BSB 7.0

BSBTWK502

MANAGE TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Aspire
Learning Resources

BSBTWK502

Manage team effectiveness

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1

Learning Resources

Aspire also has learning resources available in these areas:

- Foundation skills
- LLN and employability skills (non-competency)
- Community services
- Early Childhood Education and Care
- Allied health

Aspire is committed to developing quality resources that meet the needs of our customers. However, occasionally Aspire finds, or is notified of, errors. Please refer to our website at www.aspirelr.com.au to see if there are any updates that may be relevant to you.

BSBTWK502 Manage team effectiveness, Release 1

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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBTWK502 Manage team effectiveness*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at:
www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

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

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

Foundation skills

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

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	▪ Analyses and interprets textual information from the organisation's policies, goals and objectives to establish team goals or to determine corrective action
Writing	▪ Prepares written reports and workplace documentation that communicate complex information clearly and effectively
Oral Communication	▪ Engages in discussions or provides information using appropriate vocabulary and non-verbal features ▪ Uses listening and questioning techniques to confirm understanding and to engage the audience
Enterprise and initiative	▪ Identifies how own role contributes to broader organisational goals ▪ Modifies or develops policies and procedures to achieve organisational goals
Teamwork	▪ Selects and uses appropriate conventions and protocols when communicating with diverse stakeholders ▪ Uses interpersonal skills to gain trust and confidence of team and provides feedback to others in forms that can be understood and used ▪ Adapts personal communication style to build positive working relationships and to show respect for the opinions, values and particular needs of others
Planning and organising	▪ Develops, implements and monitors plans and processes to ensure team effectiveness ▪ Monitors and actively supports processes and development activities to ensure the team is focused on work outcomes ▪ Plans for unexpected outcomes and implements creative responses to overcome challenges

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: Establish a team performance plan	1A	Identify the team's purpose, roles and responsibilities	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B	Develop team performance plans	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C	Support team to meet expected outcomes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2: Develop and facilitate team cohesion	2A	Develop strategies to foster team member input	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B	Develop or modify policies and procedures to promote accountability	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C	Provide feedback to team members	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2D	Develop processes to identify and address issues	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 3: Facilitate teamwork	3A	Encourage responsibility for team activities	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B	Support the team to resolve work performance problems	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3C	Promote collaboration through individual behaviour	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 4: Liaise with stakeholders	4A Maintain open communication with stakeholders	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	4B Communicate and address issues raised by team members and stakeholders	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1 | Establish a team performance plan

1A Identify the team's purpose, roles and responsibilities

1B Develop team performance plans

1C Support team to meet expected outcomes

1A Identify the team's purpose, roles and responsibilities

The leader is responsible for developing team performance goals and plans for their team members.

In work teams, having a common purpose and a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities and individual goals within the team dynamic is essential to ensuring a quality outcome. In this case, 'quality' refers to more than just a positive outcome in relation to the prescribed goals. It means the cohesion of individuals within the team and the lasting impressions of the success (or otherwise) of the group project.

As a leader, aligning the focus of the team helps to enable the team members to achieve goals. Important issues to consider include facilitating a shared understanding of:

- the purpose of the organisation, knowing who its customers are, and the team's role in relation to the customers
- the organisation's goals and objectives, and how your team will help achieve them.

Identify the team's purpose

To shape the team in a positive and constructive way, there must be a clear focus or purpose.

A team is defined as a group of people with complementary skills that come together to complete a task and share a common commitment to a team purpose. Team members will be more engaged when they understand the why behind the what; that is, why does the team exist?

It is important to ensure that your team's purpose is connected to the organisation's mission, values and strategies. When the team understands how their roles align with organisational goals, plans and objectives, they are more likely to produce work that is effective and exceptional.

Review organisational plans

The team's purpose can be established by reviewing the organisation's high-level vision, mission, strategic and operational plans, and identifying the team's role in fulfilling organisational goals and objectives. Ask:

- What is the team here to do?
- How do its activities link with the organisation's plans, goals and objectives?

Vision

The purpose for the organisation – what it is striving for in the long term

Mission statement

The reason for the organisation's existence – what it believes it is currently achieving

Strategic plans

Strategic plans explain the long-term objectives and direction of the organisation for the next 3–5 year period.

Organisational plans

Organisational plans explain the budget, areas of focus and key objectives for the next 12 months (fiscal year).

Operational plans

Operational plans explain the day-to-day objectives, resources, budgets and short-term methods needed to achieve milestones written in organisational and strategic plans. Operational plans are usually team/department-specific, or may cover the whole of a small business.

Team objectives

A team needs to have very clear objectives and outcomes in order to be cohesive and productive.

When everyone in the team knows 'where we are going and why', and helps to set those objectives, there is greater potential for cooperation and high morale. Team objectives may be long-term (ongoing) – for example, to deal with organisational needs – or they may be short-term – for example, to complete a project or meet a sales target.

Team objectives and goals need to link to organisational goals and objectives if they are to achieve organisational vision and purpose.

Clearly defining team purpose, goals and objectives has the following importance.

Clear goals

Clarity helps ensure that all team members have a clear definition of the team's purpose and goals. Once this is established it must be distributed to all team members and other interested members of management.

Keeping track

It is important to keep track of team goals and make sure that all members are contributing to them effectively. Some people, both from within the team and without, may see the team as a medium for completing personal goals or agendas. This is acceptable if it is part of the team's original purpose, but if it is not, the team could be derailed, rendering it ineffective.

Clear alignment of team purpose with organisational goals

By clearly defining the organisation's plans and objectives, there is an obvious relationship between team purpose and its overall goals and objectives.

SMART objectives

Goals are desired results that are broad and long-term. Objectives are specific and need to be written to a set formula to ensure they hit the mark in achieving what is needed.

To be clear and unambiguous, objectives need to be written according to the 'SMART' principles and be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-framed. For example: 'Attain $1 million in sales of widgets per quarter'. Assuming that $1 million in sales is supported by the required production capacity, marketing, competitive pricing, the objective is realistic and achievable.

Specific

All objectives must be specific and not general. A specific objective will generally answer the four W's:

- What needs to be achieved?
- Why does this need to be achieved?
- Who will be involved?
- Where it will take place?

Specific objectives need to be clear and free from ambiguity, especially if they are given to team members.

Measurable

Objectives need to have quantitative data or something tangible in order to measure progress and indicate when the objective has been met. Measuring progress keeps the team on track. A measurable objective will be able to answer:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will we know when the goal is reached?

Achievable

- Objectives need to be achievable. They need to stretch and challenge team members but still be attainable and within reach.

Relevant

Objectives need to be relevant to the outcome or purpose of the team as well as the vision, mission and strategies of the organisation. A relevant objective will answer:

- Is this worthwhile?
- Does this match our needs?
- Does it support our organisation’s plans and goals?

Time-bound

All objectives must time-bound to a date when the objective should be met. Time frames motivate work teams by giving them something to aim for. A deadline gives people an incentive to commit to an objective in an environment where the business of day-to-day work can dominate.

Identify team roles and responsibilities

With an understanding of the purpose the team needs to achieve, the leader can identify the specific tasks and roles and responsibilities of team members.

Just like a sporting team, every member of a business team plays a key role and has important responsibilities. Leaders must consider the tasks involved to achieve the team's purpose, and align the tasks with the skills, knowledge and experience of each team member in accordance with their position descriptions.

A position description is a broad, general and written statement of a specific job/position, based on the findings of a job analysis. These are essential in planning and communicating team roles and responsibilities and ensuring your team understands their expectations.

Position descriptions will usually include the following information to help leaders identify team roles and responsibilities.

Type of position	Explanation as to whether the job is based on a salary or an hourly rate, and whether the position is permanent or not.
Job title	The formal job title reflects the actual job being undertaken.
Summary of position	A brief overview of what the job actually entails including a summary of the key duties and major functions
Key duties	Greater detail on each of the duties and functions undertaken in the role. This should identify the key duties and separate them from the other duties that may be undertaken.
Key relationships	Relationships with internal and external stakeholders that impact the position.
Skills	Required skills that an individual needs to have in order to undertake the duties required by the position.
Key results areas (KRAs)	Key areas of responsibility that the person in the job must hold.
High level objectives and activities	The objectives are the major results that must be achieved in the role. For each objective, there should be a list of activities to be completed.
Work environment	A statement about the location of the position. For example, will the individual be working in harsh environments, on-site or off-site?

Consult with the team to clarify roles and responsibilities

Consultation is the process of sharing information, and seeking and considering the views of key people when making an informed decision.

Members of a team bring their own knowledge, skills and abilities that can add to team effectiveness. The group leader should identify and use these skills and abilities in a consultative way.

The leader will benefit by communicating and negotiating with team members about the team's purpose, objectives, roles and responsibilities.

The benefits of a consultative team culture include: additional insights and ideas, improved satisfaction levels, and improved interest in and commitment to the job. When team members know their opinions are valued, they understand that they are playing an important role in the context of the team and the organisation.

Consultation methods

Central to effective planning is the need for team-level consultation.

Consultation with team members during the planning process provides you with critical information to help you plan the team's purpose, objectives, roles and responsibilities.

Mechanisms such as scheduled meetings, bulletin boards, text messaging, shared computer network spaces, blogs, and even tweets and other social media can be used to provide feedback to the work team in relation to outcomes of any particular consultation.

The process of consultation can be achieved through the methods detailed below.

Ways of consulting with others and getting feedback in the workplace	
Meetings	Formal, scheduled meetings and informal, ad hoc gatherings between team members contribute to a better understanding of tasks, responsibilities and roles.
Interviews	Creating a list of questions to establish knowledge, skills and understanding of the task can help you identify individual needs and attributes.
Brainstorming sessions	The group as a whole considers a number of possible perspectives. Successful brainstorming requires commitment, contribution and cooperation by all team members.
Email and/or intranet communication	If a team is geographically dispersed, a system of electronic communication can aid understanding and contribution by all team members.
Newsletters or other processes and devices	Use widely-distributed mediums to help ensure that all employees have the opportunity to contribute to team and individual performance plans.

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 position descriptions, 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.

Agreement should be reached through consultation and it should be formal; that is, a signed document should 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 required to meet expectations.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Describe the method you would use to establish a clear team purpose, and well-defined roles and responsibilities.

Question 2

Draw a line to match each organisational plan and objective to its correct definition.

» Operational plans	» The purpose for the organisation
» Strategic plans	» The reason for the organisation's existence
» Vision	» The long-term objectives and direction of the organisation for the next 3–5 year period
» Mission	» The day-to-day objectives, resources, budgets and short-term methods needed to achieve milestones written into organisational and strategic plans

Question 3

Provide one example of how you can develop a shared understanding of a team's purpose, roles and responsibilities.

1B Develop team performance plans

Once the team's purpose, roles and objectives are set, the leader can establish a performance plan that describes the outcomes and key performance indicators.

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.

Create a team performance plan

A team performance plan sets out the goals and actions for team performance over a specified term. It must be consistent with the operational plan.

The creation of the team performance plan should be in accordance with prescribed organisational guidelines and legal requirements. Team performance plans extrapolate operational plans into individual personnel and team-level requirements. They are the day-to-day actions and objectives that must be achieved by team members to ensure team and organisational goals are met.

The main benefit of undertaking this detailed level of planning is to subdivide what began as a large mass of organisational or operational work into a set of clearly defined and manageable units. By allocating work in this way, you will ensure that the work of both individuals and your section or department as a whole are focused on the achievement of the organisation's strategic goals.

There is no prescribed format for the creation of a team performance plan; however, there are several elements that should be considered in order to develop a clear and comprehensive plan for teams and individuals.

Organisational and team goals

The broad statements that explain the alignment between individual objectives, team goals and organisational level goals. This should capture the overarching purpose of the work plan.

Key results areas

The areas of responsibility for team members as described in a job description.

Performance standards

The level of performance that explains what is needed from an individual to support business objectives. They are the realistic and tangible targets for the intervention – objectives should relate to the actions column of your work plan and set specific numbers to be achieved by a certain date. The standards are also known as performance metrics, or key performance indicators (KPIs).

Actions

Activities or ground level strategies that need to be carried out to bring about the desired objectives and performance standards.

Monitoring and review

How the activities and outputs are monitored and evaluated.

Incorporate input from stakeholders

Collaborate with a range of stakeholders to develop plans for team performance.

It may seem counter-intuitive to negotiate key performance measures with other team members or other co-workers (for example, sales team or technical advisors) but this process has several benefits. Negotiation can highlight potential issues that may impact performance as well as 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 team members having an increased level of personal commitment, and managers having a better level of understanding of team members' perspectives. This collaboration allows for feedback and critical analysis of the role and the performance measures applied to it.

Strategies to foster team input will be further discussed in Topic 2.

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 regarding 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 assist you in monitoring progress toward the end goal. You don't want a surprise when it's 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.
Ensure regular accountability	Accountability requires some form of benchmark. As a team leader, schedule regular meeting times 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.
Reach 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.

Key performance measures

The team performance plan must indicate the key performance measures in relation to the quantitative elements of job performance.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are essential elements of a team performance plan. These elements are based on the function of the role and must be discussed and confirmed with the staff member before they commence their job, and thereafter at every performance appraisal.

The number of performance measures depends on the technical complexity of the role, the professional expectations within the given industry, organisational culture and the personal requirements of the line manager/supervisor. In all cases, the measures should directly apply to the job requirements as outlined in the work plan and their position description.

The table below provides examples of the metrics applied to traditional functional areas.

Position	Key performance measures
Receptionist	▪ Number of rings before answering incoming calls ▪ Time on calls ▪ Number of errors when directing calls
Technical service assistant	▪ Time taken to allocate jobs to service agent ▪ Number of complaints received/handled ▪ Customer feedback rating (for example, out of five stars)
Accountant	▪ Actual versus forecast billable hours ▪ Number of clients seen per month ▪ Percentage of new clients versus existing clients

Quantitative performance measures

Quantitative performance metrics involve an evidence-based method of collection and analysis of work-related data.

Workplace data can be generated automatically from existing information systems and extracted from observations and reporting systems. A combination of the two sources provides the most holistic measurement of performance.

Quantitative performance can be thought of as 'how much' a person does in their job. Here are some examples of some quantitative performance measures.

Quantitative performance measures
Production or sales volumes year on year
Increased deliveries or sales to new clients, indicating individual efforts and production market focus
Net profitability, creating accountability for cost savings and margin maintenance
Unit production year on year, emphasising performance efficiencies or technological advances that have been adopted
Market coverage, providing feedback to marketing executive regarding overall capture in certain geographic or demographic segments

Qualitative performance measures

Qualitative usually refers to how well the job is completed, in particular the aspects that determine the quality standards of a task.

A typical set of criteria for qualitative performance assessment might include: number of errors in a work task, knowledge, desire to learn, initiative, reliability, teamwork and attitude. These should be discussed with each staff member when their work plan is developed so they understand the organisation's expectations of them; for example, in the way they perform their job role and behave in the workplace.

Effective managers provide ongoing qualitative feedback so that any problems are corrected as soon as they are observed, rather than waiting for a formal performance appraisal. It is important that this type of measurement is consistent, reliable and effective.

Qualitative measures can be assessed on a scale for ongoing performance monitoring, as shown in the table below.

Performance measures	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent	Superior
Quality	Produces unnecessary work	Completes necessary work	Produces value-added work	Maximises value-added work
Knowledge	Knows very little about job	Has good working knowledge of job	Has detailed knowledge of job	Is a recognised expert
Desire to learn	Shows no desire to learn	Is willing to learn more	Wants to learn more	Has a strong desire to learn more
Initiative	Shows no initiative	Shows some initiative	Shows considerable initiative (self-starter)	Shows extraordinary initiative
Reliability	Is completely unreliable	Is generally reliable but needs supervision at times	Is very reliable	Is always reliable
Attitude	Negative	Positive	Shows enthusiasm	Creates excitement

Develop performance standards

A key factor in the creation of a work plan is the development of clear performance standards and indicators.

Performance standards must set out the required level of performance that explains, in non-quantifiable terms, what is needed from an individual or group to support business objectives. A performance standard should be based on key results areas (KRAs), or key elements of the operational plan.

When deciding what the performance standards will be for a particular task, you should always determine which actions will be a minimum standard of acceptable performance for the task. Consult with key personnel and consider what has been achieved in the past, to ensure your standards are reasonable and achievable. Take the time to gather the data in order to make an informed decision about what measures to set for your team.

In most cases, you should set your performance standards based the following three steps.

Step 1: Identify the Key Results Areas (KRAs)

Key Results Areas are the areas of responsibility for team members. They are usually described in the person's job description or your performance standards. If KRAs are not pre-determined, you will need to analyse the job roles of your team members to identify what areas of the business they are responsible for.

The KRAs will change significantly depending on the nature of work operations and job roles of your team.

They may be based on achievement of:

- Sales
- Customer service
- Safety
- Team participation
- Innovation
- Quality
- General Store Maintenance
- Administration and support
- Learning and development
- Leadership

Step 2: Confirm the performance standard

Based on each KRA, confirm the standards of performance that need to be achieved. Given that 'what you measure is what you get', it is critical that the KPIs support the outcomes you want to achieve. (If you get these wrong, everything that follows will be out of alignment.)

For example:

- External – improving service levels to customers
- Internal – reducing operating costs to international benchmark levels

Step 3: Determine how you will measure performance standards and achievement of KRAs

After establishing the KRAs and performance standards in the previous steps, you will now focus on how to measure a team member's outputs, to determine whether the standard and area of responsibility is being fulfilled. This is known as their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The most effective way of determining individual KPIs is to review your performance standards and break them down into team and individual measures.

KPIs should:

- reflect and feed into the organisation's goals.
- be quantifiable where possible – for example, they should be explained in financial terms, numbers, raw data, percentages, rates etc.
- be fair and achievable under regular operating conditions.
- be clear, concise and simple.

SMART KPIs

Once a performance outcome is developed and agreed to, it must be worded so the employee and the manager are clear on the performance objectives to be achieved.

KPIs are benchmarks or measurements indicating how well you are doing in meeting a SMART performance objective; for example, how well your team is attaining a $1 million sales of widgets per quarter. To be clear and unambiguous, KPIs need to be 'SMART' (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-framed) and quantifiable. Each team member would have their KPIs to meet a team Objective of $1 million in sales, assuming it is supported by the required production capacity, marketing, competitive pricing.

KPIs should be written concisely to avoid being misunderstood. If you require a breakdown of detailed KPIs, ensure each one meets the 'SMART' criteria and is agreed to by the employee.

Objectives and KPIs are often grouped into KRA (Key Result Areas). KRAs are areas of responsibility or general areas of outputs.

Example

KRAs and KPIS

Barry works in a customer contact centre called Jet Setters. He has just finished putting together the work plan for his team for the next four weeks. The KRAs and KPIs that Barry has set are described in the table below.

Key Result Area	Performance standards	Key Performance Indicator
Customer service excellence	Achieve a high level of customer satisfaction	90% customer satisfaction rate based on feedback surveys. 6 hours of customer contact talk time per day.
Sales	Generate revenue for the business	10 closed sales per day. $10,000 of revenue per week.
Health, safety and wellbeing	Ensure the health and safety of self and others	Less than 5% annual injury rate within own team. 2 weekly hazard inspections conducted in own work area.
Quality outcomes	Maintain quality standards in own work produced	Less than 2% error rate on customer transactions.
Personal excellence and development	Maintain professional development and continuous improvement standards	38 hours of logged professional development per half-year. Attendance at 1 training course and 3 networking conferences per quarter.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Which of the following are examples of quantitative performance measures? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Sales volumes year on year
- ◯ Net profitability
- ◯ Customer feedback survey
- ◯ Unit production year on year
- ◯ Increased deliveries or sales to new clients
- ◯ Management's opinion

Question 2

What three steps should you follow when setting worker or team performance standards?

Question 3

Write at least five questions you could use as a checklist for developing an effective performance plan.

1C Support team to meet expected outcomes

To succeed as a team leader, you have to believe in your team members, as well as the purpose of the team.

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.

Here are some of the support strategies you can use to ensure the best outcomes are achieved from your team.

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 in this regard.

Build commitment and confidence

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

Strengthen the mix and level of skills within the team

Effective team leaders are committed to ensuring the team acquires the skills necessary to achieve its objectives, while simultaneously encouraging team members to take on challenging, interesting and varied work.

Manage relationships with the rest of the organisation

Team leaders require strong communication skills in order 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 will be required 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.

Do 'real work'

Team leaders should lead from the front. They should do roughly the same amount of 'real' work as other team members. The role of team leader should not be used to just make decisions. Rather, the team leader should volunteer for work that is high-risk or difficult.

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 demonstrate 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 required by the team and the rest of the organisation.

Use a systematic approach to managing team member performance

Managing a team member's performance requires a systematic approach; action must follow decisions or agreements for the planning process to be effective and useful.

Consider the following scenario: You sit down with John to discuss his performance, which has been below standard. Your conversation lasts for some time and involves discussing some workplace adjustments to help him maintain motivation. Before John leaves, you clearly outline your expectations for improvement in his performance. You both leave the meeting feeling positive, and John appears to understand what he needs to do. You feel confident that you will start to see some good results from John. A few weeks go by, and you haven't seen any improvement in John's performance. Nothing has changed, if anything, his performance has dropped. You're frustrated and wonder what you are doing wrong.

In this instance, you should have followed up the meeting by setting clear objectives to be achieved within a defined time frame. You may also have set some KPIs in order to track John's progress more effectively.

Coaching support

Coaching is a learning process that is aimed at bringing out the best in a person and is one of the most effective ways of developing the competencies of workers at all levels of the hierarchical structure.

Coaching is one strategy that can be used to support effective team performance. On-the-job coaching is cost-effective, uses in-house expertise and provides instant feedback on progress.

This method is a two-way process that is aimed at bringing out the best in a person and is one of the most effective ways of developing the competencies of workers at all levels of the hierarchical structure. It involves providing the individual with technical competence, observing their performance, giving them opportunities to reflect on and develop their skills and offering advice on how they can improve their skills.

Encourage	▪ Developing a proactive, high-performance team is best achieved by setting high (but achievable) goals and providing encouragement, rather than by pointing out poor performance and chastising those responsible. ▪ If poor performance becomes an issue with one of your team members, consider handling it in a constructive manner, and in a private setting. Challenge your team member to rise to a set of new goals that are challenging and motivating and work out a plan together of how to achieve those goals.
Acknowledge achievements	▪ When a member of your team demonstrates exemplary behaviour, acknowledge them individually and in front of the team. Allow team members the opportunity to acknowledge their teammates' positive contributions. When you help people feel good about themselves, improved performance will follow.
Bond your team	▪ Positive coaching requires that you build 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. ▪ Consider activities that will help your team 'gel'. As your team members learn to trust each other, they will support each other to accomplish team goals. All team members should be encouraged and supported to have active input into planning, decision-making and operational aspects of the team activities.

Supervision support

Throughout each operational period, you should take steps to regularly supervise each team member, making sure they are working effectively and meeting team objectives.

The level of support that you can offer your team members will vary, depending on their needs, preferences, performance and areas they are finding most challenging.

Providing supervisory support is key to ensuring team members are working safely and productively. It also enables managers to gain a personal understanding of team members' skill gaps, through a process of direct observation.

Supervision involves:
▪ Consistently observing the performance and outputs of team members ▪ Measuring and testing outcomes during and after the completion of tasks ▪ Conducting physical site/job inspections and observing tasks completed or in progress ▪ Making yourself available at the ground level to provide input into activities and correct issues as they occur ▪ Monitoring the health and safety of workers and other people who come into contact with the job site ▪ Providing relevant instructions to team members.

Provide education, training and development opportunities

Team members need to constantly develop new skills and knowledge and refine existing competencies in order to support the team performance plan.

Learning and development are part of the continuous improvement cycle and team members should be consulted about their needs on a regular basis so that relevant support is provided. Regular monitoring and reviewing of performance helps to identify skill and knowledge gaps that may affect performance. You can then determine education, training and development requirements that enable individuals and teams to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. You should also be familiar with your organisation's business plan, in particular the organisation's goals and objectives, to see where new skills are needed.

In some situations, you may be required to determine staff needs for a specific task or project. In others, you will need to identify the various skills needed for the team to operate as an effective unit.

Formal and informal learning opportunities

To learn new skills, gain new knowledge or enhance existing skills and knowledge, people can undertake formal or informal education, training and development within their workplace or attend external courses, conferences or information sessions.

Professional education usually refers to formal, accredited programs such as degrees or certificate courses. Training is the way in which specific job skills and knowledge are taught and ranges from formal, structured courses to coaching, mentoring and informal discussions. Development is about redefining and extending existing skills and knowledge by ensuring the latest practices are followed, work practices are improved or opportunities are given for advancement.

Example

Team effectiveness in action

Kids United Pty. Ltd. is a toy manufacturing company that exports toys to overseas markets. In connection with its continuous improvement initiatives, senior management has established a process quality improvement team for the manufacturing division. The team includes members of the sales, marketing, production and logistics teams, and is facilitated by a production floor manager.

The production manager clarifies the purpose, desired outcomes and time lines of the team's project with senior management and develops a plan to discuss with the individual department's team members. The discussions are in the form of face-to-face meetings with each member prior to gathering the whole team together. This approach allows the facilitator time to distinguish individual strengths and weaknesses and to align roles with each team member's abilities.

By the time the group meets, each team member is familiar with the purpose and role of the team and is in a position to discuss their individual roles. At the first meeting, the production manager outlines each role and gives each team member the opportunity to contribute to their performance plan. Doing this in a group environment allows each member to recognise how their roles overlap and integrate with others in the team.

The first tasks are scheduled and milestones are established, including formal reports to be presented at each fortnightly meeting. With specific and measurable goals in place, the team members recognise their individual responsibilities and become accountable for their portion of the project. Members who fall behind, or don't meet their obligations, are influenced by the production manager and their fellow team members. This pressure to remain accountable and remain outcome-focused produces very positive results for the company's production quality.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

List three strategies that could be used to support the performance of team members.

Question 2

How can coaching be used to help individuals achieve the operational goals? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ To build capability in workers
- ◯ To punish behaviours seen by the supervisor as negatively affecting the business
- ◯ To improve areas of under-performance
- ◯ To provide feedback that is personal and emotive in nature
- ◯ To inspire and motivate
- ◯ To reinforce excellence in performance

Question 3

List three ways in which you can provide formal and informal training to team members to ensure they meet the expected outcomes.

Summary

- Team effectiveness increases when the leader sets out clear goals and responsibilities for the team that support organisational strategic plans and objectives.
- The team purpose should be established to help people understand the 'why' behind the 'what'.
- One of the most effective ways of managing individual and team performance is by developing performance plans.
- Consult with team members and other stakeholders to set out the requirements for the team performance plan.
- The performance planning process starts with stating expectations, determining milestones, agreeing on terms, having regular accountability, establishing outcomes, results and consequences and then making sure the team member and team leader agree on the plan.
- Team leaders should ensure that team members progress towards their goals by establishing and following performance plans, and by providing opportunities for training, education and development, as well as 'positive coaching'.
- Once the performance objectives have been established, you need to establish Key Results Areas (KRAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Leaders must support their team members to ensure they meet the expected outcomes by providing ongoing coaching, supervision and training.

Learning Checkpoint 1

Establish a team performance plan

Part A

1. List five items that should be included in a team performance plan.

2. Draw a line to match up each of the following terms about work performance plans to its correct description.

» Team objectives	» A statement that describes the reason that the team exists and what it needs to achieve at a higher level
» Team KPIs	» The position requirements, including key tasks and duties that need to be performed by team members
» Team purpose	» Quantitative and qualitative performance measures that are used in the performance monitoring process
» Team roles and responsibilities	» A clear and measurable outcome that sets a clear direction for the work team to be cohesive and productive

3. What is the difference between qualitative and quantitative performance measures? In your answer, provide examples for each.

4. List four training strategies you can use to support your work team to meet expected performance outcomes, including individual, task and team support. Identify areas in which you can improve, and then develop a plan to increase your effectiveness as a team leader.

Part B

Read the case study and then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Sharon works as a team leader for a medium-sized contact centre. The organisation employs five teams with approximately 10 sales consultants in each team.

The centre's primary function is to generate revenue for a number of selected charities. Sharon manages the workloads for one sales team, consisting of eught sales consultants. Her team is required to call potential customers, asking for donations for a number of selected charities, and respond to inbound enquires about the charities that they support. She reports directly to the contact centre manager, Patricia. The organisation also employs an operations manager, who oversees the systems, marketing and day-to-day productivity of the centre.

Every month, Sharon develops a detailed performance plan for her team. The plan includes the KRAs and KPIs, which are developed at a team level as well as individual team member level. The plan also includes the key actions needed to achieve the KPIs, resource requirements and risk management for the upcoming month.

1. Write a clear purpose statement for the team.

2. When developing team KPIs, what must Sharon consider?

3. Set three objectives Sharon might establish with her team as part of the performance plan.

4. How does effective consultation with her team members help Sharon when setting out the team's roles and responsibilities? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Contributes to a greater level of personal contribution from staff
- ◯ Provides Sharon with an opportunity to show off her wealth of knowledge
- ◯ Encourages accountability in the workplace
- ◯ Allows for team members to develop their understanding of the team objectives
- ◯ Provides opportunities to gather information to assist in assigning work roles and responsibilities
- ◯ Allows Sharon to take full credit for achieving operational goals

Topic 2 | Develop and facilitate team cohesion

2A Develop strategies to foster team member input

2B Develop or modify policies and procedures to promote accountability

2C Provide feedback to team members

2D Develop processes to identify and address issues

2A Develop strategies to foster team member input

Effective teamwork involves all members contributing to planning and decision-making in relation to the organisation's operations.

Many managers embrace collaboration and consultation and use these processes as part of their planning and decision-making processes.

Encouraging team members to participate in the planning, decision-making and operational aspects of the work team (to their level of responsibility) is a great way to enhance team cohesion.

Consultation processes

Consultation processes ensure that employees are given the opportunity to have input into issues relating to their role.

Consultation processes must be developed and implemented to ensure that work colleagues have the opportunity to contribute to issues related to their work role. These processes include planning, decision-making and other operational aspects such as resource usage and improvements to operations.

With the changing nature of information in business today, effective leaders place as much value on receiving information as conveying it. They need to be good listeners and encourage those around them to contribute to how their role is defined and performed.

Develop consultation processes

Developing consultation processes helps to ensure that all parties are clear about the means and methods by which consultation will occur.

No two workplaces are the same and the consultation processes that are appropriate for one organisation may not suit another. Processes for communication and consultation should always be relevant to the nature and needs of your particular organisation.

Team meetings	▪ Regular team meets can be used to discuss broad team issues, collaborate as a group and provide a forum for employees to raise issues and provide updates on their work tasks. ▪ Team meetings are an ideal platform for encouraging employees to make contributions and for you as a leader to reward and acknowledge the collaborative and consultative behaviours you are trying to develop in your team.
One-on-one discussions	▪ Ranging from formal discussions (such as performance appraisals) to informal, incidental discussions, one-on-one discussions are an important part of the consultation processes. ▪ This approach can be particularly valuable with new or less confident employees who may not yet feel comfortable contributing their views in a more open forum.
Email/notices /written communication	▪ In some instances, consultation may require written communication. ▪ This includes instances where employees are in remote locations, where input is to be quantified and formally reviewed, or where consultation is a legislative requirement, such as with workplace health and safety.
Health and safety committees	▪ Consultation with employees on workplace health and safety is a legislative requirement. ▪ Most workplaces have a health and safety committee and their meetings provide the opportunity for employees, or their nominated representative, to provide input into how safety can be promoted and protected in the workplace. ▪ Written outcomes from these meetings, including details of how hazards and risks are to be managed, must be shared with all employees.

Implementing consultative communication processes takes advantage of what is often an under-used resource in an organisation: its people. Effective team leaders recognise when team members have meaningful contributions to share in the way of experience or skills that other team members, including the team leader, may not have.

The benefits of a consultative team culture are not just limited to the additional insights and ideas generated by a group of individuals working together. As with collaboration processes, when you encourage your team to contribute to organisational decision-making, they will encounter greater job satisfaction and a heightened interest in and commitment to their job.

Encourage input relating to role

Employees should be encouraged to make contributions and suggestions regarding factors affecting their work role, including planning, key decisions and other operational aspects of their role.

Employees are often best positioned to recognise issues and factors that affect the performance of their role. Leaders need to actively encourage their staff to put forward new ideas, provide comment, show initiative and raise any concerns about work-related issues. The nature of work related issues vary according to your industry, role, department and working environment. Typical examples are shown below.

Issues relating to work role may include:
▪ Too much or not enough work ▪ Requests relating to work hours, rosters, leave, work arrangements, remote working etc. ▪ Environmental factors such as office space, furniture, heating, noise levels ▪ Training needs ▪ Workplace health and safety ▪ Work task performance; for example, different ways to perform tasks ▪ Equipment needs

Support employee contributions

Employees who have input into planning and decision-making should always be acknowledged for their contribution.

Employees' contributions should always be respected, responded to and given due regard. Demonstrating that you value their experience and contributions reinforces and encourages future suggestions. You should foster an atmosphere that is comfortable and non-threatening; an atmosphere in which employees shares ideas, tips, work strategies and information.

Supporting employees to contribute
▪ Listening to and respecting their contribution and encouraging other employees to do likewise ▪ Including making proactive suggestions as a performance indicator for review when conducting performance appraisals ▪ Evaluating and exploring the feasibility of their suggestion/s ▪ Asking follow-up questions to demonstrate that you are interested in their views ▪ Publicly acknowledging their contribution; for example, in newsletters or at meetings

Planning and decision-making processes

An effective manager includes everyone in the planning and decision-making process to encourage fuller understanding of the group's goals, to increase engagement and to support new initiatives and changes.

There are many different models, techniques and approaches to group planning and decision-making. Each technique is valid and relies on different factors, which are outlined below.

Key factors impacting on planning and decision-making processes
▪ The type of decision that needs to be made ▪ The time and resources that are available ▪ The environment that the team wants to create, ▪ The nature of the task that is being worked on ▪ The size of the group of team ▪ The physical location of the group or team

Primarily, there are two ways to make decisions as teams: consensus or voting. These are explained below.

Consensus

Consensus occurs when a team decision is agreed to by all participants. Consensus results after the team expresses the problem and compromises are made. Consensus does not mean unanimous agreement. Everyone may not agree on every detail, but members do believe the decision to be a sound one that they are willing to support. The main benefits of consensus decision-making are that everyone involved is able to express their viewpoint and that the decision will most likely be the best one. In addition, because the decision was arrived at by consensus, its implementation is more likely to be supported by the entire team.

The challenge of consensus decision-making is that it takes time. If no-one can leave the room until a consensus is reached, some people may be tempted to forego their true opinions for the sake of time, thereby compromising the group arriving at an optimum solution.

Voting

Voting adopts the classic democratic approach in which the majority rules. The main benefit of voting is that it is quick and decisive. The challenge of using voting is that it creates 'winners' and 'losers'. The 'losers' of the vote may not support the implementation of the decision and may even resort to adopting a 'sabotage' mentality to prove that the decision was wrong. When a team chooses a voting decision-making method, the team must be clear as to how many votes becomes a majority; for example, is the definition of 'majority': half, two-thirds or three-quarters of the team?

Strategies for gaining consensus

A consensus decision results from full input of all team members.

Everyone in the group must be given a chance to be heard and must feel comfortable speaking. True consensus is achieved by teams working together to arrive at decisions that everyone believes are feasible. Ensure that you identify all key stakeholders and invite them to participate.

Here are some strategies for consensus planning and decision-making.

Strategies for reaching consensus	
Clarify the issue	Share relevant information and make sure that everyone fully understands the issue or problem.
Explore the issue and discuss alternative solutions	▪ Gather initial ideas and reactions; identify all the issues and explore all stakeholders' understandings. ▪ Collect alternative solutions and discuss the pros and cons of each. ▪ Narrow down the alternatives: eliminate some, short-list others.
Look for developing ideas and common agreements	Try to identify proposals that consolidate the best elements of the ideas presented and look for a solution that satisfies stakeholders' main concerns.
Clarify and amend the chosen proposal	Ensure that all remaining concerns are voiced and considered. Look for possible amendments that make the idea more acceptable.
Check for and reach agreement on the outcome	Ask if anyone disagrees. During the final stages it may be difficult to get everyone to agree. Explain that consenting to a plan doesn't always mean it's a person's first choice. If agreement is not reached you may need to return to the third strategy above (develop a common agreement).
Implement	Develop an action plan for the tasks and nominate: who, when and how they will be achieved. Set deadlines for each task.

Other strategies for fostering team input

Team leaders can foster team consultation in a variety of ways. Some key strategies are described below.

Develop a team charter	A team charter requires input from all team members to be effective. It clarifies the purpose, goals, roles and responsibilities of its team members. All members sign the charter verifying their commitment to it.
Use electronic communication to facilitate team input	Email and electronic discussion boards are a useful means of gathering ideas and facilitating team input. Newsletters and briefings can also be used to give and receive information and feedback.
Schedule planning meetings	Regular planning meetings provide team members with an opportunity to express ideas and concerns. It also allows for reflective thinking where mistakes from the past are discussed and ideas for improvements are incorporated into future planning.
Establish mentoring and buddy systems	Mentoring and buddying systems improve team member relations and promote one-on-one discussion. In these situations, team members are more likely to offer suggestions with little fear of being criticised.
Use training and development activities	By training your team members, you extend their knowledge and capabilities and increase their opportunities to contribute to the team's efforts.

Example

One way of fostering team consultation

In a professional practice in outer Melbourne, the firm's partners and senior management meet on a regular basis to facilitate a continuous improvement policy. Subcommittees are formed to ensure all members of the meeting have the opportunity to provide input and are involved in the operational implementation of any decisions made at the meeting. Each member of the team has responsibility and accountability for certain aspects of the organisation's operation. This approach ensures that any decisions involving that particular section of the operation will fall under that partner's (or senior manager's) responsibility.

Decision-making is almost exclusively by consensus unless there is a strong disagreement, at which time the managing partner will call for a vote. While there is potential for political manoeuvring to derail the democratic approach to continuous improvement, the firm's charter strictly forbids alliances from influencing decisions made in the best interests of the firm. It stipulates that decisions must be made to improve the reputation and the financial and sustainable dimension of the business.

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Which of the following statements describe the way team members can be encouraged to be involved in planning, making decisions and operational aspects of the team? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Inclusive decision-making processes
- ◯ Input into team direction, such as through development of a charter
- ◯ Using methods of consultation
- ◯ Performance monitoring processes
- ◯ Training
- Implementing policies and procedures

Question 2

Outline one strategy you could use to improve consensus decision-making in your team.

2B Develop or modify policies and procedures to promote accountability

All members of a team must feel a sense of personal accountability for the outcome of the team's efforts.

Accountability occurs when a team member accepts the responsibility for achieving their performance requirements, and willingly adjusts their performance as required to meet expectations.

Accountabilities may include responsibilities as defined in position descriptions, 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 both the team leader and member to monitor and adjust performance to meet the agreed expectations.

Establish team ground rules

Team ground rules are a set of standards that address how individuals treat each other, communicate, participate, cooperate, support each other, and coordinate joint activities.

Team ground rules are a great way to establish accountability, improve team cohesion and ensure all team members are working toward a common goal. They can be used to guide team communication, processes, behaviour, levels of interaction, reporting lines and more.

Team leaders should expect a teething period when ground rules are tested and debated by team members. Once fully endorsed by the team members, these rules can be enforced through reminders and team process checks. They should be added to and revised as needed.

Effective ground rules must be:

- achieved through consultation with the team
- agreed to by all team members
- followed by all team members
- monitored for equity and consistency and changed if required by team agreement.

Policies

Policies create expectations for employees and set out the organisation's commitment relating to a topic of business interest.

Policies are implemented to ensure that all employees and employers know how to follow an organisation's way of completing tasks.

Job roles and responsibilities must comply with the relevant policies to ensure accountability, compliance, consistency and quality.

The reasons why policies should be followed are explained below.

Constraints

Every task has constraints surrounding it and policies and procedures provide a framework for team members to operate effectively within these constraints.

Responsibilities

Policies and procedures enable managers and team members to clearly understand their responsibilities and take responsibility for their own work.

Accountability

Policies and procedures set out clear reporting structures and clarify the key accountabilities of team members.

Improper action

Policies and procedures enable managers to decide whether an employee's improper action or decision was due to poor judgment or to an infringement of the rules.

Individual freedom

Policies and procedures provide individuals the freedom to make decisions in the execution of their duties within defined boundaries and reduce the need for over-control (micro-management) by managers.

Collaboration

Collaboration improves when team procedures are clearly defined and understood, and when individuals feel they can do a significant portion of their work independently. Without such clarity, team members are likely to waste too much energy negotiating roles, rather than focusing on the task.

Standard operating procedures

Procedures are the steps that need to be followed to complete a task to the right standards, as explained in the designated policy.

Most large organisations employ the use of standard operating procedures (SOPs) across many operational facets of the business. These set out the prescribed method that must be followed for specific operations. There are SOPs that address legal requirements; for example, in relation to safety at work, privacy issues, discrimination laws and environmental protection.

A SOP is a procedural document that can be a contractually binding component of a job role or team activity. Consistency requires discipline and the reliance on contractual obligations is one effective method of achieving discipline.

Consult with specialists within your organisation (such as payroll, accounts and human resources advisers) regarding any organisational standard operating procedures, legislation or guidelines that need to be followed by team members.

Develop or modify policies and procedures

Policies and procedures are tools to assist team members to take responsibility for their own work and actively help others to achieve team objectives.

A policy is a formal internal document that sets out the commitment, objectives, expectations and standards that need to be achieved in a given topic. The aim of a policy is to explain a systematic approach to team performance by establishing the broad goals and the process for achieving them. Procedures are the steps that outline how to achieve the commitments and expectations set out in the policy statement.

There is no single structure for a team policy or procedure. Each document must accurately reflect the unique needs and operations of the business. In many cases, an acceptable format may be a one paragraph statement of intent, followed by the required procedures.

A variety of policy and procedures documents are available online. You can view them to gain an understanding of the information, structure and language style required. You should always apply caution when researching online and focus predominately on the websites of government or educational institutions.

Each policy should accurately reflect the unique needs and operations of the organisation and:
▪ be developed in consultation with team members ▪ be appropriate to the nature of the team and to the key areas of responsibility ▪ include a commitment to achieving organisational goals ▪ include a commitment to comply with organisational policies and legislative requirements ▪ be documented, implemented and communicated to all team members ▪ be available to all stakeholders, such as upper management ▪ be reviewed periodically so it remains relevant.

It is important to allow team members to be involved in the development or modification of team policies and procedures, especially where tasks and roles are delegated. They will be more willing to accept responsibility if they feel they had a say and contributed to the team planning process.

Guidelines for writing policy and procedures

Take your time, consult with workers and other SMEs, and do your research to ensure your policies and procedures accurately reflect the needs of the business.

Many organisations use existing online versions and templates of policies, adapting the wording and making minor amendments or modifications to suit their workplace. This may be acceptable as a starting point; however, it does not mean that the policy will be relevant or compliant with the legislative and regulatory requirements specific to their business.

Another common mistake when writing a policy relates to legislation. It is not advisable to use legal jargon or copy word for word legislative provisions from acts and regulations.

Each policy should represent the unique conditions and requirements of the individual workplace and provide relevant information to its workers and managers; for example, on rules and standards that must be adhered to.

An effective policy will take the legislative and regulatory provisions from the law and contextualise it into everyday workplace terms that workers and stakeholders can understand.

Key guidelines for writing effective business policies and procedures
▪ Write the policy in plain English and consider the language and literacy levels of your audience. ▪ Be straight to the point and use clear and concise language. ▪ Avoid legal jargon, complex language and long paragraphs. ▪ Aim to communicate as simply and effectively as possible, as appropriate for the intended audience. ▪ Do not attempt to cover every possible interpretation and issue of the policy, and do not try to accommodate all exceptions, which can complicate its understanding. ▪ If an action is mandatory, use the word 'must'. If the action is recommended, use 'recommended'. ▪ Use the present tense and active voice where possible. ▪ Avoid gender-specific pronouns: for example, use 'they' instead of 'he or she'. ▪ Where acronyms are considered helpful, give the full term/title before using the acronym: for example, General Manager (GM).

Example

Customer service policy

BizOps Enterprises customer service policy

Our aim

The BizOps Enterprises customer service policy applies to all employees – whether they are full time, part time, casual, permanent or temporary.

BizOps aims to provide the highest level of service to its customers. As such, our staff should always demonstrate:

- accuracy and efficiency when providing products and services
- professional courtesy in all dealings with customers (both internal and external)
- accountability for their actions and the services they provide
- integrity
- a high level of product and service knowledge
- effective communication skills.

Commitment to customer service

During their induction period, BizOps staff are trained in communication skills and in providing effective customer service.

Dealing with customer complaints

Complaints made by BizOps customers must be handled in accordance with the customer complaints policy and procedure.

Accountabilities

All staff are expected to:

- provide high-quality customer service
- provide customers with the same level of service, regardless of whether they are internal and external customers
- show courtesy to customers in all situations
- look for ways to enhance the customer service experience
- identify and address poor customer service
- report poor customer service to their supervisor, team leader or manager.

Managers must:

- act if poor customer service is identified by customers or staff
- review customer service procedures, where appropriate
- document and report on this process.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

Which of the following elements need to be considered when developing or modifying a policy or a procedure document? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Made available to all stakeholders such as upper management
- ◯ Be appropriate to the nature of the team and to the key areas of responsibility
- ◯ Developed without consultation from team members
- ◯ A commitment to comply with organisational policies and legislative requirements
- ◯ Be documented, implemented and communicated to all team members

Question 2

Explain the process you would use to develop a policy or a procedure document for a work team.

2C Provide feedback to team members

An essential element of any performance management process is the provision of quality feedback to those being appraised.

Effective performance management involves the provision of regular and useful feedback. You want your staff to understand that feedback is a technique you will employ frequently. They must be comfortable receiving it and expect it as a matter of course.

When your employees anticipate feedback as the rule, and not the exception, they are less likely to be intimidated by it and more likely to see it as a beneficial summary of exactly how they are performing.

Benefits of feedback

Feedback gives the employee the opportunity to identify exactly how they are performing and make any necessary improvements.

Feedback is a crucial part of a performance management system. It allows individuals and teams to reflect on their performance, understand their weaknesses or deficiencies and, where perceptions are involved, clarify discrepancies or points of misunderstanding.

Feedback helps to improve workplace communication and allows employees to know what they do well, and what areas are in need of improvement.

Benefits of feedback
▪ Helps improve job performance while promoting professional and personal development ▪ Improves employee morale and reduces confusion regarding expectations and current performance ▪ Reinforces good behaviour ▪ Maintains goal-directed behaviours ▪ Influences future performance goals and increases desire to achieve even higher goals ▪ Creates awareness of poor performance or inappropriate behaviour

Types of feedback

Successful managers know how to use appropriate tools and techniques to provide structured, formal feedback to help their team achieve and maintain peak performance within the organisation.

There are several types of feedback tools and techniques that can be delivered regularly to team members. Each technique has its own time and place, depending on the nature of the information being discussed, the experience of the team member and the relationship between the manager and the team member.

Positive feedback

- This type of feedback reinforces good behaviour by describing how and why certain actions have resulted in a positive outcome.
- Often, people don't know why they have done a good job. While a 'pat on the back' is appreciated, it does not highlight the specific area of activity that should be reinforced. Positive feedback provides this information.
- For example, 'That last report to the client on their advertising yield was excellent. You presented the data well and they've told us that it was easy to read and very thorough! Well done.'

Constructive feedback

- This type of feedback methodically builds on experience that the employee has obtained through their work practices. This is done by providing concrete steps for future improvement that relate to behaviours or skills they have demonstrated up to that point.
- It is not always positive, but positive feedback may be used to capture the attention of the employee prior to providing constructive directions.
- For example, 'You got all the data in there, but it wasn't really readable. Maybe next time, read it out aloud to yourself and see how it sounds.'

Negative feedback

- Despite the name, negative feedback can be a very positive tool. Negative feedback refers to the content of the feedback and not the means by which it is given.
- If an employee fails to meet a KPI (key performance indicator), then providing feedback to that effect is negative.
- Negative feedback should always be counteracted by constructive and positive feedback to maintain personal self-worth, value and self-esteem.
- For example, 'The report was not good, and you'd left some of the most important data out. It's unlike you to do that, you are usually so thorough!'

Destructive feedback

- This type of feedback aims to punish the behaviours seen by the supervisor as negatively affecting the business or the workplace. It is easy for this type of feedback to become personal and emotive.
- Destructive feedback reduces the efficacy, motivation and self-esteem of employees.
- For example, 'That is the worst effort I've seen in a long time. Do you really think you are ever going to get anywhere in this firm producing rubbish like that?'

Formal and informal feedback

Formal feedback is scheduled and structured, whereas informal feedback is given in the moment when a manager identifies an opportunity.

Formal performance reviews with team members are not a substitute for good communication within the workplace or for timely informal feedback. Team members who consistently perform above standards should not have to wait months to know that their work is appreciated. Managers and team leaders should not assume that, because certain behaviours are obvious to them, they are equally obvious to the team. Informal, daily feedback needs to remain consistent with the principles above.

Sometime it is possible that the feedback is so routine or informal that the team member misses the message or doesn't even realise that feedback has taken place. When giving informal feedback (both positive and constructive criticism), it is useful to reinforce this with a personal email or memo.

Formal feedback

- Feedback that is given to employees through an organisational process that all employees must participate in
- Examples include annual reviews, performance checklists, written warnings and group appraisals

Informal feedback

- Feedback that is provided to employees in everyday work situations
- This feedback is often given verbally, during or just after tasks have been completed and usually comes in the form of conversations

Provide regular feedback

Regular feedback means giving workers ongoing information and advice about specific tasks, outcomes, decisions, issues or behaviours.

Like any relationship, feedback is critical to encourage, value and reward team members' efforts and contributions. A leader is responsible for providing regular constructive feedback to team members regarding their progress towards achieving the expectations and goals.

In a workplace there is usually ample opportunity to provide feedback to staff. This feedback may take on a variety of forms.

Water-cooler discussions

'Water-cooler' discussions are informal discussions held in a neutral area of the workplace. It may be in the lunch room, or outside the office or work environment. The aim of this approach is to reduce any feelings of intimidation and reduce the perception of authority. It is a means of freeing discussion from specific tasks and allows generalised conversation that raises overarching issues.

Workstation coaching

This refers to any one-on-one coaching provided by the supervisor to the staff member in their place of work. Examples include the sales floor of a department store, a construction site, an office or a laboratory. This feedback aims to improve knowledge and skills in a specific area of the employee's performance where formal training or evaluation is not deemed appropriate.

Informal discussions

When poor performance is identified in an employee, an appropriate action to take is an informal discussion with them. In some instances, the poor performance may be due to circumstances outside the work environment and over which the person has no control. A discussion may involve:

- arranging a private and quiet location where no interruptions will occur
- checking information and determining the consequences relating to the poor performance or non-performance of the standards to be discussed
- ensuring documentation sticks to facts and avoids emotive statements or generalisations
- documenting possible solutions for improving the employee's performance.

Staff meetings

Ad hoc workplace meetings can be held to discuss issues as they arise. These could be safety issues or other performance-based changes where feedback is required.

Provide constructive feedback

Employees must receive regular constructive feedback if they are to maintain awareness and motivation in their work.

The technique of providing constructive feedback to foster improvement is a valuable management skill.

There may also be times when you have to give negative feedback to team members. While positive recognition should always be done publicly, any negative feedback or correction should always be done in private, so as to not embarrass the person.

Before giving feedback about poor performance or behaviours, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why are you assessing this staff member?
- On what functions, skills, behaviours, or activities is this feedback based?
- On what standards is this assessment based?
- What are the facts of the situation?
- What do you plan to do with the results of your feedback?

If you can answer all these questions satisfactorily, you can be sure that the need to provide feedback is appropriate in the situation, and you are doing it for all the right reasons.

Steps to providing quality feedback
1. Remove emotion before providing feedback.
2. Begin with positive feedback regarding areas of performance in which the individual has shown improvement or is meeting the standards.
3. State the areas of performance where the individual has not met the agreed standards.
4. Ask if there are any reasons for the individual's lower performance and actively listen to the response.
5. Ask the individual for suggested methods of meeting standards in the future.
6. Negotiate approaches for improvement over the coming period.
7. Agree to and set the new standards.
8. End with a positive comment. This may be congratulating the employee on their useful suggestions or highlighting other areas of outstanding performance.

Example

Giving feedback on a job well done

Harry and his manager, Leanne are having a conversation about how well they have been doing on the development of a new customer service questionnaire. As well as providing feedback on a few points that Harry was unsure about, Leanne congratulates him on his application and dedication to the task. She gives a few specific examples of where he has done particularly well. This shows Harry that Leanne has thought about the feedback and his performance on the task.

Leanne also asks for feedback from Harry as to how she could have supported him better when working on this project. She asks for feedback on her communication style and what Harry would like to see done differently the next time they work together.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

Which of the following are appropriate feedback methods? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Performance appraisals
- ◯ Verbal feedback given as part of another discussion
- ◯ Team meeting update
- ◯ Written performance warning
- ◯ Thank you letter from senior management

Question 2

Which of the following statements represent benefits of providing feedback to members? Tick all that apply.

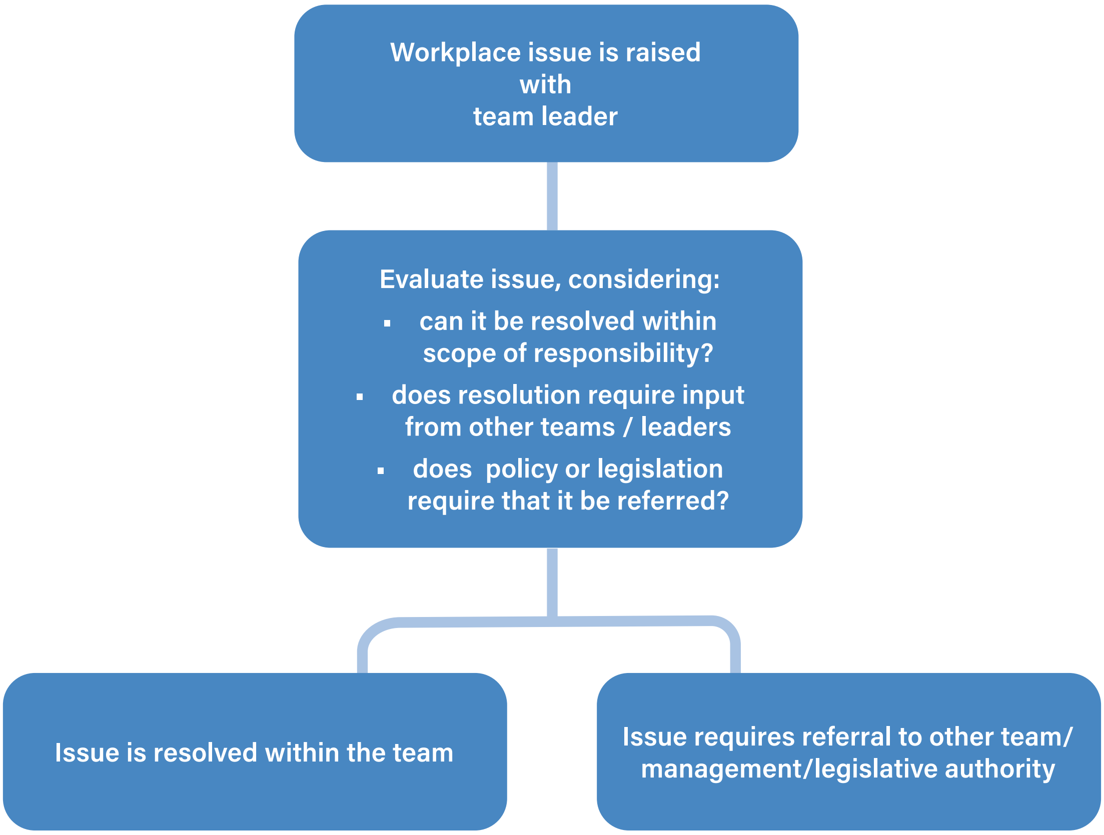
- ◯ Team members can see their input has been considered
- ◯ Team members can adjust their practices accordingly
- ◯ Team members can see when their suggestions are not feasible
- ◯ Team members won't make further suggestions
- ◯ Team member engagement and contribution to further consultations

2D Develop processes to identify and address issues

Managers must develop and implement specific processes to ensure that any issues raised by the team are resolved promptly.

As a leader, it is important that you resolve issues quickly to minimise the impact on safety, productivity and customer satisfaction. Facilitate problem-solving in the development of processes to address commonly experienced problems because this will build self-sufficiency in staff and free up your time.

Prompt resolution of problems requires that you recognise and act on these situations as soon as they occur.



Develop processes to resolve problems

Developing processes that address commonly experienced problems helps to provide clarity and proactivity in your team members and can be a timesaver for you as a manager.

As a leader it is good practice to promote clarity and proactivity in your team. This can be achieved by developing processes to address commonly experienced problems. Such processes will allow your team to be clear on the steps to take (should a specific issue arise) without having to seek your input (unless the specific situation requires it). Do not wait for problems to occur that present 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.

Processes to encourage employees to resolve problems should include:

- details of who to ask for help, such as specialists – internal or external to your organisation
- contingency plan and examples of other situations that could impact the resolution of a problem –such as a team member going on leave or calling in sick
- reward and recognition for using initiative.

If you have problems you think your team members could help you with, ask them for assistance. You could include a regular five-minute session during team meetings where you ask if any problems have occurred or are anticipated, problems that might impede progress.

An open communications policy is another valuable process for resolving problems. If team members want to raise issues with you in a private setting, as opposed to a public meeting, they should feel able to speak freely with you; for example, about problems involving other staff members or sensitive issues.

Tips for resolving problems

- Talk to your colleagues or other managers who may have experienced a similar problem to see if they have useful advice.
- Do some research or read books about problem-solving, seeking information on tested theories or frameworks you could apply to your workplace.
- If your problem is deciding between options, list the pros and cons of each. This can help clarify thoughts and identify options to deliver the greatest benefit.

Develop conflict management processes

Conflict is an inevitable part of working life. Developing strategies to manage conflict fairly, thoroughly and in line with organisational requirements helps to promote an acceptable outcome for all parties.

A manager should establish processes and systems to ensure that conflict is identified and managed constructively in accordance with the organisation's policies and procedures.

Most performance problems result from strained relationships between individuals, not from deficits in employees' skills or motivation. Whether the problem is a dispute between team members or departments, misunderstandings with customers or between you and a colleague, remember that conflict is an everyday part of working life. In fact, you should be concerned if there is never conflict or disagreement – it could mean that your team is apathetic or uncommitted.

Disharmony can eventually lead to positive change by forcing the resolution of a difficult situation. Often, problems fester because no-one knows how to define them or what to do about them. Inaction ultimately undermines the smooth functioning of the organisation and the quality of employees' work lives.

Principles when managing conflict

As a leader you should be aware of informal methods and skills to be employed when managing conflict as well as formal dispute resolution processes.

Whether you're acting as an intermediary between disagreeing colleagues or involved in conflict yourself, employing interpersonal skills and communication methods can be invaluable in diffusing aggression and resolving conflict.

Principles to apply when handling conflict
• Arrange a time for the relevant parties to meet to discuss the situation. • Discuss privacy and confidentiality requirements. • Explain the need for commitment and cooperation between team members in order to achieve common goals. • Provide opportunities for resolution, such as brainstorming potential solutions. • Explain the organisation's processes if a resolution cannot be achieved.

If you are involved in conflict, you should seek all the relevant parties' points of view and be willing to compromise and negotiate a resolution. In some cases, not everyone will be happy with the outcome. Learning to be flexible and cooperative does not mean that you have to give in. It implies you are willing to listen with an open mind and accept alternative ways of doing things, while being prepared to adapt and work as part of a team.

Strategies for handling conflict

When handling conflict, it is natural for people to become emotional. Using strategies that seek to de-escalate the emotional response can lead to quicker and more appropriate resolution.

During a conflict situation it is only natural that emotions run high. Anger and distress rarely solve problems or lead to objective thinking. Actions taken in the heat of the moment often lead to a situation becoming worse, not better. Whether you're directly involved yourself or helping others through a situation, often taking a break from discussions, getting fresh air or focusing on other tasks for a while can help. Other strategies are outlined below.

Use a deferral technique

If you or someone else is considering putting feelings in writing, use a deferral technique: write down what you want to say but do not send it immediately; put a draft aside until you're feeling calm and then reconsider your words to decide whether you need to send it at all.

Discuss misunderstandings

If there is an obvious problem, draw attention to it and talk about how it can be resolved. Often the parties will be relieved that the matter has been brought out into the open. Of course, it isn't appropriate to react every time you see the slightest sign of friction.

Acknowledge the other party

If you are in conflict with another party, let the other party know they're being heard. Often this is all that is needed to defuse the situation. Showing open-mindedness demonstrates that you will treat their concerns fairly. Listen actively and ask critical questions to explore the situation. Rather than trying to solve the disagreement yourself, ask 'What do you think needs to be changed?' or 'How can we resolve this?'. While open questions are often effective, avoid asking why. Asking vague questions does not help identify the source of the problem and 'why' questions often make people defensive.

Be aware of certain behaviours

Be aware of the difference between passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour. You could arrange for you and your team to have some training in conflict management that focuses on the benefits of assertive, rather than aggressive or passive, approaches to workplace problems and conflicts. Assertiveness is a valuable skill to acquire. Through training and awareness, everyone can learn to use assertive techniques in their workplace and in their everyday lives.

Conflict resolution procedures

Maintaining a positive attitude is essential when handling conflict. Following the steps of a conflict management process can help ensure discussions stay on track and remain constructive.

The secret to effective conflict management is to handle the situation in a constructive way so it is resolved as positively and quickly as possible and does not become unmanageable. Sometimes a minor problem can escalate into a major crisis if it is not tackled promptly. Steps for handling conflict are outlined below.

Procedures for handling conflict may include:

1. Discuss concerns with each party individually, allowing them to speak freely and listen without judgment.
2. Seek input from relevant impartial observers; for example, managers.
3. Arrange a time for a mediated discussion between each party, that addresses:
   - Ensuring each party is aware of the need to observe privacy and confidentiality
   - Explaining the need for commitment and cooperation between team members in order to achieve common goals
   - Providing opportunities for resolution such as brainstorming potential solutions
   - Explaining the organisation's processes if a resolution cannot be achieved.

Dispute resolution processes

Dispute resolution processes are usually formalised in an organisation's policies and procedures and provide a framework for resolving issues where informal methods are considered inappropriate or may have failed.

Many organisations have a formal framework in place to help parties deal with issues that cannot be easily resolved. It is in everyone's interests for management to take the initiative in developing collaborative processes for dispute resolution and for all parties to be encouraged to use them – as opposed to the arduous route of relying on litigation or industrial action in every case.

It may be, however, that a dispute process requires immediate escalation. This is particularly relevant where the conflict or dispute may impact on legislative requirements; for example, discriminatory or bullying behaviour. You should refer closely to your organisation's policies and procedures or relevant personnel, such as your supervisor or HR team.

Summarise the problem	State the issue, facts, feeling and concerns. Define the problem in terms of organisational or team requirements and expected performance or behaviours and what is currently being produced by the worker.
Search for mutually acceptable solutions	Encourage ownership and a shared commitment of the solution. Ask the worker to summarise their role in implementing the solution and encourage them to explain the benefits of improving. Summarise the actions, including roles and responsibilities, give encouragement and praise and reinstate the value of following through on the agreed steps.
Evaluate the possible solutions	Discuss the possible outcomes of each solution. Consider whether they are practical, realistic and will contribute toward helping the person getting back on track within a reasonable period of time. Add your feedback using objective language in conjunction with the STAR/AR feedback model: Explain the current situation/task; the workers proposed actions; and the likely result; follow this up by providing a refined or an alternative (more appropriate) action; and its result. Avoid agreeing on solutions that are unreasonable or place unfair expectations on the worker.
Decide together	Encourage ownership and a shared commitment of the solution. Ask the worker to summarise their role in implementing the solution and encourage them to explain the benefits of improving. Summarise the actions, including roles and responsibilities, give encouragement and praise and reinstate the value of following through on the agreed steps.

Example

Resolving conflict

Jed is a category strategy manager at a major food manufacturer. He says conflicts often arise within organisations when employees are frustrated with their employment, particularly when employees feel they are being overlooked for promotion, are unhappy about the type of work they do or experience difficulties with other staff members. Their negative behaviour is a signal that something is wrong.

'The strategy I use when I have to deal with conflict of any type can be broken down into four steps. The important thing is to understand the other person's viewpoint and perspective. So I sit down with them and ask questions.

'I start by asking them what's wrong and let them vent their emotions, which can be distressing to listen to, but is important for them to do before they can move on. Then I ask questions to find out the reason for their behaviour. Getting to the source is vital before anything else can be done. People often talk in generalisations such as "Everyone ignores me", "I'm never asked to give a presentation" or "People don't respect me". So then I ask them to give me specific examples. In this way I'm guiding them to focus on the issue and not their emotions. For example, "Why do you think people have that opinion of you?"

'I then encourage them to find solutions. For example, "What can you do to improve the situation?" I encourage them to think of responses such as "I could contribute more at meetings"; "I could take on a project so I would be more visible to management"; "I could be more accepting of other people".

'I then ask them to accept or not accept the solution. They generally accept if they are the one who has suggested the solution.'

Group dynamics and team performance

Group dynamics are unconscious, psychological forces, or undercurrents, that influence behaviour and performance.

If you have responsibility for managing the performance of a team or an organisation, you need to be aware of the way in which the individuals within it interact and the effects this has on other team members and the team as a whole. This is often referred to as group dynamics.

Often people in groups adopt distinct roles and behaviours. Dynamics are created by the nature of the work, personalities within the team, their working relationships with others and the team's work environment. Group dynamics can support team performance through positive behaviours, or hinder it through negative behaviours that result in unproductive conflict, mistrust and demotivation, for example.

Teams or groups with positive dynamics trust one another, make decisions collectively, take responsibility for their individual and team performance and hold one another accountable. People's behaviours in groups with poor dynamics can disrupt work, impede decision-making and lead to poor choices.

Common behaviours that affect group dynamics

Some behaviours that commonly affect group dynamics are listed below.

Negative behaviours	Positive behaviours
Giving too much advice or instruction	Promoting teamwork and shared problem-solving
Belittling or undermining team members	Accepting and welcoming diverse opinions
Attempting to persuade (without listening); the 'hard sell'	Employing and encouraging active listening
Censoring ideas and giving precedence to only one opinion	Conveying empathy and welcoming objective assessment of each idea
Talking too much or dominating discussion	Letting others speak and gently interrupting dominators to call on other individuals to present their views
Remaining silent and impassive	Contributing whenever possible and encouraging contributions by asking questions, boosting confidence and giving credit
Displaying negativity or disinterest	Taking on more challenging and active tasks such as gathering information, taking notes or making presentations
Continually arguing against others	Encouraging positive attitudes, remaining calm, allowing everyone to contribute to discussion

Strategies to improve team dynamics

In most cases, leaders need to be proactive to alleviate potential conflicts and other issues that can impact on group dynamics.

Leaders need to demonstrate initiative by planning for the key issues that can impact on the dynamics of their team. This means being aware of the different personalities and behaviours in the team and forecasting the range of issues that might occur.

Some useful strategies for improving or maintaining good team dynamics are shown below.

Strategies for improving group dynamics
Understand the phases of group development; for example, Tuckman's stages of forming, norming, storming, performing and adjourning. Adjust your leadership style to suit the stage.
Deal with problems quickly and fairly, and provide constructive feedback.
Ensure that team roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
Keep communication channels open and clear.
Watch for signs of poor group dynamics and respond with corrective action.

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Which of the following statements are correct? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ As a manager it is your responsibility to resolve all problems that arise in your department.
- ◯ Issues of bullying or harassment should be resolved without referral to other parties.
- ◯ Effective leaders encourage their team members to seek out solutions to problems.
- ◯ Talking through a workplace problem with other leaders only confuses decision-making.

Question 2

Number each step from 1 to 4 in the order you would follow to address an issue.

- ◯ Resolve issue or refer to others
- ◯ Evaluate options for resolution
- ◯ Employee raises issue with leader
- ◯ Seek further information on nature of issue

Question 3

Which of the following statements are effective methods of addressing conflict?
Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Arranging a time for the parties to meet so you can tell them how to resolve their issue
- ◯ Advise that failing to agree will result in a formal warning
- ◯ Brainstorm potential solutions
- ◯ Explain the need for commitment and cooperation when working together

Question 4

Briefly explain how group dynamics can impact on the performance of a team.

Summary

- There are two main ways to make decisions as teams: consensus or voting. Consensus occurs when all participants agree to a team decision. Voting adopts the classic democratic approach in which the majority rules.
- Collaboration in the workplace seeks to explore new and innovative ways to perform work tasks and resolve problems. The collaborative process often brings together people across an organisation outside of a traditional organisational structure.
- Team policies and procedures are a great way to improve accountability and clarify responsibilities and expectations of performance.
- Policies create expectations for action and procedures provide the means by which the actions can be carried out. Once responsibilities have been assigned, policies and procedures provide guidance about how to carry out assigned tasks within the system.
- Giving feedback is a key responsibility of leaders. Research strongly suggests that job satisfaction, morale, and retention are closely related to the ability of a manager or supervisor to provide feedback to team members.
- The development of processes to resolve workplace issues can empower staff to make their own decisions. This can be facilitated by defining who can help when issues arise, the impact of a situation occurring and developing contingent plans for things such as staff absence.
- Conflict is an unavoidable part of working life and it is important that methods be developed to manage and resolve conflict in line with an organisation's policies and procedures. The use of effective interpersonal skills such as listening, discussing issues in a calm and non-judgmental manner and negotiating outcomes is useful in this regard.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Develop and facilitate team cohesion

Part A

1. List one pro and one con for each of the following methods that can be used to facilitate team input into planning, decision-making and operations:
   - Team meetings
   - Email
   - One to one discussions

2. Explain a process that leaders can use to encourage employees to contribute to the resolution of issues affecting their roles.

3. List three things to consider when giving feedback to team members.

4. Which of the following behaviours will produce a positive impact on group dynamics? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Accepting and welcoming diverse opinions
- ◯ Conveying empathy and welcoming objective assessment of each idea
- ◯ Remaining silent and impassive
- ◯ Taking on more challenging and active tasks
- ◯ Displaying negativity or disinterest

5. Draw a line to match each step in consensus decision-making to its correct definition.

» Clarify and amend the chosen proposal	» Share relevant information and make sure that everyone fully understands the issue or problem.
» Implement	» Gather initial ideas and reactions; identify all the issues and explore all stakeholders' understandings. Collect alternative solutions and discuss the pros and cons of each. Narrow down the alternatives: eliminate some, short list others.
» Explore the issue and discuss alternative solutions	» Try to identify proposals that consolidate the best elements of the ideas presented and look for a solution that satisfies stakeholders' main concerns.
» Check for and reach agreement on the outcome	» Ensure that all remaining concerns are voiced and considered. Look for possible amendments that make the idea more acceptable.
» Clarify the issue	» Ask if anyone disagrees. During the final stages it may be difficult to get everyone to agree. Explain that consenting to a plan doesn't always mean it's a person's first choice. If agreement is not reached you may need to return to the third strategy.
» Look for developing ideas and common agreements	» Develop an action plan for the tasks: nominate who, when and how they will be achieved. Set deadlines for each task.

Part B

Read the following case study and the answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Ethan is the team leader of the communications and marketing team in a pet food manufacturer named Pet Chow, which is based in a small country town. He moved to the town three months ago to take up the role and is slowly getting to know his team, their roles and backgrounds.

Many of the people at the company either went to school together or know each other socially. While this can make for a very friendly environment, it does sometimes mean that social issues are brought into the workplace. Two of Ethan's team, Alice and Kyra, used to be very close friends but fell out following an incident at a social event.

Alice has come to Ethan saying that Kyra is deliberately leaving her out of department communications, not passing on messages and generally trying to make her look unprofessional and unproductive.

1. Kyra advises that Alice has been bullying her. What process would Ethan need to follow to resolve this issue?

2. Write a policy statement that will help build accountability within the team and improve staff behaviours.

3. What specific procedure would Ethan need to develop or modify to ensure team members are able to resolve issues relating to conflict problems and concerns, and what steps should it contain?

Topic 3 | Facilitate teamwork

3A Encourage responsibility for team activities

3B Support the team to resolve work performance problems

3C Promote team collaboration through individual behaviour

3A Encourage responsibility for team activities

Successful teams require the commitment of all team members to take full responsibility for their behaviours and performance.

Getting your staff to take responsibility for their results can be a challenge. Gaining commitment from each team member is a process starting with the establishment of KPIs and agreeing on roles and responsibilities. Effective teams also need good communication processes, including reporting to each other, sharing knowledge and resolving issues of concern.

The performance equation

The performance equation describes the two key elements of a performing team: capacity and commitment.

When evaluating your team, you should consider the performance equation. This is a simple tool that team leaders and managers can use to monitor individual contributions and make necessary adjustments to improve performance. Written as a formula, this concept can be expressed as:

Performance = Capacity x Commitment

What you will notice in this equation is that performance is the product of two factors: capacity and commitment. If either of these factors is zero, the performance result will be zero. In addition, the relationship of capacity to commitment in this equation is such that adjustments to either factor will affect performance.

Capacity to perform

In a work setting, the capacity to perform means having available the competencies, the resources, and the opportunity to complete the job.

Capacity is the first key element of the performance equation. If team members are missing the competencies, resources, and the opportunities to complete their work, it will not get done and the results will not be achieved.

In other words:

Capacity = Competencies x Resources x Opportunity

The components in this equation are defined below.

Competency

Team members must have the right competencies in order to complete a task satisfactorily. Team leaders and managers should carefully determine which competencies are important to achieving team results and provide opportunities for team members to acquire those competencies.

Resources

Team members must be given the resources they need to do their jobs effectively. If individuals have all the competencies needed to complete the job, but lack the resources to perform, the job will not get done.

Opportunity

Team members should be given every opportunity to use their knowledge, skills and abilities to contribute to team outcomes. Team leaders should ensure that the team structure supports this.

Encourage team commitment

Commitment refers to the individual's willingness to perform the tasks.

The level of individual commitment is often the key determinant of whether a team meets its targets or not. As leader, your job is to provide regular opportunities for team members to account for their contributions to team outcomes.

To be effective at fostering team commitment and ensuring members take responsibility for their results, an organisation's systems must be designed with three basic principles in mind: focus, influence and consequences.

Focus
Teams need to share a clear goal that links directly to the organisation's goals. Within the team, each member should be clear about 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 within 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, they must accept the consequences of their own actions as a team. 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.

Encourage responsibility

For a team to be effective and to be able to reach their goals and objectives, all members need to participate in, and take responsibility for their results and the team's activities.

Different team members will have different skill sets and there will be particular tasks or jobs that only they can complete. Nevertheless, all team members should be contributing the same amount of effort and commitment to their team.

Leaders can follow the key strategies below to encourage team members to take responsibility for their results.

Initial communication

Initial communication should involve face-to-face meetings where the team leader and the team members can openly discuss roles and responsibilities. The team members should be made to feel comfortable enough to become fully involved in the discussion and openly express their opinions, beliefs and preferences.

Involvement in decision-making and communicating outcomes

Involve team members in the decisions about team activities, KPIs, roles and responsibilities (i.e. seek input from team members). Following this, the leader should communicate the information contained in those decisions in such a way that:

- The message is complete and specific.
- The expectations for each role are clarified and documented for use in the Performance Appraisal process.
- Each team member understands their role and the roles of their team-mates.

Communicate regularly

Team members need regular information about team activities, KPIs, roles and responsibilities.

This can be achieved through a range of communication mediums including:

- Board room or 'meeting space' designated solely for team discussions and meetings
- Email
- Skype
- Google docs or other cloud-based storage spaces for the sharing of documents.

Example

Encouraging ongoing participation from team members

At a national fast-food restaurant chain, shift managers are trained to lead their teams to perform at a high level at all times and to maintain consistency during individual shifts. Each team member is responsible for their area but is also accountable for overall outlet performance and cleanliness. They do this by prioritising each area of responsibility. This practice allows team members to move from one task to another when activity within the store varies. For instance, during busy periods, all team members concentrate on their main priorities but during down times, they move to their next area of priority, and lastly onto the cleanliness of their area. The shift manager's responsibility is to manage the transition between tasks to ensure the organisation's overall goals are achieved.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

Using a team with which you are familiar, describe three key actions and communication undertaken by team members that demonstrate responsibility for team activities.

Question 2

What are the two key elements that leaders need to focus on, in order to encourage team members to take responsibility? Tick the correct answer.

- ◯ Performance and pay
- ◯ Capacity and commitment
- ◯ Competence and clarity
- ◯ Leadership and capacity
- ◯ Commitment and willingness

3B Support the team to resolve work performance problems

When work-based 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 place undue pressure on team cohesion as it strives towards its objectives. If risks have been adequately assessed, the team should be able to carry out contingency plans when they occur.

Problems that may impact team objectives include:
• Managing change within the team or to the team's objectives • Individual targets not being met • Personal factors affecting team members' contributions and personal problems • Insufficient training and therefore level of skills • Insufficient resources • Barriers to communication • Differences in goals, needs, wants and expectations • Differences in values • Fear • Perception • Discrimination, bullying or harassment • Role pressures and emotional issues

Identify work performance problems

Problem identification is a process of considering the context of the organisation's operations and the possible issues that could impact the achievement of objectives.

Identifying operational problems is paramount to effective planning, in particular identifying and addressing risks. It requires leaders to identify where the project is currently positioned along its time line, looking for gaps in performance, and determining possible causes for delays and underperformance, as well as quality or financial issues. The following strategies outline ways to support your team in identifying problems.

Regular meetings

- Meetings provide an excellent forum for discussing and sharing information.
- When planning meetings, allow time to consider both past and 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 makes it easier to resolve problems that may arise 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 that 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 so that you can recognise opportunities for improvement before problems arise.
- Receiving regular feedback allows you to identify trends over time. These trends provide important information regarding 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.
- There are a multitude of techniques available that suit a variety of contexts. You may need to research further to establish techniques that are appropriate to your situation.

Effective problem-solving tools

Problem-solving can be done by examining data, workflow or the environment to identify issues, concerns or problems.

Some problem-solving tools that you may find useful are outlined below.

SWOT analysis

Analysing 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 diagram

A line diagram linking outcomes to potential causes and vice versa. This diagram allows 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

Useful technique 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.

Groupthink and poor decisions

Groupthink occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because of group pressures.

When considered from the context of solving work problems, group pressure can result in group members holding back personal viewpoints and ignoring alternatives.

The problems that can arise from groupthink are summarised below.

	Eight symptoms of groupthink and their effects
1. Illusion of invulnerability	Creates excessive optimism that encourages taking extreme risks.
2. Collective rationalisation	Members discount warnings and do not reconsider their assumptions.
3. Belief in inherent morality	Members believe in the rightness of their cause and therefore ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions.
4. Stereotyped views of out-groups	Negative views of the 'enemy' make effective responses to conflict seem unnecessary.
5. Direct pressure on dissenters	Members are under pressure not to express arguments against any of the group's views.
6. Self-censorship	Doubts and deviations from the perceived group consensus are not expressed.
7. Illusion of unanimity	The majority views and judgments are assumed to be unanimous.
8. Self-appointed 'mind guards'	Members protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group's cohesiveness, view and/or decisions.

Practice Task 9

Question 1

Explain ways in which you would support your team to identify work performance problems.

Question 2

Identify a problem that is currently affecting your team (or a problem that has recently been solved). Explain the problem-solving techniques you consider to be the most suitable for dealing with the problem.

3C Promote collaboration through individual behaviour

Collaboration means working with team members, using their experience and considering their input to make decisions about work plans that impact on operational performance.

Allowing team members to collaborate in the planning and decision-making processes is a great way to ensure they feel valued and respected. Moreover, it is important to gain consensus within the team on subjects that will require their full cooperation and input; for example, ways to finish a project on time or manage a customer service issue.

There are many advantages to the collaborative approach including synergy, information sharing and greater diversity of outcomes. Collaboration also leads to an improvement in team cohesion.

Improving collaboration within a team should involve:

- role modelling the required behaviours of the team
- establishing ground rules
- being aware of the features of a cohesive team
- promoting interaction between team members
- setting clear attainable goals and priorities
- clarifying and negotiating roles
- stressing teamwork and ownership
- providing leadership support to the team
- facilitating task accomplishment
- acknowledging good work.

Collaborative processes

When seeking to collaborate with your team, it is important to identify possible evaluative processes and determine those that are most appropriate in the given circumstances.

Collaboration is often accidental or natural but organisations still need to develop formal procedures for addressing problems in a collaborative way.

An examination of the pros and cons of common collaboration formats is shown below.

Regular face-to-face meetings

This is a useful approach because all participants are in the same office or within easy distance.

Pros:

- Low cost – no travel or overtime costs
- Participants usually have some understanding of each other's roles and backgrounds
- Easy communication
- Low technology requirements

Cons:

- Possibility of broad-ranging perspective and experience may be limited by participants being on the same site
- May be seen as lower priority than other urgent / core work

One-off, face-to-face events

This approach is often used for senior management meetings where people are brought together from a number of locations.

Pros:

- Allows for a singular focus on a specific topic for that one day
- Allows face-to-face discussion between parties who may not otherwise have the opportunity to meet
- Possibility of broad-ranging experience and views being shared by attendees from diverse locations
- Scope to bring in external facilitator or subject-matter experts

Cons:

- Travel and accommodation costs
- Requires decisions to be made in a short timeframe
- Relies on follow-up via different methods, e.g. email
- Participants may not appreciate the context in which others work

Use of online collaboration tools

This includes use of tools such as Facebook Workplace, Slack, Miro, Office 365 etc.

Pros:

- Tracks communication, amendments and comments made by collaborators
- Works on shared documents in real time
- Not location-dependent, i.e. it works anywhere, anytime
- Less costly than face-to-face meetings

Cons:

- Reduced personal contact and discussion
- Subject to miscommunication / misinterpretation – a flaw inherent in written communication
- Can cloud decision-making process – requires tight structure to ensure decisions are made
- Potential security risk – relies sharing / invitation protocols

Informal collaboration

Informal arrangements where employees are encouraged to seek out their own collaboration arrangements to improve their work tasks or efficiency

Pros:

- Can produce innovative solutions to everyday workplace problems
- Enhances employee self-worth, engagement and buy-in to the organisation
- Low cost

Cons:

- Requires robust processes, policies and procedures for approvals to be in place to avoid inappropriate, unsanctioned processes or actions to occur
- Can lead to employees making changes that do not reflect an understanding of knock-on effects

Role model desired behaviours

A role model is a person whose behaviours and actions are emulated by others in order to develop those skills and attributes in themselves.

A role model can be anyone who positively influences others in the work team and enhances the organisation's image to a wide range of people. These can include board members, business or government contacts, funding bodies, unions and employee representatives.

Not all team leaders or managers are considered role models. When a leader is seen to be doing the things that they have asked of their teams, they are more likely to gain the trust, confidence and cooperation of their team members.

By understanding and acting on this one principle, you will go a long way to becoming an effective leader.

What people look for in their leaders

While effective leadership can mean different things to different people, there are some common traits that people look for in their leaders.

Use the list of common traits shown here as a personal checklist to assess your own leadership abilities.

Team interactions

- Involves team members in planning, goal-setting and decision-making
- Encourages interactive communication with team members
- Listens to employees, peers and customers with an open mind
- Helps employees develop the habits they need to be more successful
- Empowers employees to make decisions
- Is skilled in managing group process issues
- Does not micro-manage effective and trusted employees

Work environment

- Inspires and motivates people around them to perform above and beyond expectations
- Has a vision for the future and communicates that vision to everyone they encounter
- Uses assertiveness to obtain the necessary resources and support for the team
- Protects the team from undue and counterproductive outside interference

Personal

- Is willing to learn better methods of doing things
- Is receptive to both positive and negative feedback
- Embraces diversity and is highly receptive to ideas and people who are different
- Apologises and admits mistakes
- Has a sense of humour
- Acts ethically and is trustworthy
- Is willing to adapt as conditions change and the needs of the team evolve

Inspire employees

Getting people to accomplish something is much easier if they are inspired by their leader to do so. Inspire means 'to breathe life into' and involves the three actions outlined below.

Be passionate

In organisations where there is a leader with great enthusiasm about a project, their teams adopt higher levels of enthusiasm and motivation. Be committed to the work you are doing. If you do not communicate excitement, how can you expect your team members to get excited?

Involve teams in decision-making

When people are involved in a decision that directly affects their work, they are more inclined to follow the outcomes and directives of the decision. Team meetings and discussions can serve as the medium for group-based decision-making. There are often times when decisions cannot be made jointly. In these instances, ensure you are able to clarify the reasons behind your decisions with those team members affected.

Know what your team is about

Teams are made of people, not numbers, computers or data. Great leadership starts with your ability to interact, understand and communicate with your team. Know what your team thinks and feels by questioning, listening and interacting with them regularly and genuinely.

Example

How a CEO gained the team's respect

Ingram Solutions Management is a management consulting firm. It has clients across all industries in both the private and public sectors. It is of utmost importance that the consultants working at Ingram Solutions Management work closely together in order to resolve the complex organisational problems that they deal with.

A few years ago a new CEO was brought in to change the current 'stale culture' and take the organisation to the next level. The key issues he set out to address were:

- Too many individuals and not enough 'team'
- Structure not lending itself to serving clients effectively
- Lack of innovation.

In order to establish a more unified team of consultants, he facilitated a series of team-building workshops that included the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and Belbin's Team Roles. From these workshops, team members gained a new understanding of the people they worked with and how they could operate more effectively as a team.

He also involved consultants in a number of problem-solving exercises in order to test their abilities to work together to resolve complex business problems. Through these exercises he was able to prove that the team outcome was much more effective than one they were able to achieve on their own.

As a by-product of these initiatives, the new CEO was respected and admired by all consultants in the organisation, many of whom consequently sought additional one-on-one mentoring.

Practice task 10

Question 1

Which of the following methods are likely to create a collaborative workplace culture?
Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Modelling the desired behaviours to team members
- ◯ The use of verbal and non-verbal descriptions of task goals
- ◯ Establishing guidelines for collaborative work that includes respectful communication
- ◯ Instructing workers to stay in their direct work areas to focus on their task
- ◯ Affirming employees when deadlines are met

Question 2

Select a person that you would classify as a role model. Develop a list of six characteristics that make them an effective role model.

Question 3

Reflect on your own characteristics as a leader. Identify two areas that you could develop to improve your performance as a role model and suggest ways to develop these characteristics.

Summary

- The performance equation is a simple tool that team leaders and managers can use to monitor individual contributions and make necessary adjustments to improve performance. The formula is:

  Performance = Capacity x Commitment
- For a team to be effective and to be able to reach their goals and objectives, all members need to participate in, and take responsibility for their results and the team's activities.
- To encourage individuals to take responsibility for their personal results, leaders need to provide clear initial communication, facilitate involvement in decision-making and communicating outcomes, and then communicate regularly.
- Group problem-solving has three distinct phases: exploring the problem, searching for solutions, and evaluating and carrying out your actions.
- Groupthink is a phenomenon of highly cohesive groups. It occurs when group members would rather maintain the group's favour than cause friction, state opposite points of view and evaluate the full extent of alternatives.
- Collaboration means working with team members, using their experience and considering their input to make decisions about work plans that impact on operational performance.
- A role model is a person whose behaviours and actions are emulated by others in order to develop those skills and attributes in themselves. When a leader is seen to be doing the things that they have asked of their teams, they are more likely to gain the trust, confidence and cooperation of their team members.

Learning Checkpoint 3
Facilitate teamwork

Part A

1. Which of the following methods are likely to create a collaborative and productive workplace culture? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ The provision of accurate and respectful feedback
- ◯ The use of verbal and non-verbal descriptions of task goals
- ◯ Establishing guidelines for collaborative work that include respectful communication
- ◯ Instructing workers to stay in their direct work areas to focus on their task
- ◯ Affirming employees when deadlines are met

2. Explain three ways you would encourage team members to participate in and take responsibility for team activities. For each strategy, include one example of how you would apply it.

3. Provide two examples of problem-solving models you might use to support the team in identifying and resolving problems. Briefly explain how a team leader can apply each model and use examples in your explanation.

Problem-solving model	Description	Application example

4. Draw a line to match each of the essential qualities of a role model leader to its correct definition.

» Effective communicator	» Provides clear direction to employees and displays passion for the task and outcomes
» Effective listener	» Communicates the vision for the future to all team members and affected stakeholders
» Inspiring and motivating	» Focuses on the person speaking, providing verbal and nonverbal confirmation that they are listening, paraphrasing and questioning to confirm understanding
» Visionary	» Provides a clear, consistent message to team members using appropriate methods

Part B

Read the case stud and then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Paul & Associates is a registered training organisation that provides nationally recognised courses in business, information technology, children's services and aged care. Paul & Associates currently has training centres in Bourke, Brisbane, Darwin, Sydney and Melbourne, and will soon open another facility in Port Melbourne.

As the national training manager, you have the responsibility for recruiting, developing and monitoring trainers. Your training team currently consists of eight full-time trainers and 22 contract trainers (see breakdown below).

Bourke:	2 contract trainers
Brisbane:	2 full-time trainers and 6 contract trainers
Darwin:	2 contract trainers
Sydney:	4 full-time trainers and 8 contract trainers
Melbourne:	2 full-time trainers and 4 contract trainers

You work out of the Sydney training centre and you try to visit the other centres at least once a quarter. In your most recent round trip, you overheard complaints from many of the trainers regarding the lack of support they get from head office, and particularly from you as their manager. As you reflect on the challenge to support each of these centres, you realise you cannot do it on your own—you need help.

1. Establish a brief plan to encourage each centre to take responsibility for their team activities. Your plan should include the following:
    - Opportunities for each centre to manage their own training teams
    - The structure of the centre's training team
    - Opportunities for collaboration between training centres
    - A mentoring program between senior and junior trainers

Topic 4 | Liaise with stakeholders

4A Maintain open communication with stakeholders

4B Communicate and address issues raised by team members and stakeholders

4A Maintain open communication with stakeholders

A stakeholder is anyone who will be affected by the team's work, including internal and external customers and suppliers, co-workers, managers and anyone else who is affected by what the team does.

A stakeholder is any person or group who has a 'stake' in the organisation. A stake refers to a degree of influence on the company, and the way it impacts on the company's operations. Stakeholders can be internal or external. They can have a direct or indirect influence on the strategic planning process.

Before a leader can communicate with its stakeholders, it must understand and identify them. Organisations vary in structure and size; their stakeholders also vary.

Refer to your organisational chart to identify your own key stakeholders. The following table lists examples of stakeholders in business services. You may need to communicate with some or all of these.

Internal stakeholders	External stakeholders
▪ Board of Directors ▪ Business owner/s ▪ General Manager ▪ Chief Executive Officer (CEO) ▪ Chief Financial Officer (CFO) ▪ Department managers ▪ Store manager	▪ Government agencies ▪ Customers/clients ▪ Associates ▪ Networks ▪ Shareholders ▪ Technical advisors ▪ Consultants

Communicate information from management to the team

A team within an organisation does not operate in isolation; it is part of a much bigger operation. Communication within a team involves everyone involved.

Team leaders and facilitators play an important role in the transfer of information. They must know how to effectively communicate downwards to their team members, upwards to management, and sideways to their managers, peers or colleagues.

The way in which you communicate with your stakeholders will vary according to their needs and the organisation's policies and procedures. The overall culture of an organisation is based on the lines of communication to upper management.

If the lines of communication between team members and managers are closed, indirect or inconsistent, the workplace culture can become tense and stressed. However, if the lines of communication are open, direct and consistent then the workplace culture is calm and relaxed.

Determine communication needs

A leader needs to ensure the lines of communication between line managers/management and back to the team remain open in order to relay key information.

As a leader you will be responsible for ensuring information about team performance and operations are effectively communicated to managers and team members, as well as other key stakeholders.

From time to time you will be required to communicate team results, performance-based problems (short-falls) or unresolved issues. Then you will need to provide follow-up to ensure action is taken. You will also need to communicate to team members the instructions from senior management. When you report a serious issue to management, they will give you immediate advice so that you can return to your team to rectify the situation.

Plan stakeholder communication

Managers should consider the information needs of internal and external stakeholders. The method of communication, content of progression data, timing and purpose of communication will change depending on those needs.

Perception equals reality when it comes to stakeholders. A communications plan provides a clear roadmap for consistently communicating with internal and external stakeholders so that they feel informed and confident in the work progress. This is the best way to maintain a trusting relationship. It is important that messages are consistent, accurate and sensitive.

Communications plans do not need to be long. A typical plan follows.

Where are we now?	▪ Current situation – actual progress, what is being done, what has been completed ▪ Team objective or goal – desired outcome, aim of the work ▪ Planned milestones – dates and performance measures ▪ Comparison of planned milestones to current progress ▪ Issues and challenges in meeting targets and objectives

Who is the audience?	These were identified when the team objective was developed ▪ Internal ▪ External
What do you want to say?	▪ Core messages that audiences want to hear ▪ Clear, simple, credible and accurate ▪ Different audiences may be privy to different information
How will you communicate to each audience?	▪ Different audiences require different methods
When will you communicate?	▪ Timelines that are relevant to your work progress, e.g. ▪ budget periods, school terms, seasons, project milestones, funding reporting periods ▪ as requested by client ▪ in response to market opportunities or community need.

Communication channels

The size of the company, the time sensitivity of the issue and importance of the message dictate the best communications tools to use to convey team performance to stakeholders.

There is a wide range of communication channels and tools that can be used in a work setting, as outlined here. A mix of communication tools allows for the ongoing flow of information between management, employees and other key stakeholders. A company is only as strong as its weakest link.

Downward channels

A message that flows from the top of an organisation down to a lower level of the organisation

Examples are:

- vision and mission statement
- policies and procedures
- instructions
- guidelines

Upward channels

Information that flows from the team up to management

Examples are:

- production reports
- budget reports
- complaints
- ideas to improve the organisation

Sideways or horizontal channels

Communication between departments, teams or individuals on the same level in the organisation

Diagonal channels

Communication between the lower level of an organisation and a higher level in a different line of authority

Report team performance to stakeholders

Reporting is a formal communication tool used to inform your key stakeholders about the performance of your team.

Reporting means sharing information, notifying stakeholders of achievements, problems and issues you experience, and communicating progress. Business reports vary depending on the information requirements of the stakeholder and the organisation's reporting strategy.

Team issues, performance and results can be reported in various ways; for example:

- As a one-off snapshot.
- By comparing results over a period of time.

Business reports

Business-style reports must be clear, concise and presented in an appropriate format suitable to the audience's needs.

Business reports are formal documents that aim to describe the true outcomes achieved over a period of time within the business. Reports must be professionally written and provide a clear and accurate picture of the current performance of resources and how they have contributed to operational objectives.

All information contained within the report must be of a quality standard. This means it must be reliable, valid, current and sufficient.

The format for presenting your findings to your stakeholders will be relevant to the organisational reporting policies, procedures and style guides, as well as the unique needs of your stakeholders.

Reports should have a clear and logical flow and structure, so your stakeholders can easily read and find the information they are looking for.

Standard structure for a business report
▪ Report title ▪ Executive summary ▪ Introduction ▪ Findings ▪ Recommendations

Example

Business report template

Report title
▪ Name of the report ▪ Name of person or department that the report is intended for (e.g. Attention: Finance Manager) ▪ Date ▪ Who compiled the report
Executive summary
▪ Summary of key findings, high-level points and recommendations of the fuller report
Introduction
▪ What was monitored ▪ Monitoring system used ▪ Data sources and collection methods
Findings
▪ Presentation of information and evidence, including successes and issues ▪ Objective analysis of the operational results achieved, including trends, patterns and forecasts ▪ Variations in performance from the operational objectives
Recommendations
▪ Changes that need to be implemented moving forward in order to meet business objectives

Report writing guidelines

You can follow key guidelines to ensure your reach a professional standard and meet the needs of your stakeholders.

When writing a report, be sure to follow the principles for formal report writing. This will give you the best possible chance to achieve your intended outcomes.

The following guidelines will ensure you produce a quality business report.

Accuracy

Report reliable and valid information only. Make distinctions between fact and hearsay, fact and opinion, and fact and conclusions. Be clear about the meaning of words used in the report and avoid jargon that the audience will not understand. Clarify all abbreviations, e.g. CRM is short for Client Relationship Management. Proofread and edit the report and rewrite as needed.

Completeness

Completeness is achieved by reporting all the information as per the stakeholder's request. When in doubt, include the information, but only if there is clear relevance. Avoid partially stated facts that can be misleading and misinterpreted.

Conciseness

Avoid unrelated, extraneous, incidental, and nonessential information and detail. Pay attention to grammar, spelling and sentence structure. Avoid adjectives, wit, sarcasm, flowery expressions and repetition. Use headings, paragraphing, sentence structure, indentations, underlining, and capitalisation to emphasise and give weight and/or visibility to information the investigator deems most important.

Impartiality/ objectivity

Report the material and evidentiary facts without addition or subtraction. Do not conceal or withhold information, do not make your own assumptions and conclusions. Maintain an unbiased and open mind about the results and avoid becoming emotionally involved in the process.

Clarity and report formatting

Arrange the contents of the report in discrete sections to facilitate the reader's review and understanding of the report. Write in chronological order and avoid ambiguous sentences and vague statements.

Positive language

Apply positive language to highlight opportunities for improvement. For example, 'The system will require ongoing maintenance and upgrades to keep up with the changing demands of the business environment' is preferable to 'The current system is not working effectively and is unlikely to meet the needs of the business'.

Descriptive and specific language

Use descriptive adjectives instead of umbrella terms. For example, 'Changing to a customised WHSIS will lead to a more efficient and user-friendly hazard and incident-reporting process' is preferable to 'A change of information system will lead to good improvements in safety'.

Reduce adverbs and adjectives

Avoid the over-use of adverbs and adjectives. An adverb is a word used to modify a verb; an adjective is a word used to modify a noun. For example, 'A software-based CRM will improve user-accessibility' is clearer than 'A state-of-the-art and user-friendly CRM system will uniquely improve the productivity of users'.

Images and charts

Reports can be enhanced by the use of graphs, charts or other graphics generated by databases and spreadsheets. This allows the reader to see trends and key issues without spending a lot of time reading text.

Communicate with team members

Leaders need to effectively communicate information about team performance (including key issues) to their team members.

Leaders need to communicate with team members about team performance; for example, any changes to the organisational plan or goals. Effective communication guarantees a high-quality working relationship between leaders and team members. It builds awareness of team performance (including issues and challenges) and prevents issues arising; for example, misinterpretation and delays. There are several approaches you can use to strengthen communication between management and your team. As a leader you may need to follow the approaches outlined here.

Open-door policy

This is another way of saying that you will be open to your team members' efforts to communicate with you. Figuratively speaking, this refers to leaving your office door open so others can walk in at any time to talk with you. In reality, it means providing an easy, secure and respectful communications channel with your team when they need to communicate about important matters.

Effective open-door policies include strict ground rules. The level of openness must be commensurate with a functional and performing workplace. For example:

- if you are talking with someone, you should avoid being interrupted
- if someone else is handling a matter, the team member should endeavour to communicate with that person in the first instance
- conflicts between team members should be mediated by those team members before raising the issue with you and so on.

Team environment

When team members feel you are unapproachable, they will keep information from you that can hamper performance and damage your effectiveness as a leader. Consider creating and fostering a team environment. This means focusing efforts on the team's purpose, while ensuring all members of the team feel respected and valued for their contributions. Like any relationships, these require constant work. Holding regular formal and informal meetings with team members and displaying genuine interest in the pursuits of each member (where practicable) will encourage the maintenance of this environment.

Regular meetings

Regular meetings allow for the sharing of information and ideas, as well as offering the chance for people to interact socially and professionally. Successful meetings must be kept as short as necessary, on topic, and must not be viewed as interfering with normal work operations; rather, they should be recognised as a vital part of work operations.

Training and mediation

Poor communication can lead to disagreements and conflict between managers and team members. Often the causes of the conflict are close to the interests of each party. It can be helpful in these circumstances to seek the input of a third party. This person may be internal, such as an HR representative; or external, such as a negotiation trainer. These people can offer unbiased advice to overcome issues and suggest better forms aof communication to suit the specific needs of the team to avoid issues in the future.

Motivation

A successful leader learns and understands what motivates their team. Ask questions and pay attention to the details of the team members you come in contact with in order to understand their personal motivators. This helps you to manage performance and also improves communication and trust as you develop a genuine interest in those working with you.

Forums

Forums are central hubs for ideas, comments, concerns and information sharing. Today, most forums are internet-based; however, scheduled meetings can also provide a forum for discussion on matters involving the team. An important purpose for conducting forums, other than the communication of ideas, is to openly invite the input of every member of the team. This demonstrates your respect for the individuals and improves trust among the team members and management.

Example

An open-door policy

Leslie Inc. has adopted an open-door policy for all employees. This means that every manager's door is open to every employee at any time. The purpose of this policy is to encourage open communication, feedback and discussion about any matter of importance to an employee. This open-door policy means that employees are free to talk with any manager at any time.

Responsibilities

If any area of an employee's work is causing concern, they have the responsibility to address that concern with a manager. Whether they have a problem, a complaint, a suggestion or an observation, company managers want to hear from their staff. By listening to their team members, the company is able to improve, address complaints, and foster employee understanding of the rationale for practices, processes, and decisions.

Practice Task 11

Question 1

Draw a line to match each communication need with its correct stakeholder.

» Issues and challenges experienced by the team	» Team members
» Information about specialised issues that need to be resolved	» Senior managers
» Sales information and progress of the team	» Managers from other departments

Question 2

Name three communication tools/channels you can use to convey information to your managers.

Question 3

Name three strategies to improve communication with stakeholders at all levels.

Question 4

Describe four key points to be included in a communication plan.

Question 5

Number each step from 1 to 5 in the order you would follow to set out a business report.

- ◯ Findings
- ◯ Report title
- ◯ Introduction
- ◯ Executive summary
- ◯ Recommendations

4B Communicate and address issues raised by team members and stakeholders

Leaders are often required to communicate unresolved issues to a line manager or upper management and follow up to ensure action is taken.

As a leader you will be responsible for dealing with low-level day-to-day issues and problems. Most of these you will be allowed to resolve quickly at the team level. However, from time to time you will be required to communicate unresolved issues to a line manager or upper management and follow up to ensure action is taken.

Some of these issues or problems may include:
▪ concerns and tensions ▪ problems related to work roles and responsibilities ▪ grievances and complaints ▪ matters affecting workplace relationships and team cohesion.

Communicate issues to management

The leader is the first point of contact between team members and the next level manager.

If management identifies a problem that your team needs to deals with, you will be the first point of contact. You must then relay that information back to your team in a prompt manner.

Often language and communication can get 'lost in translation'. This is demonstrated in a children's game in which players whisper a message into the ear of the next player, who repeats the message to the third player and so on. When information is passed onto you from upper management, it is important that you take notes, ask questions for clarity and paraphrase to ensure you have interpreted the situation correctly.

When you are ready to relay the information to your team members, it is important to model and instil the same communication principles into them.

Communication principles
▪ Be clear about your message and instructions ▪ Ensure all your team members have a device to take notes ▪ Encourage discussion and questions ▪ Check for understanding ▪ Always follow up by putting any instructions in writing yourself and disseminating them to your team members

Address unresolved issues with management

Once issues have been identified and communicated to management, it is crucial that action is taken to resolve the issues.

In some cases, you will be able to report an issue to management, receive their advice, and return to your team to rectify the situation. In other cases, the issue will be more complex and may take time or resources to resolve. Such issues will need to stay with management for longer periods of time to be rectified. In this instance, it is still important for you to continue to evaluate the issue and listen to the concerns raised by team members. In other words, don't allow team members or management to get the impression that you have forgotten and become lazy or unprofessional.

Whatever the situation or issue, it is important to keep the lines of communication open. Sometimes a manager may be very busy and forget about your issue. Sometimes it may appear that your manager does not deem your issue to be important. However, you should never assume what the manager is thinking. Continue to talk and remind the manager about the importance of the issue to your team. They will often be grateful of the gentle reminder.

The 8D reactive problem-solving process

When someone inside or outside of the team has raised an issue, you have an obligation to evaluate it and take the necessary corrective action.

The first thing to remember is not to rush because few problems require immediate action. Determine the urgency of the situation and if the problem does need immediate resolution, act decisively and promptly. Before acting, however, it is important to gather facts and opinions, analyse them; challenge and check assumptions, and generate and assess your options before making a decision or referring the problem onto the next level of authority.

A corrective action can be classified as a change implemented to address a weakness in the system. The eight disciplines (8D) reactive problem-solving process is a formal, documented step-by-step process which, when implemented appropriately, will lead to permanent corrective and preventive action.

Each step of the process and desired outcome is outlined below.

The 8D problem-solving steps and desired outcomes	
1	**Define concern, organise and plan** ▪ Identify the concern or problem ▪ Put in place a project plan for eliminating the problem and improving the process – including scope, key activities, boundaries, responsibilities, time lines, resources
2	**Describe the opportunity or problem** ▪ Write the problem statement in terms of the gap between 'as is' and 'desired state' ▪ Define the non-conformance in terms of 'what is wrong' (the defect) with 'what' (the object) ▪ Determine the quantity, size, volume, magnitude of the non-conformance
3	**Contain the problem** ▪ Implement interim actions to shield the customer from the problem
4	**Identify and verify root causes** ▪ Select root causes to work on ▪ Revise the problem statement if required ▪ Produce a list of as many ways as possible to solve the problem
5	**Develop corrective action plan** ▪ Decide on optimum corrective action/solution and plan its implementation
6	**Implement and verify corrective action** ▪ Perform pilot test ▪ Evaluate effectiveness of corrective action or solution ▪ Document improvements ▪ Address open issues ▪ Remove the interim actions to ensure the problem does not re-occur
7	**Prevent recurrence** ▪ Apply permanent 'fix' ▪ Identify what system, practice or procedure allowed the root cause to occur ▪ Modify and monitor to prevent recurrence of problem
8	**Celebrate and communicate success** ▪ Recognise the contributions of everyone involved ▪ Communicate the changes or improvements to all individuals who are affected

Communication skills for issue resolution

Resolving issues requires the development of communication and managerial skills that can always be improved and refined.

There are many skills required for issue resolution and not all of them are immediately obvious. These skills can be learned and practised. Some of them are listed below.

Nonverbal communication

- Look for the nonverbals such as body language, facial expressions, posture, gestures and tone of voice. Be aware of your own body language.
- How people feel about conflict will be apparent in their body language, they may avoid eye contact, cross their arms, roll their eyes, act in a defensive, aggressive or non-caring way.
- Try to stay relaxed and open. Breathe deeply and calmly. Respect personal space and be aware of your facial expressions. Avoid making sudden movements and do not stare.

Active listening

- Know when to stay quiet. Focus on the words and nonverbals the person is communicating. Ask questions to clarify points that are unclear to you. Let the person explain themselves, in their words. Ask open-ended questions. Allow all parties to express themselves equally.

Empathy

- Acknowledge feelings and try to put yourself in their shoes. Ask questions about how that made them feel and the reasons they give for being upset. Be patient. Be aware of and respectful of differences.

Patience

- Rushing to a solution can make people feel like they're not being heard and they're not part of the solution process. Take time to listen, allow for silences. People often do not like to be wrong and will often hold their stance until they're proven right or wrong.

Objectiveness, impartiality and calmness

- Staying calm and objective when emotions are high is very difficult. Partiality will only intensify conflicts.
- You need to remain level-headed in order to think rationally about a solution that is good for all. Vent before or after.
- Don't take things personally. This conflict only involves your professional role. Never attack the person. Talk about the problem, not the person.
- Prioritise resolution over being right. Know when to apologise and forgive. Remain focused on the conflict at hand rather than past ones.

Positivity

- Being positive will ensure the resolution process progresses forward. Positivity can be contagious. Share your confidence that there will be a solution.
- Demonstrate a willingness and positive outlook to compromise. Model behaviour you wish to see in all parties.

Open communication

- Maintain open communication so that relationships can continue after the conflict is resolved. This is critical for relationship management and work objectives. It's important not to feel resentful and to accept compromise in an open and positive manner. Remember the importance of this relationship.

Example

Respect the chain of command

Convention has it that an employee should report to only one person. This concept, known as the chain of command, is based on the thinking that having more than one boss or source of authority could create a situation of potential conflict and confusion. This principle flourished in the days of hierarchy and bureaucracy, but is eroding in today's organisations where flexibility and responsiveness to the environment are called for.

For example, project teams often comprise employees from multiple departments who report directly to their project manager. Once the purpose of the project has been achieved, the project members return to their regular roles.

While flexibility is currently a driving force in most organisations, it is still a good idea to let your immediate manager know when another manager has given you a job to do. In other words, respect the chain of command by letting your manager know what you have been asked to do and/or have agreed to.

Practice Task 12

Question 1

Describe the chain of command used to communicate issues with management.

Question 2

Which of the following are useful skills to manage workplace issues? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Being able to block out discussion of the issue when you need to complete work
- ◯ Impartiality when managing conflict between others
- ◯ Being patient when listening to others
- ◯ Being empathetic towards others' issues
- ◯ Active listening when communicating with others

Question 3

Which methods should a manager use to resolve workplace issues and conflicts?
Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Actively listening to the person raising the issue, to establish what their concerns are
- ◯ Only listening to the most trustworthy employees
- ◯ Finding a compromise so both parties gain
- ◯ Ignoring the issues and telling those concerned to focus on their work task
- ◯ Following an issue resolution plan that sets out parameters of what is to take place and how the issue will be resolved

Summary

- Communication in organisations consists of downward, upward, sideways and diagonal channels.
- A mix of communication tools allows for the ongoing flow of information between management and employees.
- Communication between management and employees can improve through an open-door policy, by nurturing a team environment, by holding regular staff meetings and promoting training opportunities.
- Once issues have been identified and communicated to management, it is crucial that action is taken to resolve the issues and there needs to be accountability for the issues raised.
- When an issue has been raised, the first thing to remember is not to rush because few problems require immediate action. Follow up with managers and team members. If the problem does need immediate resolution, a decisive leader will act promptly.
- The 8D reactive problem-solving process is a formal, documented step-by-step process, which, when implemented appropriately, will cause permanent corrective and preventive action.
- Corrective action plans are generally used for correcting a management system or process, a quality issue; or to identify, correct and document employee performance problems.
- Reports must be clear, concise and presented in an appropriate format suitable to the audience's needs.

Learning Checkpoint 4
Liaise with stakeholders

Part A

1. Which of the following information do you need to include when reporting on team performance? Tick all that apply.

   - ◯ Include detailed recommendations that are planned to improve team performance
   - ◯ Explain in general terms the team's performance
   - ◯ Provide a clear outline of the issues experienced by the team
   - ◯ Present your report to your key stakeholders based on agreed reporting procedures

2. List three communication techniques a leader must use to communicate issues and performance to stakeholders.

3. Explain two strategies to enable effective communication between management and team members.

4. Explain what is meant by the term 'upward communication', including two examples of how upward communication is used to resolve issues, concerns and problems within a team.

Part B

Read the case study and then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Klikcom is a national telecommunications company employing over 10,000 staff. In order to manage its day-to-day operations, it has a large management team consisting of state managers, regional managers, store managers, team leaders and supervisors.

As one of the regional managers, it is your responsibility to oversee the operations of 20 retail outlets and you report monthly to the state manager.

One particular outlet continues to have staffing issues and receives more customer complaints than any other outlet. Even though you have tried to work with the store manager to resolve these issues, little improvement has occurred.

1. Give two examples of who you would you speak to for assistance in resolving the issues you have identified, and provide a brief explanation of the focus of the communication.

2. Briefly outline three corrective actions you could take regarding these unresolved issues. Identify how these actions align with organisational policy.