. Describe how Laksi can facilitate her team to identify the issue. What problem-solving skills can she use to resolve the issue?

4. Suggest strategies that Laksi could use to resolve the conflict between her two team members.

Topic 4 | Monitor team performance

4A Measure team member performance and provide feedback

4B Identify specific opportunities for improvement and implement action plans

4A Measure team member performance and provide feedback

Measuring team performance involves monitoring progress against work plans and reviewing results to ensure objectives have been achieved.

Monitoring should ensure all tasks and changes agreed to are completed within specified time lines and with allocated resources. To achieve team and organisational objectives, you should set measures to track progress against periodically. If people are to perform well, they need to know exactly what is expected of them. Clear roles and responsibilities give people focus and clarify their aims. This enables them to monitor their own performance, take responsibility for results and initiate improvements.

Identifying key result areas is one way of setting standards of performance for the team and for individuals. For example, key result areas for a personal assistant could include:

- preparing correspondence and reports
- coordinating meetings
- handling inquiries from the media and the general public.

Key performance indicators

Within each key result area, smaller tasks need to be completed according to set performance standards and within agreed time lines. Key performance indicators (KPIs) can then be allocated to each key result area to provide a measure of how well employees are performing their tasks.

Using KPIs, the employee knows exactly what is expected of them and the employee's supervisor can monitor their performance against these criteria. For more specific tasks, measurable time frames and outcomes can be established and tracked.

KPIs for a personal assistant could include the following requirements.

Key result areas	KPIs
Prepare correspondence and reports	Correspondence and reports are prepared accurately and thoroughly.
Coordinate meetings	Meetings are scheduled in consultation with other relevant personnel. Agendas and papers are circulated promptly. Accurate minutes are recorded and circulated within three days of each meeting.

Key result areas	KPIs
Handle inquiries from the media and the general public	Inquiries are handled professionally and politely to ensure that the organisation's objectives are met and relationships with key stakeholders are maintained.

The KPI process can also be used for team performance. Involve staff in the process of establishing key result areas, KPIs and specific work targets so they understand what needs to be done and why. When people feel they own the plan, they are more likely to take responsibility for its success and for their own contribution.

Other measures against which ongoing progress can be tracked are shown below. Ensure that you monitor outcomes regularly against each of these measures and initiate improvements with the relevant personnel. Use your communication skills to implement consultation mechanisms.

Other measures against which ongoing progress can be tracked include:

- regular financial reports outlining performance against divisional and organisational budgets
- sales statistics setting out results against marketing strategies
- documentation of customer inquiries and sales conversion rates
- personnel records, including staff attendance and turnover
- feedback from staff and other key stakeholders
- data on equipment maintenance and reliability
- quality control processes
- product evaluation completed by end users
- general customer feedback on products and services.

Review and evaluate outcomes

If records are simply documented and filed away, they are of little use in monitoring performance outcomes. You should have an active commitment to closely reviewing the material gathered and using this information to further your knowledge, identifying areas for improvement with relevant personnel.

Ways you can keep and report outcomes are outlined below.

Written communication

Workplace outcomes should be summarised and relayed through reports, emails, memos or newsletters. Follow this up by providing opportunities for face-to-face discussion with either the whole team or one or more individuals. Encourage team members to give feedback and contribute to issues related to their work.

Manager/staff briefings and staff forums

Find ways of conveying and discussing workplace outcomes with stakeholders. Meetings provide a vehicle for reporting on outcomes; sharing views on team progress; inviting feedback; providing input on areas for improvement; and discussing ongoing work issues, problems and objectives. Staff forums can be convened for major topics, such as outcomes against organisational objectives, employment conditions or work health and safety (WHS) requirements and issues.

Incident reports

Clearly outlined procedures must be in place to ensure incidents are reported and documented as and when they occur. This applies to technical failures and any instances of discrimination, harassment or other grievances, as well as health and safety incidents and workplace hazards. In matters such as employment and WHS, it is often a legal requirement to keep precise records and to retain these for a specific period of time. Incident reporting is also a way of ensuring that problems are addressed at the earliest possible opportunity.

At a team level, you can observe how long the team takes to carry out a particular procedure; the manner in which people communicate, or how the team members work together. You might see that projects regularly run over budget or a process needs to be streamlined. You should continually monitor complaint levels regarding your team's work and review any feedback received about your team's performance from stakeholders and other managers.

Observations and feedback are often the impetus for you and the team to get together to discuss the situation and arrange an appropriate solution. Though no new skills may need to be learnt, the team could come up with new and improved work practices or ways to communicate more effectively.

Keep notes on team performance so you have a written record you can refer to in group discussions and when making decisions. Give sufficient information and evidence, such as completed work, to enable you to show the group exactly where the skill gaps occur.

Example

Measure performance against KPIs

Sunita manages a customer service team. The team has established KPIs for handling customer calls and queries, which include the time it takes to answer a call and resolving 85 per cent of customer queries on the first call. Customers are also asked to give feedback on their experience with the customer service representative. Sunita uses the metrics collected by their CRM and the customer feedback to give information to her team every month on how they are tracking against their KPIs and team objectives. Regular monitoring of KPIs allows performance to be measured and for extra support or training to be given as needed.

Provide performance feedback

An important step in the process of managing work performance is to give feedback to team members when needed.

One of the most challenging areas for a team leader is being able to deliver constructive negative feedback in relation to individual or team performance.

For many people, delivering a message that is likely to be negatively received is so uncomfortable that they tend to avoid it altogether. This is not appropriate management behaviour. If you have trouble giving negative feedback, prepare yourself with a written list of the problems you have identified and all the ways they affect you, the team and the organisation.

Some ways to deliver effective feedback are shown below.

Give feedback in person

When giving feedback, which should be done in person wherever possible, refer to a list to remind yourself how important your feedback is. It is your responsibility as a manager to address problems that interfere with the team's work, and sometimes you have to make tough decisions. If your negative criticism is also constructive, in that you try to help improve performance, you will be repaid with team loyalty and increased productivity.

Present the facts assertively

Be prepared to present the facts assertively and to respond to your employees' concerns. A commitment to consultation includes explaining to employees how decisions that affect them have been made and how their views have been taken into account. Always be prepared to give reasons for any decisions that affect individuals and the team as a whole.

Arrange mediation if necessary

In the case of a dispute between two team members, arrange for a mediation session and discuss the situation with others on staff to see how they might resolve the situation. Give feedback with all parties present so it is fair and impartial.

Collect feedback on individual and team performance

Feedback should be routinely collected to monitor service delivery. It should be ongoing and can be collected in different ways. You should also reflect on your own performance as a team leader and encourage team members to reflect on their performance as well.

When you receive negative feedback about a team member's performance, think about what may have caused the problem before discussing it with the individual or team.

Consider also the source of the feedback to see if it is credible; that is, whether it is reliable, accurate and valid. Any credible feedback received by the supervisor, team leader or frontline manager should be passed on to the person involved and resolved one-on-one and in private. Make sure you document all details of the complaint and include the appropriate training need in your team plans.

Compare feedback

Poor performance may not always require acquisition of new skills or knowledge. For example, if poor planning has led to the team underperforming, examine the planning process rather than focusing on the individual's performance. Sometimes, addressing poor performance may involve a simple rearrangement of work schedules or holding discussions with the person or team to talk about the situation and come to a resolution.

Any feedback you receive should help you confirm the learning and development needs you have already identified via other methods.

After you have received feedback from various sources, it is important to use this feedback to improve the team's performance. You should compare the information received through feedback with the team's learning needs to check if problem areas identified could be resolved through professional development and other learning opportunities.

Feedback mechanisms

For many people, acknowledgment of a job well done, especially in a public setting, is reward enough, without the need for monetary or physical rewards. Taking the time to acknowledge the efforts of individuals, groups or the whole team in meetings where colleagues or more senior staff are present is an excellent way of showing people that their contribution is important and valued. 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.

Here are two common ways of giving feedback to teams and individuals.

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 factors 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. Bear in mind that 360-degree feedback can be confronting; therefore, it needs to be managed carefully. Getting low scores from team members can be a shock; on the other hand, getting high scores lets you know that colleagues appreciate your efforts. The 360-degree feedback tool is especially useful 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, KPIs 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.

Informal and ongoing feedback

You can seek and give feedback in many situations, formal and informal.

When you give instructions or make requests, elicit verbal feedback to check that team members understand the information provided. Sometimes people say they understand when they do not. A good way 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.

Ways of receiving feedback from your team are shown below.

Ask team members for feedback on your performance as a manager

This could be in general or in specific situations; for example, 'Do you think that the information I give to you before brainstorming meetings is adequate?'

Encourage team members to give feedback to each other

Team members can give each other feedback and recognition when they have worked hard, made an effort or achieved something they have been working towards.

Encourage team members to give feedback to the team as a whole

The team can give itself feedback in sessions that are structured so that people assess the team's overall performance, as opposed to focusing on individual members' achievements or shortcomings.

Encourage frequent feedback

Seek feedback several times over the course of a project or activity to check how work is progressing.

Use KPIs to monitor team progress

KPIs 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.

Example

Feedback during performance reviews

Vedant manages a team of six project managers. He has monthly meetings with each project manager and conducts a performance appraisal annually, in line with organisational requirements. Upon setting the date for each performance appraisal, Vedant emails relevant internal and external stakeholders seeking feedback on the performance of each project manager and he also encourages the project manager to gather evidence of their own performance against their objectives. Vedant collates all the feedback and at the performance appraisal he shares this with the project manager so they can discuss how they feel they have performed and how others have perceived their performance. Generally, this is a very positive experience for the project manager and any constructive feedback received is used to identify development opportunities.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

Give an example of a KPI in your work plan. Explain how your performance is measured in your team.

Question 2

How would you collate feedback on individual and team performance? Identify sources of feedback.

Question 3

What is your organisational standard of providing timely and constructive feedback? Give one or two examples.

4B Identify specific opportunities for improvement and implement action plans

The process of measuring performance and providing feedback allows for the identification of learning and development opportunities.

The first step in developing a learning and development plan is to study the information you have collected and documented regarding the learning and development needs of your team. You should arrange the data into categories such as job-specific, professional development and career. Within these, create subcategories such as communication, organisational processes, technology and interpersonal skills, and further categorise them into long-term and short-term needs.

Documentation should provide a record of:

- skill gaps
- how the gaps were identified
- priority for training or development, including long- and short-term needs
- the type of training required.

Information that you may use when developing a learning plan may come from a variety of sources.

Sources of information may include:	
▪ assessments of completed work	▪ notes on your observations
▪ training needs analysis (TNA)	▪ questionnaires and surveys
▪ third-party reports	▪ performance appraisal discussions.
▪ self-evaluation reports	

Identify team needs

When identifying team needs, consider if you will provide training for the whole team or just one person, who can then transfer their learning to the rest of the group. This may be a budget consideration, or you may need to consider the time required to do the training.

Identified team needs may cover skills that all members need to have to complete their tasks (for example, operating specialised equipment). Sometimes, training for a procedure that has just been introduced may be where attention needs to be focused. In other instances, the skills may be more general and generic (knowledge and skills all staff should have). Examples of general skills are email etiquette or knowledge of organisational procedures. You may find that skills to improve overall work practices and team efficiency are required where your team needs a closer focus. Occasionally, training and skill development may need long-term attention, such as when an organisation decides to implement new delivery processes or produce a new product.

Conduct a TNA

A performance appraisal may identify the need for further skills development. Learning and development activities should be specifically designed to target any identified knowledge or skills gaps. Conducting a TNA will identify the specific development needs of your team or team members.

A TNA is a process used to assess employee capabilities against required competencies. A successful TNA will establish what is needed, by whom, when and where, to ensure training objectives can be determined.

Questions a TNA addresses
▪ What training support is needed and why?
▪ Where is training needed?
▪ Who needs training?
▪ How will training be provided?
▪ How much will training cost?
▪ What will be the impact on the organisation?

The components of a TNA are shown below.

Training needs analysis	
Determine desired outcomes	Clarify training goals and expected outcomes. Training goals should align with service-level and organisational objectives.
Link desired outcomes with employee behaviour	▪ Identify the existing competencies of employees (behaviours, knowledge, skills, abilities and personal characteristics) and link these to desired outcomes. ▪ Collect information and consult with employees to determine which competencies are critical to achieving desired outcomes.

Training needs analysis	
Identify trainable competencies	Assess the critical competencies and determine if they are abilities an employee should possess prior to employment, or abilities that can be learnt on the job.
Evaluate competencies and identify performance gaps	▪ Evaluate existing competencies and identify where there are gaps between existing and desired abilities of employees. ▪ To evaluate competencies, use performance appraisals, self-assessments, one-on-one interviews, surveys, questionnaires, focus groups or psychometric testing.
Prioritise training needs	▪ Identify the number of employees who require training on the competencies identified. ▪ Consider the importance of the competencies in achieving service-level and organisational objectives. ▪ Use identified competency needs to determine training priorities.
Select training methods	▪ Select appropriate training methods and learning and development activities according to the needs of the organisation. ▪ Consider adult learning principles and best practices for training in particular competencies.
Determine the costs	▪ Consider the costs associated with the training methods, to the extent that the methods selected will address performance gaps and meet service-level objectives. ▪ Costs may include time off for employees to attend training, program development time, training and assessment resources, training evaluation and reporting, travel and logistical expenses, lost productivity from time spent in training.
Evaluate training	▪ Measure how well the learning and development activities met the training and relevant service-level objectives. ▪ Observe employees to identify whether they have retained and applied the information and competencies received. ▪ Assess whether training improved employee performance, enhanced service delivery and supported service-level and organisational objectives.

Example

Identifying learning and development opportunities

During her performance appraisal, Karly admits it takes her a long time to prepare the sales data in Excel as she is not familiar with the shortcuts or some of the functions that might save her time. Her manager notes that as a training need and considers the best way to approach the training. Does Karly need to attend an Excel course or could her training need be addressed by some coaching from another team member? After the manager has completed all the performance appraisals, she notes a number of team members need to develop their Excel skills but there are two or three who have advanced skills. The manager decides to work with the staff who have advanced skills to develop a customised Excel training program for the rest of the team.

Develop a training program

Once training needs and goals have been determined, team leaders or managers should develop a training program by selecting methods and activities that achieve training and workplace relations objectives.

Individual learning plans should be developed for each team member. Develop the learning plan with the team member, helping them understand the need for each skill and how it will benefit them in their work. It is important to encourage them to contribute to solutions. Finalise the plan together so you and the employee understand your responsibilities.

Some skill needs may require a brief in-house coaching session; some may necessitate a number of off-site training sessions; others may require the individual to gain a qualification over an extended period of time. Policies regarding training vary between organisations, with some organisations paying the full cost of training, some paying partial costs and some providing in-house training only.

Using a formal planning process ensures the training directly addresses identified needs and benefits the organisation as well as the individual. It also requires some action on the part of team members after the training has been completed.

When planning a training program, there are a range of considerations that must be taken into account. Consider the following questions when developing a training program.

Questions to ask
▪ Who is the target audience, what is their level of competence and what type of training best suits their needs?
▪ What are the costs of training and how will they be met?
▪ When and where will the training take place?
▪ What training resources are already available and who will develop training materials if they do not exist?
▪ How will training be delivered? Who will deliver it?
▪ What are the learning outcomes and performance criteria that must be met?
▪ What is the length and duration of the training program? When must outcomes be achieved?
▪ How will the training be structured to meet the needs of a diverse workforce?
▪ How will learning be assessed?
▪ What methods will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the training program?

Select training methods and activities

The methods and activities used to conduct training and assessment must be suited to the individual differences of the participants. You should consult with employees required to undergo training during the development of the program to ensure the learning is relevant, appropriate and accessible.

Examples of training methods and their benefits are described here.

Mentoring	▪ Mentoring is a developmentally oriented relationship between senior and junior employees that involves advising, role-modelling, sharing contacts and giving general support. ▪ Mentoring in the workplace can have long-term benefits as employees become more self-directed and develop strong communication and problem-solving skills. Mentored employees value collaboration and sharing of information.

Coaching	▪ Coaching is an on-the-job approach to management development in which the manager is given an opportunity to teach one-on-one. ▪ Workplace coaching equips employees with the tools, knowledge and opportunities needed to develop themselves as effective and efficient workers.
Shadowing	▪ Work or job shadowing involves an employee following and spending time with a more experienced employee, observing everything they do. ▪ Shadowing enables employees to learn what they are expected to do, and how they are expected to behave, when performing a particular role or delivering a service.
e-learning	▪ E-learning is learning conducted via electronic media, such as the internet or an intranet, using videos, interactive whiteboards or other available media. ▪ E-learning is increasingly becoming the preferred training method in many organisations for its cost-effectiveness and efficiency. E-learning modules can be easily personalised and tailored to serve a specific purpose. This method can be less intimidating for employees than instructor-led courses.
Job rotation	▪ Job rotation is the process of moving employees between different tasks to promote experience and variety. Job rotating allows employees to gain new skills and knowledge and produces multiskilled employees who are able to deliver a range of organisational services.
Classroom learning	▪ Classroom learning is the most traditional method for training and involves a large number of employees attending instructor-led sessions on specific topics. ▪ Classroom learning is beneficial and cost-effective when training a large group of employees with limited access to instructors. It may be conducted on-site in the workplace, or off-site, such as a registered training organisation's premises.
Self-paced study	▪ Employees who are capable and motivated may benefit from directing their own learning. Self-paced study involves the distribution of training resources to individuals who go away and learn the content in their own time. ▪ Self-paced study allows individual learning needs and training preferences to be met but is not suitable for developing group competencies.
Peer training	▪ Peer training is a process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on work practices to build new skills, share ideas and demonstrate to one another how services and systems work. ▪ Peer training is unique to the individuals engaged in it but generally develops skills in problem-solving, teamwork and collaboration.

Action learning	▪ Action learning is based on learning by experience. It uses real problems from the work situation for trainees to solve. ▪ Action learning provides for the immediate transference of skills and knowledge, bringing about a change of behaviour and thinking processes. It also promotes team learning and problem-solving by challenging groups of employees to resolve complex business issues on the spot.
Simulation	▪ Simulation is designed to reproduce a real-world situation in a risk-controlled learning environment. ▪ Simulation includes role-play training activities in which participants assume the roles of specific people in situations, act out the event and then review the implications of their behaviour.
Competency-based training	▪ Competency-based training is a skills approach to employee development. Its focus is on performing specific tasks to a predetermined standard. ▪ Competency-based training establishes a framework for constructive performance assessments by management at scheduled intervals and ensures training programs are cost-effective, goal-oriented and productive.

Document and implement training plans

Team leaders or learning and development coordinators should develop formal training plans for each employee participating in a workplace training program. Written training plans describe the goals and objectives, actionable strategies, milestones, progress measures and assessment outcomes.

Asking employees to read and agree to their individual training plans encourages them to take active ownership for their learning goals and outcomes. Training plans should be implemented promptly to ensure performance objectives can be achieved.

A formal training plan should include the sections shown here.

Training goals	This describes the overall results or capabilities the learner hopes to attain by implementing their training plan. Example: Become a workplace health and safety officer
Learning objectives	This describes what the learner will be able to do as a result of the learning activities in their training plan. **Example:** ▪ Demonstrate safe work methods. ▪ Exhibit interpersonal communication skills. ▪ Understand WHS compliance requirements.

Training methods	This describes what the learner will do to achieve their learning objectives. **Example:** ▪ Complete an e-learning course in WHS. ▪ Demonstrate safe work methods using simulation activities. ▪ Job shadow a WHS officer for one day.
Evidence	This describes the evidence produced during the learning activities to demonstrate the skills and knowledge required by the training program. **Example:** ▪ Certificate for completion of e-learning course ▪ Assessor's observation of the learner demonstrating safe work methods ▪ Documented evidence of completing a WHS audit in the workplace
Evaluation	This is an assessment and judgment on quality of evidence to conclude whether the learner has achieved their learning objectives. Evidence must be valid, sufficient, authentic and current. ▪ **Valid** – the assessor is assured the leaner has the skills, knowledge and attributes as described in the training program. ▪ **Sufficient** – the assessor is assured that the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence enables a judgment to be made of the learner's competency. ▪ **Authentic** – the assessor is assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the learner's own work. ▪ **Current** – the assessor is assured that the assessment evidence demonstrates current competency. This requires the assessment evidence to be from the present or the very recent past.

Example

Learning plan template

Tessa recognises that she needs advanced word processing skills. Her manager helps her develop a learning plan using the organisation's template to record how she can achieve this. Here is a copy of Tessa's completed learning plan.

Learning Plan	
Name:	Tessa O'Mallery
Date:	23 July
Identified need	**Action**
Competency or task	Produce complex documents
Organisational objective	To produce quality material that enhances the image of the company
Identified learning goal	To produce reports more efficiently, using the advanced tables, borders and referencing features in Microsoft Word
Why is this learning important to you and your job?	I want to learn more about using Microsoft Word to help me with producing reports for work, and for my course in human resources. The skills will enable me to share the team's workload.
How will you accomplish this goal?	I will attend the formal Microsoft Word training sessions organised by my supervisor and practise the new skills that I learn at work and at home.
How will you demonstrate that you have attained your goal?	I will prepare reports efficiently and within designated time lines using these features, and I will share my newly gained knowledge with my colleagues. I will ask for feedback from my supervisor and colleagues.

Practice Task 9

Question 1

Give an example of specific feedback on your team's (or your individual) performance that indicated a need for improvement. What specific learning and development would be helpful to improve your team's (or your) performance?

Question 2

What are your organisation's policies for addressing individual and team training needs?

Summary

- Measuring team performance involves monitoring progress against work plans and reviewing results to ensure objectives have been achieved.
- To achieve team and organisational objectives, you should set measures to track progress against periodically.
- Using KPIs, the employee knows exactly what is expected of them and the employee's supervisor can monitor their performance against these criteria.
- You should continually monitor complaint levels regarding your team's work and review any feedback received about your team's performance from stakeholders and other managers.
- Feedback should be routinely collected to monitor service delivery. It should be ongoing and can be collected in different ways.
- After you have received feedback from various sources, it is important to use this feedback to improve the team's performance.
- Any feedback you receive should help you confirm the learning and development needs you have already identified via other methods.
- Use the information you have collected and documented regarding the learning and development needs of your team as part of your TNA.
- A successful TNA will establish what is needed, by whom, when and where, to ensure training objectives can be determined.
- Once training needs and goals have been determined, team leaders or managers should develop a training program by selecting methods and activities that achieve training and workplace relations objectives.
- Team leaders or learning and development coordinators should develop formal training plans for each employee participating in a workplace training program.
- Written training plans describe the goals and objectives, actionable strategies, milestones, progress measures and assessment outcomes.
- Training plans should be implemented promptly to ensure performance objectives can be achieved.

Learning Checkpoint 4

Monitor team performance

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Clare is a team leader in a large company. Her direct reports are the sales consultant, product buyer and an administrative assistant, Katie. The organisational standard requires sales force to submit data in spreadsheets for monthly reports, board papers, budgets and sales forecasts. The spreadsheets are sent to the administrative assistant for proofreading and formatting and finalised for approval by Clare. During a discussion with Katie, Clare discovers that Katie needs to spend considerable time correcting the spreadsheets due to incorrect data and formulas. Clare asks why Katie did not ask the sales consultant to fix the data, and Katie explains that she did but as the sales consultant was busy, she asked Katie to fix the data for her and now she expects Katie to do it all the time.

1. The sales consultant's duties include preparing accurate reports and data as required. What needs to be measured to monitor a sales consultant's performance? Give an example of a KPI.

2. How can Clare give constructive feedback to the sales consultant according to the organisational standard?

3. Identify specific learning opportunities for the sales consultant and a specific development opportunity for Katie to support her in her role.

4. Suggest steps in an action plan to address training needs for Katie and sales consultant.