BSBWOR404
Develop work priorities

Release 2

Learner guide

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Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.1

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Contents

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBWOR404 Develop work priorities*, Release 2. 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 and case studies	Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. Case studies highlight 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.
Video clips	Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help
Summary	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 outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Learning	• Develops strategies to reflect on own performance, obtain feedback, and plan and source professional development opportunities
Reading	• Recognises and interprets textual information from relevant sources to understand organisation's policies and practices
Writing	• Prepares written reports and workplace documentation that communicate complex information clearly and effectively
Oral communication	• Provides or seeks information using language suitable to audience and context • Employs listening and questioning techniques to confirm understanding
Numeracy	• Interprets numerical information related to budgets and timeframes
Navigate the world of work	• Identifies and understands roles and responsibilities in relation to organisational objectives, policies and procedures
Interact with others	• Selects and uses appropriate practices when communicating with internal and external stakeholders to seek or share information • Establishes and builds rapport and relationships with others to foster a culture of trust and honesty in communications
Get the work done	• Plans, organises and implements tasks to meet organisational requirements • Systematically gathers and analyses information and evaluates options in order to anticipate potential problems and develop contingency plans • Uses the main features and functions of digital technologies and tools to complete work tasks efficiently and effectively

What do you already know?

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

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Plan and complete your work schedule	1A Prepare workgroup plans	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B Analyse workgroup objectives and priorities	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C Identify and plan for risks	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1D Use business technology to manage tasks	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2 Monitor your work performance	2A Identify and analyse personal performance standards	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B Seek feedback from colleagues and clients	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C Identify and report variations in service and product quality	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3 Coordinate professional development	3A Assess your knowledge and skills against organisational benchmarks	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B Research opportunities for improvement and learning	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3C Use feedback to identify improvement opportunities	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3D Facilitate continuous learning	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3E Record professional development achievements	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1
Plan and complete your work schedule

For an organisation to be sustainable and operate efficiently, a clear plan is needed to outline the goals, objectives and responsibilities of everyone involved in the organisation. Most workplaces, from small businesses to multinational companies, prepare plans that can range from strategic plans for the entire business operation, outlining the key objectives of the business for the next five to 10 years; to individual project plans, which detail the specific tasks and responsibilities required to successfully complete a six-month project on time and on budget.

You may need to consult the workgroup plans of other departments, sections or areas to ensure that any reliance or interdependency between your team and others is planned for. You will also identify any factors that could adversely affect your achievement of the objective and determine how to avoid or overcome them.

In doing all of this you will rely on your knowledge of the organisation you are working in, your understanding of team dynamics and your expertise with business technology to help you with your planning process.

In this topic you will learn how to:

1A   Prepare workgroup plans

1B   Analyse workgroup objectives and priorities

1C   Identify and plan for risks

1D   Use business technology to manage tasks

1A Prepare workgroup plans

In your role as a manager, team leader or supervisor, you will be responsible for planning your own work schedule as well as that of your team to ensure that the team's goals and objectives are met. Depending on the size of the organisation you are working in, you may be involved in planning at an organisational level. In this case you will be directly involved in linking your team's responsibilities to the overall goals and objectives of the organisation.

Even if you are not involved in high-level planning in your organisation, as the team leader you will be responsible for devising a workgroup plan, including setting goals, objectives and targets for the team. You must also incorporate the team objectives into your personal work plan and each team member's work plan.

To be able to do this you need a thorough understanding of how all the plans fit together and how the progress of one of these plans affects the progress of the others. You also need to understand how planning and setting priorities helps you and the team achieve your objectives.

Be aware of the organisation's policies and practices for preparing work plans, developing budgets, seeking and managing resources, keeping records, and customer service. Know where you can access information and procedures to follow.

Definition of terms

Workplaces use different terms for describing how people work together and what they have to achieve. Below are some commonly used terms and what they mean.

Work group

A work group is any number of people who work together in a team. This can be a group of people who always work together or a team that is formed to achieve a specific task over a specific period of time. A work group or team is usually defined as people working together to achieve a common goal.

Work schedule

A work schedule can be referred to as a work plan, an operational plan or simply a plan. These words are used interchangeably in most workplaces in Australia. A work schedule or work plan details the tasks and responsibilities involved in achieving a specific objective. A work plan can cover one person's, a team's or a whole department's responsibilities.

Objectives

An objective is what you are aiming to achieve. Some workplaces call this a goal, an outcome or an output. Generally, the achievement of a number of objectives or outcomes contributes to the achievement of a larger goal. The objective is the end point reached once the work schedule is successfully completed.

Tools

Organisations use a range of tools to identify the skills and knowledge needed by workers. They may use a position description, specific organisational benchmarks or national competency standards. They may also use a skills audit to help workers self-assess their skills.

The planning process

Every manager, supervisor or team leader is responsible for achieving certain goals, objectives and targets that have been identified in the operational and/or strategic plan of the organisation.

The planning process involves breaking these goals, objectives and targets down into tasks that must be completed in order to reach the specific objectives, and identifying the resources required to complete the tasks. Once the tasks and resources are identified, the tasks are allocated to appropriately qualified team members who have access to the requisite resources.

This planning process is generally collaborative. In order for team members to successfully carry out their tasks, it is important to involve them in the planning process. The better their understanding of the end objective and of the tasks detailed in a workgroup plan, the better they will be able to develop and complete their own work plan or schedule.

Planning is an ongoing process

Planning does not stop once the workgroup plan is formulated, but is continually revised. A crucial part of your role as a team leader is to ensure that the team stays on track – do this by regularly checking each team member's progress and monitoring the team's progress against the work plan.

Planning, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes takes time. Make sure you account for this time when setting the work plan of the team. Outlined here are the steps that can be undertaken during the ongoing plan process.

The planning process

1   Establish realistic and measurable goals, objectives and targets.

2   Make them quantifiable and specify a time frame for their achievement.

3   Identify the resources and budget required to achieve your objectives and targets.

4   List all the things that need to happen in order to achieve your goal.

5   Determine the order in which events should occur. Be aware of team and individual targets and dates.

6   Implement your plan.

7   Check progress against the plan to make sure that your original targets and time frames are being adhered to.

Types of plans

Organisations use a range of plans to achieve their goals. Here is an outline of three strategic plans and the team manager's involvement in each.

Strategic plans

Strategic plans chart the course for the organisation's future. They are long-term plans, which usually look two to 10 years into the future. They provide the overall direction for activities and the focus for the organisation. Strategic planning usually involves the highest level of management in a business, and sometimes includes board members. Smaller organisations may include all staff in their strategic planning processes.

Business plans

Business plans are also long-term plans and, in some organisations, are interchangeable with strategic plans. A business plan provides the basis for business decisions to make sure actions, processes and expenditure take the organisation closer to its desired position.

Operational plans

An operational plan provides specific details of what is to be done to achieve the established overall objectives of the business plan. Middle management or team leaders and supervisors generally develop operational plans. Operational plans are short-term (by comparison with strategic plans) and detail the weekly or monthly operations of a team or department within an organisation.

The team manager

The team manager develops the operational plan in conjunction with the team. This process involves identifying the tasks that need to be completed to achieve the team's goals and objectives, and then identifying the resources that will be required to carry out the tasks successfully. These tasks are then allocated to team members generally through a collaborative process.

Types of team plans

Organisations use a range of team plans to achieve their team and individual employee goals. Here is an outline of three strategic team plans.

Workgroup or team plans

Depending on the size of your organisation, you may be responsible for a work group or team within a department. In this case, you will devise a team plan that details the daily, weekly or monthly actions the team is responsible for achieving on behalf of the department and the resources you will need to carry out your work plan.

Team manager plans

Your own plan should detail your overall goal, objectives and targets and how you expect to achieve them. This includes your major areas of focus, the allocation of specific tasks to team members, your weekly activities and daily tasks, and the resources you need to successfully complete your plan.

Team reflection

Whereas the organisation's strategic plan should focus, motivate and inspire its employees, your own work plan should help you focus and keep you motivated towards your own work goals and targets. Your goals and tasks provide direction and act as guidelines to help you complete your day-to-day tasks, make appropriate decisions and solve problems.

Individual team member plans

Team members' individual work plans must reflect their weekly and daily tasks and detail how they are expected to achieve the set tasks. You need to set time lines, allocate resources and discuss outcomes for each of the tasks. This should be done at a team meeting when tasks are allocated and deadlines are set.

Link the plans together

Every plan in an organisation must link with all the others. If individual work plans are not designed to contribute to achieving the team manager's plan, then the team manager's plan will not be implemented effectively and the objectives will not be achieved. If the team manager's plan is not achieved, the workgroup plan will not be achieved and so on, right up to the organisation not achieving its strategic plan.

If an organisation does not achieve its strategic plan it will have failed to meet its obligations to its board of directors, shareholders and clients. Therefore, it is very important that team and individual work plans reflect the objectives and goals of the organisation.

The following diagram illustrates how all the plans developed in an organisation are directly linked to each other, and how each plan contributes to achieving the strategic plan of the organisation. There is only one strategic plan in an organisation, but there can be any number of operational plans, workgroup plans, team manager plans and individual team member plans, depending on the size of the organisation.

Plans within an organisation

Individual team member plan
- Developed by each team member
- Help achieve the team manager plan

Team manager plans
- Developed by each team manager
- Help achieve team/workgroup plan

Workgroup plan
- Developed by each team/work group
- Help achieve operational plan

Operational plan
- Developed by department managers
- Help achieve the strategic plan

Strategic plan
- Developed by senior management for the whole organisation
- Help achieve the organisational goals

Workgroup plans

Workgroup plans are developed by team leaders, managers or supervisors. They detail the daily, weekly or monthly actions their team is responsible for achieving on behalf of the department, and the resources required to carry out the work plan. As the team leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that the team's plan meets your organisation's overall goals and objectives.

In a small organisation, your work group or team may be a department responsible for a specific work function within the organisation. In a large organisation, your team may be one of many teams that make up a department. In all cases, your work group's plan will contribute to the achievement of your organisation's operational plan.

Here is more information about what a work plan for your team might include.

Goals and objectives

What your team is aiming for; for example, 'Increase sales revenue by 10 per cent per annum'

Targets

The measurable goals you aim to achieve; for example, 'Retain all current clients', 'Gain 10 new clients per month'

Tasks/activities

The actions you will take to reach the targets and achieve the objective; for example, 'Contact all current clients each month to check client satisfaction and any supply requirements', 'Make 10 cold calls each day to introduce our company to prospective clients'

Team member responsibilities

Identification of who is responsible for each task

Resources

The tools the team members will need to carry out their work; for example, each sales rep will require a mobile phone, samples of supplies, a laptop computer and a visual display unit

Time lines

Each target and task should have a time element so that team members know when they should carry out or complete tasks

Milestones

Major points within the work plan that are measurable and signify that a stage of the plan has been completed; for example, if your overall objective is to 'Prepare and produce the annual report', a milestone could be, 'All financial information gathered from all departments'.

Priorities

The relative importance of the various objectives and tasks within the work plan; for example, your team might be working towards more than one objective, but the most important objective, and therefore the highest priority of your team, is to 'Keep current clients 100 per cent satisfied'.

Consider other workgroup plans

It is usually necessary to consider the work plans of other areas of the organisation in order to develop your own work group's plan. In devising your workgroup plan, you may need to consult your department's operational plan as well as plans pertaining to other departments such as sales plans, budgetary plans and production plans.

For example, if you are working in a sales, marketing, production or finance role, you will need to be familiar with the organisation's sales plans and budgets, your own reporting requirements, your organisation's production plans, the work plans of employees in your area and possibly those of team members not wholly dedicated to your area.

Plans within your work group's overall plan

Plans will consist of smaller steps or tasks that will also need to be planned. Depending on the nature of your team, your workgroup plan may need to include other plans. For example, if your work group is responsible for generating sales revenue, your workgroup plan will include a sales plan. You will also need to report on your team's activities and its progress towards achieving its objective, so you will include a reporting plan within your workgroup plan. Your team may not produce material goods, but will need to know about the organisation's production plan to know when products are available to sell. You will need to develop a budget for your team that details your anticipated expenditure. You will need to plan your team members' participation in completing the team's plan. Finally, each team member, including you, will need an individual work schedule that details specific responsibilities in the team's work plan.

Your workgroup plans may include:

- sales plans
- reporting plans
- production plans

- budgetary plans
- team participation plans
- individual work plans.

Sales plans

Like any other plan, sales plans include details about specific team goals, milestones, targets, budgets, tasks, resources and team member responsibilities. Not all this information is necessarily contained within one document. There might be two or three documents that cover all the information relevant to the sales plan.

For example, there might be an overall plan that outlines the goal, milestones and targets. From this, a more detailed document might be created that breaks down the milestones and targets into specific tasks, resources and team member responsibilities. Supporting both plans might be a budget that details the anticipated expenditure for the team.

When developing a sales plan:

- Objectives must contribute to achieving organisational goals.
- Objectives and targets must be clear and challenging, but also achievable.
- Tasks must relate to individual team members' KPIs.

- Tasks must clearly contribute to achieving the team's objectives.
- Each person's responsibilities must be clearly articulated and understood.
- Constant evaluation of progress is important to ensure the plan is being achieved.
- The budget must provide adequate resources to your team to help them carry out their tasks.
- You will need to report on your team's progress.

Reporting plans

As a frontline manager, team leader or supervisor, you are required to report on your progress and that of your team. Most organisations provide opportunities to report both formally and informally. Informal reporting may include regular meetings, where you give your manager a verbal update on your team's progress and achievements. Formal reporting is more likely to involve written reports and possible presentations to your manager, other managers and possibly your board of directors or external stakeholders.

Formal reporting usually occurs on a regular basis. For example, every three months you might have to prepare a written report on how well your team is achieving its objectives.

If your team is working on a project for an external organisation, you might have to report on your progress every month via a written progress report, or you might have to attend a regular meeting and present a report on your team's progress.

In any of these situations, you will need to prepare a reporting plan that details what you are expected to produce, by when, and who will be responsible for producing it. The reporting plan is likely to be included in your team's schedule as one of the major milestones.

Here are things that you should keep in mind when developing a reporting plan.

Reporting plan objectives
• Reports must demonstrate your team's contribution to achieving organisational goals.
• Reports must meet organisational reporting requirements.
• The content of a report must be accurate, clear and easy to understand.
• The tasks must relate to individual team members' KPIs.
• Tasks must clearly define the required content (such as the information, format and bibliography style required) of the report.
• Each person's responsibilities must be clearly articulated and understood.
• Constant evaluation of progress is important to ensure the report is completed on time.
• A budget (if required) must provide adequate resources to your team to help members carry out their tasks.

Production plans

If you work in an organisation that produces things, at least one team in the workplace will be working to achieve a production plan. Your team might interact with the production team, so you might need to take the production plan into account when preparing your own work group's plan.

If your team is responsible for manufacturing products, your production plan will be a detailed guide that spells out each step in the production process, the input materials that are required, and who is responsible for each particular step in the process, and when. The production plan will be supported by a range of other plans such as a budget detailing the team's expenditure and individual work schedules. Because production generally involves machinery, there will be maintenance and safety plans that underpin the production plan.

Production plans also define the quantity and quality of the products being produced. Therefore, they include targets stipulating specifications of inputs and desired rates of outputs.

Steps and milestones

The production plan will generally be divided into steps in the production process. The conclusion of each step is a milestone at which point there is likely to be a quality control step prior to the start of the next stage in the production process.

Often the production plan will resemble a process map, which describes the steps in the production process. Underpinning each of these process steps will be detailed plans that spell out how the step is carried out: the materials required, the actions that must be completed, the time frame for completing each action, any machinery required, the operation steps and the safety precautions that must be taken.
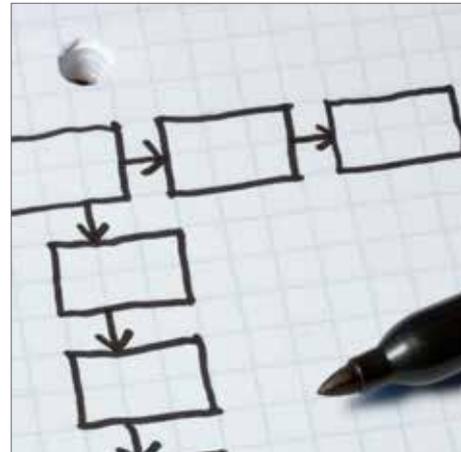
Budgetary plans

Setting the budget for your team is an important part of planning. Without an adequate budget, your team members will not have access to the resources they need to meet their responsibilities.

Setting the budget requires you to understand both the type and quantity of resources required by your team, and the cost. You must also know when the resources will be needed, so that you plan for the expenditure in your budget at an appropriate time. You will also need sound mathematical skills to interpret budget information; develop these skills further through training courses or mentoring by an experienced person.

Different organisations have different ways of budgeting. It is important that you understand how to budget in your organisation. Some organisations prepare annual budgets on a calendar or a financial-year basis. Others prepare budgets for each project they undertake as well as for the overall activity of the team on an annual basis.

Your role in budgetary plans

As a team leader or supervisor, your involvement in the budgeting process will be determined by your organisation's processes. In some instances you might work with your manager to set the budget, in others it could be your sole responsibility to prepare the budgets.

Budgeting involves an element of guesswork. You cannot be 100 per cent certain of what will happen in the future, so you have to use your knowledge of the organisation, your clients and the market you are working in to formulate the best estimations of what your team will require.

Include any assumptions you are basing your calculations on. For example, if you are assuming that your team size remains the same over the period the budget covers, you should state this against the salary/wages item in your budget.

The budgets in an organisation will generally use consistent terms and conventions to describe common items as well as the same terminology and basis for the calculations.

When setting the budget, make sure you:

- understand the budget format, the line items and how they are calculated
- can interpret numerical information accurately
- keep notes about every assumption you make when setting your budget
- ensure every step of your team's work plan is scrutinised for potential expenditure
- go through your budget with your manager to confirm your assumptions and calculations
- remember that it is better to overestimate and then adjust your budget than underestimate and not have enough resources.

Team participation plans

An important aspect of your team's work plan is making sure you have adequate human resources to carry out the tasks and responsibilities that will contribute to your team achieving its goals. The team participation plan details which team members are responsible for which tasks, and how much time they are required to commit to completing the tasks.

The purpose of the team participation plan is to ensure that there is adequate personnel to carry out the team's responsibilities, to ensure that all personnel are fully occupied and that their talents and skills are being appropriately utilised.

Types of teams

Some teams consist of people who are wholly dedicated to particular work teams. If this is the case, your team participation plan will detail each staff member, their responsibilities within the work plan, the time allocation for completing these responsibilities and how these responsibilities match their position description and utilise their skills and talents.

If your team includes people who have responsibilities across more than one team, your team participation plan will include all of the same information as if they were wholly dedicated to your team, but will also have to account for the time that the team members spend carrying out other responsibilities in other teams. You need to work with relevant team leaders and managers to ensure that these employees are not over- or under-worked and that they will be available to carry out their tasks at the required times.

You will need your team's work plan, each team member's position description and potentially other teams' work plans in order to prepare your team participation plan. Remember that each task within your work plan must be allocated to a team member; otherwise it will not be completed.

Individual work plans

The team's work plan forms the basis of your own team leader work plan and the individual work plans or schedules of each team member. Here is more information about individual work plans.

Details in individual work plans

- The tasks the individual is responsible for achieving
- The actions they should take to complete the tasks
- The time lines for completing the tasks
- The resources required to complete the tasks.

Details in workgroup plans and schedules

- The team objective/s and targets (what you have to achieve)
- The resources required (people, time, money, technology)
- Time frames (by when)
- The tasks, activities and milestones involved (how you are going to achieve objectives)
- Team members (who will be involved)

Identify required resources

Work plans must be supported by the necessary tools, equipment and materials. Many resources will be available in your organisation. Other resources, such as additional personnel or specialised equipment, may need to be hired or purchased for specific tasks. For example, you may not have in-house graphic design skills, but you may have a relationship with a graphic design studio that you can contract to complete the work.

Depending on your familiarity with the objective you are aiming to achieve, it is often worthwhile to work with your team to identify the required resources. It is always wise to confirm your resource needs with your manager – especially if you realise that you need additional or specialised resources that aren't readily available and/or that will cost more money.

Here are some resources that may be required.

Stock and supplies

These may be consumable items such as packaging equipment, distribution materials (envelopes and boxes), stationery items and catering supplies.

Information technology

This includes computers, laptops, scanners, printers, and software and computer peripherals.

Facilities

You may need to organise conferences or workshop facilities, meeting rooms for customers, training rooms and associated training equipment and secure storage for documentation.

Human resources

You may need extra personnel to help with promotions, prepare for a training session or organise a luncheon. You may need to hire casual staff for special activities, or require a specialist to complete some of the tasks, such as an auditor or illustrator.

Time

This is probably the most valuable of all resources. Setting realistic time lines for your tasks requires considerable skill, including the ability to consider potential problems and prepare a contingency plan. Remember to factor in time lines for organising a venue, hiring extra staff, obtaining and installing additional equipment and so on.

Money

Without an adequate budget, you will struggle to reach your objective. You need to account for all the purchases you will need to make, any additional services or skills you might need to contract in, and the salaries or wages of you and your team members.

Client needs

Everyone has clients, whether they are internal (colleagues, team members, managers) or external (customers, suppliers, business associates) to the organisation. Understanding and meeting the needs of your clients, whether internal or external, is one of your key responsibilities. Regardless of your role, you will always be responsible for providing some type of service or product to your clients. You and your team must have a clear understanding of how to best satisfy and fulfil your customer needs. This is one of your key objectives as a manager.

Most businesses and managers adopt a multifaceted approach to understanding their clients.

Here are examples of skills that you need to deploy when ascertaining a client's needs.

Understand changing needs

Client needs are rarely static: they change over time. One of your management responsibilities is to understand the direction your organisation wishes to take and, within this context, help your clients to meet their changing needs.

Your organisation's goals will also change over time. Does your organisation's business plan identify opportunities for expansion or challenges from new or existing competitors? How will they affect your team's work priorities? As the manager of your team, you need to understand the environment your organisation is working in and prepare your team to take advantage of opportunities and be able to resist damage from external threats of competition.

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Know the business cycle of your organisation

Your knowledge of your market and clients includes understanding market trends or purchasing patterns and planning for them. There could be certain times of the year when customers are more likely to purchase your product. For example, ski gear is a seasonal purchase. Other purchases could be cyclical; for example, mostly made at the end of the financial year. In that case, you may need to put aside other work during this period while you focus on meeting the increased production, purchasing or sales demands placed on your team.

Access any information held within your organisation that records the services requested of your team over the past 12 months. This will help you predict client needs for the next 12 months. You can also use purchasing data to determine purchasing patterns, which will help you schedule cyclical tasks and anticipate client demand.

Business offerings

Your clients may make an unusual or new request for a product or service. Your knowledge of your organisation's range of products or services will help you meet the client request. By working with the client to understand exactly what they require, you may find that your organisation can develop a product or service to suit the client, or that an existing product or service that the client is unaware of would suit their needs. Sometimes your clients' needs will not be best met by your organisation and you will need to refer them to someone who is better placed to service them.

By understanding your clients' needs and knowing your products and services, you will be able to make these judgment calls and provide a better service to your clients. As a team leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that your team also understands the parameters within which to make these judgment calls. Set guidelines for team members to follow and, when requests fall outside of the guidelines, make sure they know to discuss the solution to the client's need with you.

Know your market

Your understanding of the market that you operate in will help you when you are devising the work plan for the team. For example, if you have a good relationship with your clients, they may tell you when your competitors approach them for business. With this knowledge, you will be able to plan your strategy for keeping the client and you will also be able to report the competitor's activity to your manager and other colleagues who could be affected.

Part of your strategy may be to request a temporary increase in customer service support to ensure that all current clients are aware of the benefits and advantages of your product or service. Focusing on counteracting a competitor might affect the planned work of the customer service team; however, if counteracting the competitor is a high priority, other tasks will be given a lower priority in the customer service team's work plan.

Research your market

Understanding client needs might mean you have to undertake or commission market research. Market research can be routine and built into the everyday interactions that your team has with your clients. If you deal with external clients, research can simply involve asking new clients how they heard about you, or making a courtesy call at the end of a transaction to determine whether they are happy with the service provided, whether any improvements are needed or whether they need extra services.

Market research can also be more formal and extensive. You may want to initiate regular customer satisfaction surveys that are sent out to all the clients who dealt with your team in the last six months. You can find out whether there is an emerging need for a particular service your team could offer.

Depending on your skill set and your priorities, you can design the market research yourself, or use a marketing or market research department within your organisation that can undertake the research for you. Alternatively, you may need to commission an outside market research firm. The market research needs to be focused on helping you understand your clients' needs and how best you can serve them.

Meet with clients

You can regularly meet with your clients to check their requirements and determine their expectations of your team. Many clients value personal meetings. Always remember the key objectives when holding a meeting with a client. Your primary interest is to know more about the client and their business needs and how you can help them meet these needs.

Client meetings are an opportunity to manage client expectations. As the team manager, you are responsible for ensuring that clients clearly understand how your organisation can help them and that your team does not misrepresent your products or services or create false expectations.

Whatever methods you choose to understand your clients' needs, you must include these activities in your work plan. The more you understand your clients, the more you can prioritise your team's activities to ensure that important tasks are given appropriate attention.

Workgroup targets

As you write your workgroup plan, keep in mind your organisation's overall goal (its mission or vision), its objectives and targets. Be clear about the big picture before you set your own objectives. It makes sense for individual work objectives to be linked to team objectives, and for team objectives to be geared towards delivering business goals.

Your understanding of your team's goals must be clear enough for you to know what you should do to help achieve them. Consider your unique role and the responsibilities that correspond with the role to help ensure that your team reaches its goals. You must have a clear understanding of the role of your work group in the organisation.
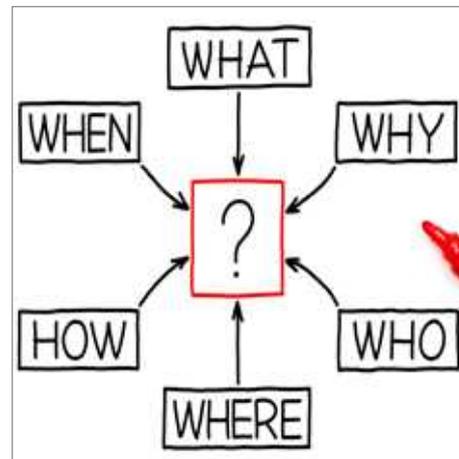
Whether a plan is intended to shape the future directions of the organisation, or shape your own daily activities in the short or long term, it needs a clear statement of purpose, objectives that can be measured and tasks that can be prioritised.

Definitions

You need to be clear about the subtle differences between goals, objectives and targets.

Here is an explanation of each.

Mission or vision

At the broadest level, the mission or vision of an organisation is a strategic goal set by the senior management of the organisation and encapsulates what the organisation wants to achieve.

Objectives

Objectives provide clear measuring posts as an organisation proceeds towards these strategic goals. Objectives are more short-term and more specific than goals.

Targets

Targets are usually more short-term than objectives and even more specific. They tend to cover five main areas: cost, quality, quantity, time and safety. Targets must be measurable; that is, you must be able to express them with a quantity, dollar, time or number measure.

Measurements

Your workgroup plan is likely to contain numerous targets. It is important to remember that each target must have a quantifiable measurement so that your team members know what to aim for and when they have achieved the target.

For example, if your workgroup objective is to improve client service, one of your targets might be to increase the client service rate. Team members would be very clear about how to achieve the specific target.

This target would need to be expressed as either:

- a measurement of time; for example, 'Service all clients within 24 hours of receiving service request'
- a percentage increase; for example, 'Increase by 50 per cent the number of client jobs completed within 24 hours'
- a number measure; for example, 'Complete 50 service requests every 60 minutes'.

Example: team's overall work plan

This diagram illustrates how your work plan and the plan for each of your team members stems from the team's overall work plan.

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                  ┌──────────────────────┐
                  │  Marketing team      │
                  │  work plan           │
                  │  Details marketing   │
                  │  teams               │
                  └──────────┬───────────┘
                             │
                  ┌──────────┴───────────┐
                  │  Your team manager's │
                  │  work plan           │
                  │  Details your        │
                  │  responsibilities    │
                  └──────────┬───────────┘
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  │ Team 1  │ │ Team 2  │ │ Team 3  │ │ Team 4  │
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  │ team    │ │ team    │ │ team    │ │ team    │
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Example: workgroup plans and client needs

The team leader's responsibilities

Carmela is the team leader at a printing house. She is responsible for managing a team of printing and packing staff and has a number of key external clients that her team provides printing services for.

Carmela relies on the supplies department to deliver adequate stock of various sizes and grades of paper, printing inks, binding and packing materials, and provide additional stock on demand.

Technology requirements

Carmela's technology requirements are taken care of by the maintenance department, which conducts fortnightly inspections of all of the printing machinery to ensure that it is running smoothly and to fix minor problems before they become serious.

Client needs

For two years, Carmela has been looking after the same six key clients so she is very familiar with their printing needs. She has a regular quarterly meeting with her top two clients to make sure she gets feedback from them about the service her team has provided in the preceding three months, and to manage the upcoming printing needs over the next quarter.

The remaining four clients are smaller and generally order standard printing jobs, so Carmela keeps in touch with them monthly by email and phone. She makes contact with these clients in the week prior to placing her own order with the supplies department.

Team meetings

Carmela holds a weekly meeting with her team:

- The printers report on their current jobs and warn the packers about the size of the jobs and when they are expected to be ready for packing. They also report on any mechanical glitches that may have occurred in the previous week.

- Carmela keeps a record of how current jobs are progressing and reminds the team of deadlines if necessary. She also notes the mechanical problems reported by the printers.

- At the end of the meeting Carmela updates the running sheet that details the progress of the current tasks against their deadlines and schedules in the new work with the people responsible for completing it.

Practice task 1

Read the previous example, then answer the questions that follow.

1. Create a list of Carmela's work group's targets.

    a) Set measurable and quantifiable parameters for each target.

    b) Check that each target is clearly defined so that team members know how to reach the target and when they have achieved it.

2. What are the steps Carmela has taken to ensure that the team meets its clients' needs?

3. How can Carmela demonstrate to her manager that she understands her clients' needs and considers them when managing her team?

4. What needs does Carmela have to consider when preparing the work plan for the team?

5. How does Carmela achieve the KPI of growing her client base?

Practice task 1

1B Analyse workgroup objectives and priorities

The team's objectives are the crucial goals that must be reached by the team, and are often reflected in position descriptions as key responsibility areas (KRAs) or KPIs that you will be held accountable for at performance review time. Objectives generally involve budgetary targets, production targets, reporting deadlines, sales targets, and individual and team learning goals. There are usually a number of objectives and some of these objectives will take precedence over others from time to time.

Set objectives and priorities

As a frontline manager, team leader or supervisor, you are ultimately responsible for setting priorities and achieving your team's objectives. Determining the priority of objectives requires you to understand how each objective contributes to the ongoing success of your organisation's strategic goals. You need to be able to interpret and analyse your organisation's business or strategic plan, and discuss with your manager your work group's priorities. Work with your manager to ensure that your team's effort is focused on achieving the major outcomes and reaching its highest priority objectives. You need to set the priority of each of the objective in relation to each other and articulate the reasons for this prioritisation to your team members.

Priorities can change over time. If your work plan covers an extended period of time, you may need to re-analyse your objectives to determine whether the priorities you originally assigned are still valid. Again, it is a good idea to check any changes with your manager prior to implementing them.

Technical and management objectives

The key objectives for each type of team should include both technical and management objectives. As a team leader, you are expected to have technical skills (specific to the area your team operates in) and management skills (ensuring your staff are motivated and appropriately skilled). Both these areas of expertise should be detailed in your position description and the team's objectives.

Following are some examples of different types of teams and their objectives.

Sales team objectives

- Meeting/exceeding annual sales targets
- Staying within budget
- Ensuring staff are appropriately trained
- Keeping clients satisfied
- Reporting on your team's progress and achievements.

Internal human resources objectives

- Providing timely and accurate human resource advice to colleagues
- Keeping up to date with legislation, awards and other human resource policies
- Preparing reports for management
- Ensuring staff are appropriately trained
- Keeping colleagues satisfied
- Staying within budget

Administration team objectives

- Providing timely and accurate administration support to colleagues
- Keeping up to date with, and procuring, technology as required
- Ensuring staff are appropriately trained
- Managing workflow between staff members
- Keeping colleagues satisfied
- Reporting on your team's progress and achievements.

Incorporate objectives and priorities into schedules

With your work group's objectives and priorities determined, it is time to incorporate them into individual work plans. A plan is not worth much to an organisation unless it is effectively implemented and its objectives are achieved.

Having already established which team members will undertake a task, you need to ensure that tasks are carried out according to the priority of the objective to which they contribute.

Communication

Communication is a key responsibility for team leaders.

You need to explain the team's role and individual team plans at a team meeting or work with individual team members. Speak clearly and ask questions to confirm their understanding. Check that everyone is aware of their role, the tasks they have to do in priority order, the objective of each task and how their work aligns with the organisation's goals.

Here are some techniques for speaking, listening and questioning.

Tips for speaking, listening and questioning
Use a clear voice and speak at an even pace.
Don't use jargon unless you are confident the audience is familiar with it. Your message must be unambiguous so there will be no misunderstandings.
Listen actively by paying attention to what the other person is saying and not interrupting them until they have finished.
Ask closed and open questions to seek confirmation of what you are saying. Rephrase statements or repeat them if the person looks worried or appears confused.
Always give team members the opportunity to ask their own questions.
Be enthusiastic and encouraging to motivate team members.

Example: incorporate organisation's strategic goals

The organisation's strategic goals may include the following:

- Achieve revenue growth of 5 per cent per annum.
- Increase market share to 75 per cent.
- Maintain 100 per cent customer loyalty.
- Retain and attract talented and committed staff.

Every team in the organisation will contribute in some way to increasing revenue and market share, maintaining customer loyalty and keeping staff happy and motivated. At times, though, there may be some conflict about whether or not to pursue an increase in market share because doing this might jeopardise your relationship with an existing client, therefore threatening your ability to maintain 100 per cent customer loyalty. If you can't achieve both objectives, you need to understand which objective is a higher priority, and be able to guide your team to achieving this objective.

Remember that the priorities of your team's objectives should reflect the priorities of the organisation's strategic goals. It might be more important to your organisation to deliver fault-free products than to exceed sales targets because it costs more to retrieve and repair faults than it does to miss out on a certain percentage of sales.

Therefore, your team will make the delivery of fault-free products its number-one objective, and focus on achieving zero per cent faults in preference to achieving 100 per cent of sales targets.

Practice task 2

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

Case study

Kirk is the team leader of five legal secretaries. The team looks after the administrative work of three partners in a law firm. The firm's partners pass work to Kirk who then distributes the work among the five secretaries. Usually, all work from a particular client will be given to the same secretary.

Kirk's draft work plan for his team includes the following objectives:

- Provide accurate and timely administrative support to partners.
- Maintain currency of all hard-copy and electronic active files.
- Ensure all closed files are archived accurately.
- Provide professional service to all clients.

Kirk is holding a meeting with the partners to determine the priorities of his team's objectives. He discusses with the partners the range of administration tasks the team has been undertaking in recent months, including preparing draft contracts and keeping up with the correspondence between the firm and its clients involved in the deals.

Kirk knows that the key objective of the partners is to maintain a high level of billing so that their revenue targets are met and salary levels can be maintained. In order to maintain a high level of billing, the administration team needs to make sure that all documents for clients are accurate and ready as needed.

Kirk is concerned that with the number of deals the partners are expecting to sign, his team will be flat out providing administrative support and customer service to clients. Kirk is worried that the files will not be accurately maintained. He raises his concerns with the partners and is confirmed that it is more important that the administration work is completed and that clients are kept informed about the progress of the work.

1. Describe how Kirk uses his knowledge of the firm's strategic goals to help him work with the partners to determine which objectives should be prioritised.

2. What questions do you think Kirk asked himself to determine which of his team's objectives were more important than the others?

… continued

3. Explain why you think the partners and Kirk agreed that the team should focus on administration and customer service rather than filing.

4. Why do you think they decided a floater could look after the files?

5. Using Kirk's team's objectives, devise his work plan, including all the tasks and their priority.

1C | Identify and plan for risks

A plan alone does not guarantee that you will achieve your goals. You need to consider factors that hinder completion of daily tasks and could prevent you and your team from achieving your objectives.

The process of identifying factors that could affect your plans is called contingency planning and the plan that you put into place to mitigate the factors is called a risk-management plan.

A contingency plan should detail the risks that you and your team face in implementing your work plan. Your risk-management plan details the steps you will take to overcome the risks should they arise.

By planning to overcome the risks, you should be able to neutralise the effects of any risks to your work plan. The more detailed the plan, the more likely you are able to deal with things that go wrong.

Steps involved in contingency planning can include:

- identifying the factors that pose a risk
- establishing contingency plans
- incorporating contingencies into your work plan.

Identify factors that pose a risk

Numerous factors could pose a risk to your team achieving its objectives. It is unlikely that all the risks you identify will eventuate, but you should prepare to deal with any risks that do occur. Some risks may be particular to the industry you operate in; others may relate to your geographical location.

To identify potential risks, you need to think laterally. The most obvious risks don't always pose the greatest threat. For example, you might plan to overcome the incidence of a sick employee, or a computer crash at work, but forget to plan for an employee's car being stolen when it contains important documentation. It may not always be possible to overcome these risks, but you should have a contingency or backup plan in place wherever possible.

You also need to be realistic. While your team faces any number of risks, there is no point wasting time creating a contingency plan for a flood, if your building is not in a flood-prone area. On the other hand, if you identify a risk that could severely impact your team's ability to achieve its objectives, you should treat this risk with the attention it deserves.

Competing work demands

At some stage throughout the work plan, there is a chance that a team member will experience competing work demands. This happens when they are expected to complete two different responsibilities in the same time frame, possibly of equal priority. The competing responsibilities could be within the one work plan, or the team member might be working across two different areas of the organisation and have responsibilities to another work team.

This clash could occur as a result of poor planning. If the time lines allocated for the completion of other tasks have been incorrectly estimated, this could affect the availability of the team member to move on to other tasks as originally planned.

Team members could also experience competing work demands if new responsibilities are allocated to them. This could result from new work coming into the organisation or it could be because they are taking on a new job role, or back-filling someone on leave.

Similarly, if you are a team manager who has technical responsibilities as well as management responsibilities, at times you may have to focus on one area of responsibility in preference to the other.

Technology and equipment breakdown

Technology and equipment, such as computers, photocopiers, fax machines and printers, are standard tools used to complete daily tasks in most workplaces. Technology and equipment breakdown is one of the more obvious risks that you should plan to overcome.

Given that most businesses rely on technology and equipment, a breakdown in technology or equipment can seriously affect your ability to complete tasks and objectives in the short term.

However, because businesses are so reliant on technology, it is also expected that you will have a proper contingency plan in place to quickly recover from any malfunctions. Tolerance for equipment breakdown affecting your outcomes is therefore reasonably low, so you must be prepared to overcome these problems should they arise. Clients do not want to hear why the product or service they expected is not ready; they want to know when it will be ready.

Breakdowns include anything from broken parts through to major computer system crashes. They could be the result of power outages or surges. They could be breakdowns that occur within your team, your organisation, your suppliers or your clients.

Unforseen incidents

It is very difficult to plan for unforeseen incidents. Probably the best way to plan for unforeseen incidents is to understand that they can happen at any time.

Unforeseen incidents include a supplier going into liquidation, a major virus attacking your computer system or a freak storm cutting the electricity supply to your area.

You need to identify the assumptions that are underpinning your work plan to be in a better position to overcome unforeseen incidents.

If you have identified all these factors, you can devise a plan to overcome problems as they arise. Remember, it is important to keep your planning realistic otherwise you will waste time that could be spent actually implementing your work plan.

Assumptions
• Access to your workplace
• Access to the necessary technology and equipment
• Uninterrupted supply of all inputs, such as materials
• Availability of team members

Personnel

Without your team members it is unlikely that you will be able to complete your plan and reach your team objective. Your team members will be one of the key assets that you have included in your work plan. As a key asset, it is important that you plan for any risks that might affect your team members' ability to meet their responsibilities.

Issues that you may need to consider include losing a team member due to illness, promotion, resignation or secondment to another team.

If the project you are working on is a lengthy one, you will need to factor in the possibility that team members will take leave during the project. Also, on long or complex projects, team members may lose enthusiasm and motivation. You need to plan to overcome any drop in your team's performance that could jeopardise achieving the planned outcome.

You also need to take into account the possibility that one or more team members may not perform to the standard required to complete the work plan. Performance management is an area of your own work plan that needs due focus.

Environmental factors

When managing your own or your team's performance you will need to remember that environmental factors can also have an effect on implementing a workgroup plan.

Here are two main factors that need some consideration.

Time

Time is an intrinsic part of a successful plan. The proverb 'Time stops for no man' should be foremost in your mind when you are putting your work plan together. It can't be stressed enough how important it is to adequately plan the time allocated to each task.

In most planning exercises you will not be able to compromise on any of three elements – time, money and quality. Changing one element always impacts the others. If you spend more time on a task, it will probably cost more money, but the quality might increase. If you decide you want to produce a higher-quality product, it might take more time and cost more money.

Weather

If weather can potentially affect your work plan, you must be prepared to counteract its effect. Weather is usually a consideration if tasks will be undertaken outside, you require delivery of materials, you need to store or transport items, or your team needs to travel.

Extreme heat or cold or severe weather conditions generally need to be accounted for. Heat or cold can result in equipment malfunctioning and can affect people's health. Severe weather conditions can affect transport and buildings, close airports for extended periods of time, and make driving dangerous.

Consider each step in your work plan and identify any tasks that can be affected by weather.

Resources and materials availability

Each step in your work plan will require resources of some sort, such as team members, technology, raw materials, stationery, money or time. Your work plan relies on you and your team having access to the resources required to carry out your responsibilities.

If resources are unavailable, your team may not be able to complete the tasks as planned. This is why identifying the resources you require to complete your work plan is such a key step in the planning process.

Once you have identified the resources, consider what will happen if the resources are not available. Note down against each task the implications of not having the required resources. This will form the basis of planning contingencies to cope with any resource shortage.

Budget constraints

The amount of money you have to spend on achieving your team's objective will influence the development of your work plan. Once your budget has been set, your work plan will detail how the budget has been allocated to resources to achieve the tasks and milestones in the work plan. Every resource you have planned to use will result in expenditure from your budget. Therefore, any changes to the budget will affect your work plan.

In the planning process you need to prepare for either the withdrawal of part or all of your budget, or an increase in your budget. Small changes to your budget may not affect your work plan very much, but larger changes could result in you being unable to maintain your current staffing levels, being unable to afford external expertise, or having to cancel the purchase of materials.

Wherever a budgetary change could impact your work plan, you need to note what the impact could result in and plan to overcome it.

Minimise risks

Many risks can be minimised by being well organised during the planning process. The more attention you pay to ensuring the team has the required budget and resources necessary to carry out the tasks and milestones you have identified, the more likely it is that your work plan will run smoothly. Resources include time, people, materials, technology, money and space; in short, anything that you need to work with to complete the tasks.

To minimise risks, you should check that:

- all your tasks build to the achievement of the milestones
- your milestones contribute to achieving the objective
- all the resources required for achieving the tasks have been identified
- you have confirmed availability of all of the resources.

Establish contingency plans

Contingency planning is the process of identifying alternatives or backup plans should your current plans be threatened by any of the risks you have identified. Assess the risks to identify their probability and potential impacts to your work plan and devise the response plan. This is best done collaboratively in a team to capitalise in different experiences and expertise within the team.

The contingencies, alternatives and backup plans that you identify must be realistic and workable. There may be more than one contingency at various degrees against each risk. It is also important to consider whether you can avert further risks by handling any initial risks well.

Here are several questions that might be posed when devising contingencies within a work plan.

Questions to ask when devising contingencies
• What will happen to the work plan if this risk occurs?
• Which tasks will be affected by the risk?
• How can we realistically stop this risk from occurring?
• What can we do to get the work plan back on track once the risk occurs?
• Is there more than one solution available to us?
• Are all solutions workable?
• Which is the best solution?
• What tasks are involved in executing the solution?
• Who will be responsible for carrying out the tasks?
• How will we know that we have overcome the risk?

Develop detailed risk management plan

Just as your original work plan has tasks and responsibilities detailed, your contingency plan also needs to contain these details. If you have identified risks that could seriously affect your team's ability to achieve its objectives, you may want to consider developing a very detailed risk-management plan for these particular dangers.

A number of common risks are outlined below.

Competing work demands

Competing work responsibilities can generally be resolved in a number of ways:

- Re-allocate the tasks to a team member who has the requisite skills and is available.
- Determine the priority of the competing responsibilities (possibly with the assistance of your manager). If your work plan takes precedence over other teams', you can refocus the team member's effort onto completing the team's objective.
- Increase the size of your team by hiring additional people temporarily or seconding someone from another team.
- Change the order of the tasks.
- Remove the tasks and change the scope of the work plan.

Technology and equipment breakdown

Be generous with your time allocations for tasks involving technology and equipment where possible. Take into account the fact that a mechanical failure could have severe consequences on your ability to achieve your work plan and prepare accordingly.

Some useful strategies to consider are:

- Ensure the team well trained and equipped with the relevant technology and machinery and have appropriate level of support.
- All machinery and technology should be routinely maintained to ensure it is in good working condition, lessen the likelihood of a breakdown.
- Have an agreement with a service provider that includes 24-hour emergency repair services within short time frames for your particularly time sensitive work plan
- Ensure that you have agreement to access substitute machinery in case of emergency
- Develop version control and back up procedure to secure important data at all times and keep copies in separate locations. Allocate accountability to team members for routinely monitoring and maintaining data integrity.

Time

One major environmental risk factor is time constraints. Unforeseen circumstances from your work plan such as changes of scopes, external delays, stock unavailable, etc. may affect your original time frame. Factor extra time into your work plan to make allowance for these potential issues.

Should your work plan go over time, you will need to determine whether the team can do the following:

- Complete some of the remaining tasks more quickly than you originally planned, which will either create more time within the overall plan or free up other team members to assist with the task that is running behind schedule.
- Allocate some tasks to other people, which will increase the number of people working on completing tasks.
- Outsource some tasks and re-allocate remaining tasks to the now freed-up team members.
- Meet with the management to renegotiate your deadline, resources and budget if none of those above can apply.

In all of these contingencies, there may be budgetary or personnel constraints that you will need to take into account.

Weather

Another environmental risk factor is weather. The main contingencies for weather risks include:

- having alternative venues for outdoor activities should the event be rained out prior to commencement
- having sufficient nearby shelter should weather conditions deteriorate during the event
- testing the capacity of storage or transport facilities to deal with weather conditions
- having alternative travel arrangements on standby should original plans be untenable or cancelled due to weather.

The key to coping with weather risks is to be well prepared. You must ensure that the alternative arrangements you have put in place are clearly understood by all team members. Establish a set of guidelines that detail at what point the alternative plans should be put into action.

Budgetary constraints

You need to monitor your budget closely, able to anticipate areas that potential issues may arise and investigate why and where the shortfalls occur. You then can apply preventative measures and appropriate responses where possible. Some of the issues may be overspending, anticipated revenue not eventuated, prices of items increased, availability of required materials due to changes in the marketplace, etc.

If your workgroup plan runs into budgetary constraints, you will need to decide the following:

- Can you reduce expenditure elsewhere in the budget to compensate?
- Can you delay the activity until more money is available?
- Can you use a cheaper alternative?
- Can you do without the activity?
- Can you seek additional funds for your budget?

For example, if the whole company's budgets have been affected by lower than forecasted revenue, there is little point in seeking additional funds; if your activity generates revenue, it is probably not a good idea to delay its completion. In this case, a better contingency is to source cheaper inputs or reduce expenditure elsewhere in your budget.

Establish contingencies

For each contingency, you need to have a plan in place. For example, if sourcing alternative inputs is one of your contingency plans, you need to know which businesses supply alternatives and at what price. Sometimes it can be worthwhile discussing the issue with your regular supplier – they may have alternative stock that is cheaper.

Remember the list of questions you can ask yourself when establishing contingencies. The more thorough your contingency planning is, the more likely your team will overcome any risks or delays. Always be prepared with a follow-up plan or take preventative action before the project gets underway.

Use the following tips when preparing your contingency plan.

Tips for preparing contingency plans
• Check that stocks and supplies are adequate before you begin tasks that require them.
• Have a list of suppliers other than your usual ones and who you can contact in an emergency.
• List the names of other people who have similar skills and can replace team members at short notice.
• Always take possible delays into consideration when setting time lines.
• Make deadlines a few days earlier than when you actually need the work; this ensures that work will be completed on time.
• Incorporate contingencies into your work plan.

Incorporate planning

The last step in preparing for contingencies is to incorporate all of the planning work you have undertaken into your work group's plans.

For each task in your team's work plan, identify the potential risks and the contingency plan for each risk. Remember, a good way to identify the risks and contingencies is to brainstorm with the whole team. It is also a good idea to confirm the accuracy and completeness of identified risks and contingencies with your manager.

The contingency plan that you and the team prepare supports the team's work plan. The contingency plans may never need to be put into action, but they must be written and accessible to all team members so they can be implemented if necessary. The contingency plan should include clear guidelines that stipulate when the contingency plan should be put into place.

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Contingency plans for specific work plans

Depending on the contingency you are preparing for, you may need to incorporate the specific contingency plan into one of the following plans where most relevant:

- Sales plan
- Reporting plan
- Production plan
- Budgetary plan
- Team participation plan
- Work schedule
- Team and individual learning goals

For example, if you were planning to overcome a budgetary risk, you would most likely include the contingency plan in the budget plan. If you were planning to overcome a team member availability risk, you would include the contingency plan in your team participation plan.

Example: work plan and its corresponding contingency plan

The following is a work plan and its corresponding contingency plan.

Work plan

Milestone	Task	Responsible	Risk	Time line
Annual report dispatched to all shareholders	• Coordinate receipt of all departments' contributions (including financials) to annual report	SA	• Contributions delayed • Contributions incomplete • Contributions unavailable • See 'Contributions contingency plan'	31 July
	• Format all contributions into the annual report template	LO	• Template corrupts • New template required • LO unavailable • See 'Template contingency plan'	14 August
	• Proofread and edit formatted draft	TF	• TF unavailable • Draft corrupts • See 'Editing contingency plan'	15 August

continued ...

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	Corresponding contingency plan		
Risk	**Action**	**Responsible**	**Time line**
Contribution/s delayed	As soon as you are aware that a contribution is going to be delayed: • determine the length of delay • ascertain the reason for delay • inform the manager • ensure relevant department manager is aware of delay • ensure alternative person is nominated to provide information if necessary • determine new deadline if necessary • keep the manager up to date on progress • inform the team of status of contribution.	SY	31 July

Practice task 3

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

Case study

Blake is in the business support team, helping the manager complete team budgets for the directors meeting in 10 days. He is also a member of a taskforce working to implement improved computer systems. The directors are expecting a report on these new systems at the upcoming meeting.

Carin, a computer consultant, is sick for a week and this affects Blake's time lines. He needs to spend more time than originally estimated working on the new accounting system prior to the directors meeting. This will now affect his workload in the business support team and the manager is less than satisfied with his performance.

Blake prepares a list of his tasks with the accounting system and estimates how long they will take. He then identifies the tasks that he needs to do to complete the team budgets. He is able to see that he could work on the budgets with his manager on the days that the accounting system is being tested by the taskforce. He discusses his solution with his manager and the taskforce, who agree that this is the best use of his time. In this way, both reports will be ready for the directors meeting.

1. What did Blake do to manage his competing work demands?

... continued

2. Considering time, budget and resources constraints, what contingency plan could you put in place if you were Blake?

3. What other risks may Blake's business support team need to plan for? Prepare a contingency plan for each of the risks you identify.

1D Use business technology to manage tasks

Business technology can be extremely useful when it comes to planning. There are software application programs such as Microsoft Project that can be used to schedule tasks and resources, and monitor time lines. You can also use personal schedulers such as a Palm Pilot to record and monitor your tasks on a daily basis.

However, it is important that you use technology as a means to an end, not as the end itself. Your responsibility is to develop your work group's plan and monitor the team's progress towards achieving its objectives, not to spend time learning computer programs and using technology.

If you are focusing on perfecting the different features of your personal organiser in preference to completing your responsibilities within the work plan, you are unlikely to be contributing to your team's achievement of its objectives.

The following technology may be useful to you when managing tasks:

- Computers and computer applications, including email and internet, intranet and extranet, software management programs and spreadsheets
- Personal schedules
- Modems
- Scanners
- Photocopiers
- Fax machines
- Printers

Computers and computer applications

Your computer can be a powerful planning tool. Depending on the software available on your computer, you may have access to specific project management and planning software.

Consider training courses to ensure you and your relevant team members become proficient users of these useful applications. If this is a required skill for the job role or tasks at hand, make sure you include relevant training in the professional development plan.

Project management applications

If your workgroup planning is particularly complex, involving many objectives, tasks, milestones and resources, it might be useful to become proficient in a software application such as Microsoft Project.

With project-planning computer applications you can define significant steps in your plan, such as milestones and critical tasks, record task's duration and required resources, and link tasks that are dependent on each other to automatically calculate the overall project time line. By recording the completion of tasks as they occur, the application will track the progress and advise whether you are keeping to the time lines you established.
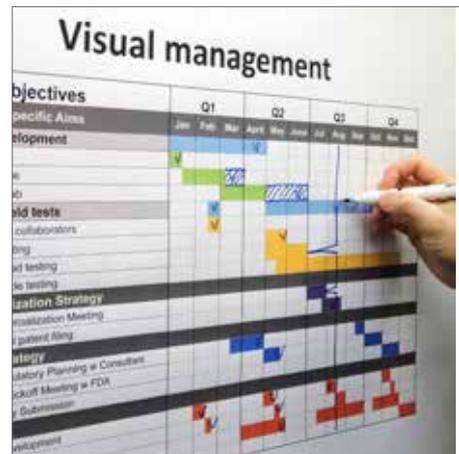
You can also use the information you enter in different features within the application such as Calendar, Gantt chart, Network diagram and Task usage. Each feature focuses on a different element of your work plan. For example, the Resource usage feature allows you to see whether you are under- or over-utilising resources.

Spreadsheet applications

Even if you don't have access to specific project-planning software, you can use word processing and spreadsheet applications to develop your work group's plan and to track time lines. By entering in specific dates, you can plan when tasks should be completed. If you keep track of the time lines you enter, you will be able to see when time lines are slipping or won't be met.

You can design a spread sheet to plan and monitor your performance in relation to your targets and any changes that are needed to keep performance at a satisfactory level. Salespeople can plan and predict the amount of sales they need to make in order to achieve weekly revenue targets. They can calculate their targets as a percentage of their weekly income and work out their level of commission.

Be familiar with the capabilities of spreadsheets so you know how you can use them to help you in the work of your group.

Word-processing applications

Word-processing applications such as Microsoft Word and Google Docs are useful to create personal and business documents. Some of the functions of word-processing software include:

- creating, editing, saving and printing documents
- copying, pasting, moving and deleting text within a document
- formatting text, such as font type, bolding, underlining or italicising
- creating and editing tables
- inserting elements from other software, such as illustrations or photographs
- correcting spelling and grammar.

When developing the work schedule, it is easy to also organise and group information into tables in these applications. For example, you can easily detail all the tasks in a table and allocate those tasks to particular people with specific deadlines.

Here is an example of how you can do this.

Person responsible	Activity	Tasks	Time line
Maya	Begin planning the content and budget for the mail-out	Determine recipients of the mail-out.	16 August
		Compile database of recipients and contact details.	
		Prepare a list of items that will be involved in the mail-out.	
		Draft an estimated budget for the project from supplier quotes.	
		Provide budget to management for approval.	

Intranet

If your organisation has an intranet, you may be able to use it to post information about your work plan. An intranet allows many people to simultaneously access the same information. Therefore, an intranet can be used to share details about your team's tasks, time lines and responsibilities.

If your team is not located together geographically, the intranet can be a quick and easy way for you to share information between each other. You can upload the team's work plan as well as updates about how the team is progressing towards achieving its tasks and milestones. Then, everyone on the team can monitor the completion of the team's tasks and keep updated about which tasks are scheduled and for when.

Email, calendar and task scheduling applications

Email can be used as an efficient means of distributing information to a large group quickly and easily, keeping the team well informed in a timely manner. You can also attach additional documents with your email messages such as reports, photos and spreadsheets.

Calendar and tasks features are powerful planning tools and can be used as your personal schedule. It is a good way of keeping track of your appointments, meetings, tasks and the time lines you have to complete them in. You can record details against specific dates and times and set reminder alarms.

You can also attach all relevant documents and correspondence related to the task in the same place. Make a list of things you need to do during the day or week and use the task list view to monitor and prioritise your daily work. This helps you keep track of your important tasks, categorise and prioritise tasks and will prompt you with a reminder if a task is overdue. You can also allocate tasks to other individuals and groups and track their progress. Some programs arrange tasks on a time line so you can see which tasks are competing for the same time.

Mobile devices

Technological advancements now include mobile devices such as smartphones, iPad and PDA, which allow you to keep in touch by voice and text messages, receive email, browse the internet, access a calendar and organiser, and access applications such as spellcheck and 'print to fax'. This can be useful when staff are travelling and away from the office.

Charts

Charts are used to show relationships between tasks and their daily importance in achieving your work objectives. A flow chart is a pictorial representation showing all the steps of a process or activity. It can help you decide which problem to address first or next. You can make a flow chart of any process that helps you to see the steps involved in making a sale, servicing a product, serving a customer or producing an invoice.

Pie charts are circular graphs where the entire circle represents 100 per cent of the data. The circle, or pie, is divided into percentage slices that clearly show the relative sizes of the data being studied. They are a good way to show the relative importance of problems or the time relationships of your tasks. If you have completed a time estimate of the different tasks or jobs you are expected to do in a week or a month, you may wish to depict these time relationships in a pie chart.

Gantt charts

A Gantt chart is used to depict the tasks you have to do, their time frame and their actual progress in relation to the plan. Each activity that has to be done is listed on the left side of the chart (vertically). Time is shown horizontally (for example, in days). To prepare a Gantt chart you need to:

- plan and list step by step what needs to be done (the activities or tasks)
- show when each task should start and when it should finish
- determine when the overall project should be completed.

As time passes, add your 'actual' lines to keep track of how your plan is progressing and to see whether you are ahead of or behind schedule.

Gantt charts serve both as a planning and a monitoring tool. They are also useful for indicating where two or more activities can occur at the same time.

Example: Gantt chart

This simple Gantt chart was created in Microsoft Excel. The shaded areas indicate that these activities must be completed before the next activity can commence. For example, if the contracts are not finalised on the first day, none of the other work can commence, and if the research materials and contacts are not received on the second day, steps 1.2 and 1.3 cannot commence on the third day.

Time line		WEEK 1					WEEK 2				
Phase 1: Research		1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12
Finalise contract		■									
1.1 Identify and confirm key stakeholders			■	■	■						
Receive research materials and contacts			■								
Receive key stakeholder contacts and list approval					■						
1.2 Analyse related work				■	■	■	■	■	■		
1.3 Identify best practice examples						■	■	■	■	■	■

Practice task 4

1. Which computer applications are you able to use to help you prepare your workgroup plan?

2. Which business technology is most appropriate for you to use to monitor your team's progress and schedule tasks?

Summary

1. Workgroup plans are developed by team leaders, managers or supervisors to outline the actions the team is responsible for performing.

2. As the team leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that the team's work plan is consistent with the achievement of the organisation's overall strategic goals and objectives.

3. The broader workgroup plan will consist of several sub-plans such as a sales plan, reporting plan, production plan, budgetary plan, team participation plan and work schedule.

4. Workgroup plans specify the team's goals and objectives, targets, tasks and activities, team member responsibilities, resources, time lines, milestones and priorities.

5. Objectives need to be developed for the work group so they are consistent with the organisation's overall strategic objectives.

6. Objectives need to be prioritised in order of their importance to the organisation – some objectives will take precedence over others.

7. Determining the priority of objectives requires you to understand how each objective contributes to the ongoing success of your organisation's strategic objectives.

8. The work group's objectives and priorities must be incorporated into the individual work plans of each team member.

9. Risk factors that affect the achievement of work objectives must be identified. These include competing work demands, technology and equipment breakdowns, unforeseen incidents, personnel issues, environmental factors, availability of resource and materials and budget constraints.

10. Contingency plans are essential and must outline alternative or backup plans, should any of the risk factors occur, to ensure objectives can still be achieved.

11. Business technology can be used to manage and monitor the planning, progress and completion of work schedules. This includes project-planning software, Gantt charts, spreadsheet software, word-processing software, personal schedules, email and an organisational intranet.

Learning checkpoint 1
Plan and complete your work schedule

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in planning and completing your work schedule.

Part A

1. Explain how client needs affect the plans you develop for you and your work group.

2. Explain how available resources affect the plans you develop for you and your work group.

3. Explain how workgroup targets affect the plans you develop for you and your work group.

4. Explain how the achievement of your KRAs and KPIs contribute to the work group achieving its objectives.

5. Use the following table to provide examples of business technology and how it can be used to manage and monitor the planning, progress and completion of the team's tasks effectively and efficiently. Include at least four types of technology.

Business technology	How it is used effectively

6. List three situations when you need to interpret numerical information when developing work plans.

Part B

Read the case study, then complete the tasks that follow.

Case study

Katy Petcovich works for Sound Vision, a small company that manufactures and sells software to produce audio visual presentations for the home personal computer market.

Katy is the team leader of the marketing and publicity team, which also consists of Jane Harding, a research officer, and Tia Song, an administrative officer. The team is responsible for researching competitors, preparing brochures and publicity flyers, arranging mail-outs to clients, organising a marketing stall at targeted conferences, trade fairs and seminars and preparing progress reports for management.

Katy's role is to plan her team's schedule as well as her own, which includes setting goals, objectives and targets to ensure that the team's goals and objectives are met. She is also directly involved in linking her team's responsibilities to the overall goals and objectives of the organisation and communicating effectively with the team so everyone understands their responsibilities.

The organisation's objectives in the current financial year are:

*   Increase marketing activities by 15 per cent
*   Decrease customer complaints by 70 per cent
*   Increase customer awareness of the company
*   Increase market share by 10 per cent

Katy's key result areas (KRAs) are:

*   Raise awareness of the company through targeted marketing and publicity campaigns
*   Maintain customer satisfaction
*   Stay within the budget
*   Ensure staff are properly trained
*   Meet time lines

1.   What are Katy's work responsibilities?

2. Prepare a work plan for your team using the following table. You can use the case study or your own workplace.

Team objectives	Target	Tasks	Milestone	Team member	Time line	Priority

3. Using the team's work plan from question 2, prepare your individual work plan or schedule using this table.

Objective	Target	Activity	Resources	Time line	Priority

4. Identify one risk that could affect your team's ability to achieve its work plan. List a contingency plan for overcoming that risk factor.

Topic 2
Monitor your work performance

People are most satisfied and motivated when they work in roles that utilise their skills and that reflect their particular interests and values. The greater the match of your own abilities and skills to the position, the more effective your work performance is likely to be. But just how effective is it?

While planning your work schedule establishes what you will do, monitoring actual performance helps you to determine whether and how well the work is being done. Monitoring involves the process of measuring and comparing actual results or work in progress with planned performance.

In this topic you will learn how to:

2A   Identify and analyse personal performance standards

2B   Seek feedback from colleagues and clients

2C   Identify and report variations in service and product quality

2A | Identify and analyse personal performance standards

In order to evaluate and monitor your work performance, it is important that your job description and performance standards are clearly defined. You can easily refer to the quantifiable, 'hard' measures such as objectives, targets and key performance indicators for required benchmarks.

'Soft' measures, such as your attitude towards your job, your initiative, motivation and interpersonal behaviour, are not so easily quantified. These aspects should be constantly self-evaluated. They will also become evident in any performance appraisal processes conducted by your manager and may be the source of much of your feedback.

Hard measures of performance

Make sure you are able to identify your expected performance outcomes in your work. Be clear about the activities that constitute your job and are contained in your job description.

Here are examples of key performance and area indicators that assist in supporting and measuring your personal work and professional performance.

Key result areas (KRAs)

Key result areas (KRAs) describe the main areas of accountability and responsibility of a job and provide a framework for your activities. KRAs specify the tasks that contribute to the team's goals and performance. For example, an office manager or team leader of a large recruitment company might have the following KRAs:

- Staffing levels
- Leadership
- Health and safety cost containment
- Industrial relations

Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Each key result area should have two or three targets that can be used to measure performance. These are often called key performance indicators (KPIs) or measures of performance (MOPs). KPIs should measure the most important or critical aspects of the KRA and contribute to overall team and organisational goals.

Your key performance indicators may relate to:

- increasing sales
- cutting costs
- improving quality
- delivering on time
- increasing customer satisfaction
- reducing the level of complaints.

Feedback

You will receive feedback about how well you are performing and meeting your KPIs when you have a formal performance review with your manager. Most organisations conduct at least one or two performance appraisal sessions a year. This gives you an opportunity to discuss your strengths, and see where you need to improve.

You can also seek informal feedback from colleagues and team members.

It is extremely important to find out how you are progressing. You may well overlook an area that needs improving, or not realise how your behaviour is affecting the team, making it difficult to achieve your objectives.

Soft measures of performance

Some performance standards, such as customer service, honesty and courtesy, are difficult to assess. For example, a bank teller's performance may be measured by accuracy in monetary transactions. Using only this measure ignores courtesy and the speed or volume of transactions. It is therefore important to use a variety of performance standards and measurements. Feedback from customers and colleagues is often used to measure politeness, efficiency, enthusiasm, integrity and maintain customers' privacy.

Monitoring helps to ensure that performance meets established goals and KPIs. It may reveal the need to modify plans or change the way work is done, or even the way it is monitored.

Soft questions for monitoring process:

- How long does it take to send relevant information to customers?
- How long does it take to reply to each customer via email?
- How does this compare to talking to the customer on the telephone?
- How many complaints have been processed in the last month?
- What product has been the source of most complaints during the past six months?

Lead and lag indicators

Timely and effective monitoring can provide an early warning so that corrective action can be taken before more serious problems arise. Lead indicators are measures designed to track things as they happen. For example, instead of analysing complaints after six months, document each complaint when you receive it and look for a pattern. Are customers complaining about the same thing? You should be able to take immediate action to reduce the number of complaints.

Lag or historical indicators measure results after the monitoring and reviewing process is completed and documented. You may need to take corrective action if the results are unsatisfactory. Ensure that you document the soft questions so that the process is improved the next time you undertake a similar task.

Self-assess performance standards

Forward-thinking managers constantly reassess the direction of their organisations by promoting a process of evaluation and reflection. What are the organisation's goals and standards and how are these being achieved? Managers need to assess the organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This process is known as a SWOT analysis.

In your own job role, you need to evaluate to what extent you are achieving your performance standards. Reflect on your previous performance appraisals. Is there scope for self-assessment? Is this conducted prior to the appraisal interview? What benefits did you derive from the process?

Here are some advantages and disadvantages of self-assessment to consider.

Advantages of self-assessment

- A sharing of the process of appraisal
- Tangible input from the employee who provides much of the agenda
- A joint commitment to continuous improvement
- An honest and often more critical assessment of own performance than a manager

Disadvantages of self-assessment

- Managers feel that they are giving too much responsibility to staff and not having enough control
- Staff feeling that if they admit to weaknesses, their weaknesses may be used against them
- Staff being unsure about whether to provide upward feedback to their managers
- Uncertainty as to whether the self-assessment form becomes part of the formal record

Conduct your self-assessment

Your organisation may have a self-assessment form you can complete. You can carry out an assessment of your own skills and use this to prepare yourself for a performance appraisal session with your manager. This requires a high degree of self-awareness. What are your strengths and weaknesses? In what area of your job do you feel most threatened? It also helps to understand your motivations and to be clear about your views and values. These help shape your attitude towards your job and your team members, and ultimately affect how you achieve your goals.

Think about how you feel about yourself; that is, your level of self-esteem. Your self-esteem is a major determinant of your behaviour and thereby your effectiveness. The higher your self-esteem, the more likely you will be able to contend with the task at hand, take on challenges and work towards an honest self-appraisal.

Questions on the self-assessment form usually cover:

- your views on your achievements during the past year
- your strengths
- areas for improvement
- what support you would like from your manager in the future
- possible future development needs.

Example: self-assessment form

The following is an example of a self-assessment form used to generate discussion in an appraisal session.

Self-assessment form	
Area	**Self-appraisal**
How do you feel you have performed against your objectives this year? Describe your specific achievements.	
Describe your strengths; for example, technical, personal, interpersonal and managerial skills.	
Describe areas you feel you could improve.	

... continued

Area	Self-appraisal
Is there anything that could have helped you perform your role more efficiently?	
Is there any support or training you could use? Please explain.	
What objectives in your role would you set yourself in the next year; for example, what are your long-term aims?	
What other points would you like to discuss at the performance appraisal session?	

Personality types

It may help your self-assessment to consider the type of person you are. Some people enjoy working with technology, some prefer organising and coordinating special events or promotions; others seek out jobs that offer a high degree of personal contact – helping others and providing advice.

There are several theories on personality types that help to explain what type of tasks and jobs a person is more suited to. Personality models can generate self-knowledge and help you analyse what parts of your job you perform well, and in which areas you may be under-performing.

Here are Psychoanalyst Carl Jung's identified personality types.

Thinkers

Thinkers are strong on clear, logical reasoning; they are methodical and enjoy analysing problems. In organisations, thinkers are often found working with facts and figures, in systems analysis or research.

Intuitors

Intuitors are good at using their imagination to come up with ideas. They see the big picture easily but often neglect the details. They are often the strongest at long-term planning and creative tasks.

Feelers

Feelers see things according to their personal values and gut reaction rather than from a technical viewpoint. They are perceptive about people's moods, feelings and reactions. They make good counsellors and public relations people.

Sensors

Sensors are down-to-earth, energetic and hardworking, preferring action to words or ideas. They are practical people with a lot of common sense. They are usually well-organised and good at setting things up, negotiating, troubleshooting and converting ideas into action.

Application of the Jung model

Jung's model can be analysed and developed in order to increase the effectiveness of your individual and team tasks. Personality types tend to manifest themselves when people engage in team situations. A person's personality type often has them occupy a role within the team such as the talker, the silent one, the wanderer, the bored one or the arguer.

By being aware of your personality and how you deal with other people, problems, and a busy workload, you can try to place yourself in situations where you feel most comfortable and able to contribute.

If you know your personality type, you can:

- work out what your strengths are: doing (sensor), organising (feeler), analysing (thinker) or creating (intuitor)
- avoid situations that highlight your weaknesses and erode your confidence and self-esteem
- pick the brains of a work colleague, peer or supervisor if you have been given a task in which your skills are underdeveloped
- you can't avoid all situations that you find challenging; sometimes you just have to do the best you can and learn to improve.

Practice task 5

1. Describe the differences between hard and soft measures that relate to an individual's job performance.

2. Think about the soft measures that are intrinsic to the standard of your own job performance.

   a) How do you communicate or relate to other members in your organisation?

   b) How responsive are you to requests for information?

   c) What level of customer service is expected?

3. What lag or lead indicators help you monitor your job performance or tasks?

4. Think about your own personality type.

   a) What category best fits your disposition?

   b) How is this reflected in the tasks you perform?

2B | Seek feedback from colleagues and clients

You may think you are doing a good job until you are overlooked for promotion. Alternatively, you may underestimate your performance, until suddenly your manager gives you increased responsibility and higher duties in your supervisor's absence.

Although you may be performing your job to a high degree of personal satisfaction, think about whether it also satisfies and fulfils the expectations of your peers, supervisors and managers?

When seeking information from others, speak clearly and frame your query using language the other person is familiar with so there are no misunderstandings.

The role of feedback

Feedback is valuable, as you receive information about your performance from different perspectives. Most people want to know how others view their performance and whether people think they are achieving their goals. This is important in the context of both your individual and team requirements. Just as your level of self-esteem affects your ability to carry out honest evaluation, it may also affect your ability to accept and benefit from feedback.

People enjoy praise, and staff at all levels always respond well to positive feedback and constructive suggestions on their work performance. It is harder to receive negative feedback. However, such feedback can be just as valuable because it challenges you to re-evaluate your personal behaviour, your goals and how you achieve them.

Feedback may be about behaviour; that is, what you say or do. It may also relate to the way you communicate with peers, share the workload and cooperate with team members.

Different types of feedback

The objectives for establishing and building rapport with others when fostering an honest and trustworthy workplace culture is an underpinning requirement of peer feedback. You no doubt receive feedback in your daily work. If you receive regular positive feedback that shows you are performing to the standard required, you know that you are achieving your objectives to your manager's satisfaction. However, if you receive negative feedback you need to confront the issues raised and analyse where your performance is falling short of expectations. Take steps to improve the situation if the criticism seems justified.

Behavioural theorists show how feedback and reinforcement can improve performance. They identify two types of positive and negative feedback: unconditional and conditional feedback.

Here is an explanation of each.

Unconditional positive feedback

Unconditional positive feedback is given to staff for being themselves. It helps develop positive working relationships, makes people feel good and helps raise their confidence and self-esteem. It is good for general motivation and morale.

Conditional positive feedback

Conditional positive feedback is what a supervisor or manager gives a person when they have done something they want, such as meeting a performance target. It increases the likelihood that the behaviour will be repeated.

Unconditional negative feedback

Unconditional negative feedback is given to people whatever they do, right or wrong, good or bad. It makes people feel unimportant and lowers morale and self-esteem.

Conditional negative feedback

Conditional negative feedback is negative reinforcement given for a specific action. It can help reduce or eliminate the behaviour in question. Think of conditional negative feedback as constructive feedback. It strengthens relationships and helps people perform tasks better.

Feedback at meetings

A staff meeting provides an opportunity for you to raise issues and seek feedback. You may be involved in a project that is regularly discussed at staff meetings or you may wish to raise an issue as other business. You can ask staff for their verbal comments and feedback about your tasks, or ask them to let you know in writing; for example, by email or a memo.

Sometimes an informal gathering of your team may also provide feedback on how your objectives are being met and whether other team members share your views and standards.

Feedback from supervisors/managers

Your immediate supervisor or manager is the best person to evaluate your performance and give feedback, both in terms of individual and group requirements. It is also their responsibility to direct your behaviour and performance towards achievable and realistic goals. Team leaders who are forthright and perceptive with their feedback help to motivate you towards performing at your best. Don't hesitate to ask for their advice on your performance directly. This will help to increase your confidence and improve your performance, especially if they notice there are areas where you are under-performing.

Performance appraisals are usually held once a year with the aim of reviewing each staff member's performance, formalising the process begun in self-assessment. They provide an opportunity for you and your team leader to discuss and evaluate your work performance, skill levels and attitude, and how these meet the requirements of your job. This can help you to ascertain how effectively you are achieving your work objectives.

For managers, a performance appraisal is a useful way of identifying training and development needs so that staff can improve their work skills and performance. They provide data for salary reviews, training, performance improvement and career development.

A performance appraisal helps both parties to:

- clarify goals
- identify gaps between current and desirable performance
- agree on actions to fill these gaps such as participation in external courses, on-the-job coaching and structured reading.

Feedback from customers

Customers can approach management through letters, email, telephone calls, survey responses and customer review websites to provide both positive and negative feedback on their experience with your organisation's service or the quality of its products. You may be the subject of this feedback.

There are a variety of ways to solicit feedback from customers in order to ascertain whether their needs are being met. You could ask a customer whether they are happy with your level of service, with the information or advice provided, or use a more formal process.

Formal feedback includes customer surveys and questionnaires. It's very common to have feedback surveys on an organisation's website. Customers can be directed to the website for details of a promotion, and are required to answer a series of questions to become eligible for a special offer. One of these questions may concern the personal contact they have had with the organisation, including the name of the contact and whether their queries or complaints were dealt with satisfactorily.

Example: feedback on customer service behaviours

Kaye works in the customer service division at T Firm, a financial services company that offers taxation advice.

Five employees share answering the incoming telephone calls in the morning. Kaye recently applied for a promotion that was ultimately given to another team member. Kaye is upset at missing out on the promotion.

Her team manager explains to Kaye that, although her work is satisfactory and she gives customers correct details, her manner is often abrupt. In addition, she doesn't appear to show any initiative by offering alternative suggestions to customers.

The manager suggests that Kaye attend a short course in customer service to help build her skills, and to listen to her colleagues as they take customer calls.

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Practice task 6

1. Consider the different types of feedback you have received from people in your professional and personal lives.

   a) How has the feedback helped to motivate you?

   b) If feedback was negative, what was your reaction?

   c) Could the negative feedback have been given in a more constructive way?

... continued

2. Think about a time when you received positive praise or thanks from a customer. What was the situation and how did it affect your performance?

3. Has there been a time when customers have complained to management about your level of service or advice? How was it dealt with? What were the implications?

2C | Identify and report variations in service and product quality

An important responsibility for a team leader is to ensure that they and their team maintain the quality of service and products that is expected of them. A team leader's role is two-fold. Here are some things a team leader needs to monitor.

What team leaders monitor

Their own performance to see whether their actual performance meets expected performance standards

Team members' performance to ensure that it meets quality standards for the team leader to carry out tasks correctly

Monitor your own work performance

Constantly applying the methods used to self-assess and seek feedback on your performance to ensure that you are functioning as an effective team leader, continually meeting your objectives. Keep a record of feedback, areas in which you need to improve and opportunities for further development. These will form the basis of your professional development program.

Regularly reflect on and monitor your performance to ensure you meet established goals and KPIs. This helps to increase your self-esteem, awareness and confidence in your role. You may also be able to identify timely opportunities to refine and improve your performance.

For circumstances that you may not be able to meet your objectives due to issues beyond your control, you can still learn from the valuable experience.

Monitor the quality of service and products that affect your work

Part of monitoring your own work performance includes monitoring the quality of service and products that affect your work. There is little point in spending a lot of effort providing excellent customer service when the product is faulty or simply not available. It is in your own interests to be vigilant with regard to the quality of your organisation's products and services.

Generally, each organisation develops its own specific quality systems that reflect the nature and size of its operations. These may be articulated in different ways. A company may have a quality assurance manual complete with detailed quality control measures that need to be implemented at each level of the business. Alternatively, a company may outline quality

assurance in its business and team plans. The various departments or teams will develop plans for achieving these measures. Some organisations have a system of total quality management. Even if these policies are not overtly stated, they are frequently implied. Be aware of your organisation's methods for monitoring the quality of service delivery.

Total quality management

Total quality concepts have spread from manufacturing to all areas, including offices, retail outlets and other non-manufacturing fields such as tourism, legal and accounting firms, airlines and universities. Total quality management (TQM) is a philosophy that focuses on total employee involvement, aiming at continuously improving productivity, quality and teamwork. It is a commitment to excellence and total customer satisfaction.

TQM stresses work systems and processes as the major cause of poor quality. It identifies areas such as inadequate tools and materials, poor or inappropriate training and production processes beyond the skill of the employees.

Be aware of where your role fits into the company's goals and objectives to provide excellent customer service and products. This applies equally to both your external and internal customers.

TQM involves all employees and technical specialists. Here is a list of what TQM may involve.

What TQM involves
• Quality awareness
• Using systematic tools for monitoring quality standards
• Identifying and correcting poor quality
• Planning for continuous improvement

Actively seek feedback

You should actively seek feedback in order to take a proactive role in monitoring your work performance. Feedback may be informal. It may involve simply asking for advice, talking to people and clarifying whether or not you gave the correct information. If you have given a customer some advice but you are not sure whether it is appropriate, ask a colleague, team leader or manager for verification.

You may feel that you don't understand all the features of a new service you are expected to promote. It is better to immediately seek a more thorough understanding than ultimately get negative feedback that can undermine your confidence. Observe the other person's tone of voice and body language, which will give you further clues as to how well you have handled each situation.

Informal feedback works particularly well in an organisation that actively encourages open communication, and where leaders speak openly and honestly with staff. This environment promotes feelings of trust and confidence. It is easier to raise issues with leaders, especially if you feel you have under-performed in certain areas or if you are feeling dissatisfied or frustrated with some aspect of your job.

Report variations in service and product quality

If you self-assess and find that you need to improve in a specific area, such as communication or production processes, bring it to the attention of your manager as soon as possible. It is crucial that skill and knowledge gaps are filled quickly. Don't wait until your official performance review session. Alternatively, if a team member is not performing well and is responsible for a fall in quality, you may need to prepare a formal report and discuss the situation.

If you identify a breach in quality concerning a product or service within the organisation, you need to follow appropriate procedures to report the situation so it can be resolved as soon as possible. The organisation may have a form that needs to be completed, or the team leader may bring it to the attention of their manager either in writing, at their performance appraisal or in an informal discussion. Your report must be written clearly so the information is communicated effectively. Use language the audience is familiar with. If the information is complex, use headings and bullet points so it is easy to follow.

Whatever the situation, the fall in quality must be reported immediately. As team leader, it is your responsibility to monitor the quality of service and products and have methods in place to address them and ensure improvements are made.

Practice task 7

Read the following case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

Joseph Campbell has been working at S&G Mobile Marks for the past three years. He is a member of a team of three computer technicians who form a help desk that offers computer support to almost 70 employees in the company.

Joseph does not have a degree in computer technology but has always had an aptitude for working things out. He was hired to fill a short-term vacancy and has gained enough experience to be able to solve most day-to-day IT problems. He has since had a promotion, and his manager has been encouraging him to do some extra study and courses. Until now, Joseph has not acted on this feedback.

The company recently recruited Susan Findlay, a qualified IT employee. She has a degree in computer science and is very confident, ambitious and keen to go out of her way to learn about S&G's systems and help the staff. Joseph has found during the past month that staff are increasingly turning to Susan for IT support and to solve their problems.

Currently, the firm is changing the IT network server and there is a lot of extra work involved. Joseph is getting a bit stressed about the change. He is becoming abrupt with staff when fielding their questions about some of the new backup procedures. At the beginning of last week, the new network server crashed. Joseph blamed Susan and told his manager that it happened just after she ran the weekly virus check.

continued …

... continued

Complete this self-appraisal checklist as if you were Joseph.

Area	Self-appraisal
How do you feel you have performed against your objectives this year? Describe your specific achievements.	
Describe your strengths; for example, technical, personal, interpersonal and managerial skills.	
Describe areas you feel you could improve.	
Is there anything that could have helped you perform your role more efficiently?	
Is there any support or training you could use? Please explain.	
What objectives in your role would you set yourself in the next year; for example, what are your long-term aims?	
What other points would you like to discuss at the performance appraisal session?	

Summary

1. Your personal performance standards can be identified through a range of hard and soft measures.

2. Hard performance standards are the activities that constitute your job and are contained in your job description. These activities are defined in terms of key result areas (KRAs) and key performance indicators (KPIs).

3. Soft performance standards are the activities, behaviours and attitudes required in your role and extend beyond the duties listed in your job description. They include customer service, communication, honesty and courtesy and are more difficult to assess than hard measures.

4. Being aware of your personality type generates self-knowledge and helps you analyse what aspects of your job you perform well, and those aspects in which you may be under-performing. The Jung model identifies four personality types: thinkers, intuitors, feelers and sensors.

5. It is important to actively seek both positive and negative feedback on your performance from colleagues and clients in order to assess your own performance.

6. Feedback on performance can be collected from team members, supervisors, work colleagues and customers or via self-assessment and regular performance appraisals.

7. Variations in the quality of your organisation's products and services must be assessed against quality standards. Variations in performance must be identified and reported in accordance with organisational requirements.

Learning checkpoint 2
Monitor your work performance

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in monitoring your work performance.

Part A

Complete this activity in the context of the role you currently hold or a role you have held in the past.

1. In the following table, identify and define the major performance standards for your role using a range of hard and soft measures.

Performance standards	
Hard measures Key result areas	**Examples** Key performance indicators
Soft measures Key result areas	**Examples** Key performance indicators

... continued

Soft measures Key result areas	Examples Key performance indicators

2. For each performance standard, list the feedback sources you could use to actively seek information on your performance and whether you have met each performance standard you identified.

Performance standard	Feedback source	Performance met

3. For areas where your performance is not up to standard, list the actions you could take to improve your performance, according to organisational requirements and procedures.

4. Why is it important to report variations in service or product quality?

5. What procedures or rules should you follow when writing a report for others?

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

> **Case study**
>
> Dina is scheduled to have her annual performance appraisal in a few weeks' time. She knows she needs to be prepared, so decides to do a brief self-appraisal to make sure that her actual performance is meeting expected performance standards. She knows that she is often so busy that she forgets to scrutinise the performance of her team members to ensure that their performance meets quality standards, which is a crucial part of her responsibilities.
>
> Dina's KPIs relate to increasing sales, cutting costs, delivering on time, increasing customer satisfaction, reducing the number of complaints, and maintaining an efficient team. In addition, she seeks feedback from others so she can prove to her manager that she is meeting all performance standards.
>
> The results of her assessment should help Dina identify her strengths and the areas for improvement.

1. Why is it important for Dina to assess her own work?

2. List five questions Dina could ask herself to ensure that her performance meets established goals and KPIs.

3. Why should Dina also seek feedback from others?

1. Why is it important for Dina to assess her own work?

Topic 3
Coordinate professional development

If an organisation is to realise its full potential, it has to assess the existing skills of all its employees and decide what extra learning and training is needed. To do this, an organisation needs to facilitate a learning culture and provide employees with opportunities for self-improvement.

Likewise, to make the most of your job and maximise your career potential, you need to develop your own knowledge and improve your own skills set. In the face of constant change, you need accurate knowledge of career paths that suit your nature, needs and preferences.

In this topic you will learn how to:

3A   Assess your knowledge and skills against organisational benchmarks

3B   Research opportunities for improvement and learning

3C   Use feedback to identify improvement opportunities

3D   Facilitate continuous learning

3E   Record professional development achievements

3A | Assess your knowledge and skills against organisational benchmarks

When determining your development needs and priorities, consider your abilities, aptitudes, skills, interests and values and, where possible, link these with your organisation's objectives. You can also assess your abilities against the relevant national competency standards, which will show you how qualified you are to take on certain roles and identify areas you can improve.

Be honest and sincere. How motivated are you? How well do your skills match your job requirements? Are your abilities under-utilised?

Things to consider when assessing your development include:

- making objective assessments about the knowledge and skills you have and that you need to develop
- extending your awareness of transferable skills
- accepting new ideas
- standing back from day-to-day responsibilities and taking a broader view of your skills.

Identify existing skills

Self-assessment, which is a process of measuring your skills against a list of skills or criteria, is an important part of your responsibilities and helps you identify skill gaps. Self-assessment using set criteria helps you identify your existing skills and those you need to acquire, by comparing them with the performance criteria of a job. Some organisations use nationally recognised, industry-specific competencies, position descriptions or an organisation's list of required skills to help people assess their skills.

Position description

Look at your position description and study the benchmarks your organisation has set for your job role.

Some position descriptions include the selection criteria, which may list the technical and managerial skills and the soft, interpersonal skills that are highly desirable for the job role. They are often used as the base for the job interview questions.

Benchmarks

In addition to the position description there may be organisational benchmarks relating to quality standards set out in the organisation's policies and procedures manual. For example:

- All work must meet designated time lines.
- Customer queries must be responded to within 24 hours.
- Customer satisfaction rate must not fall below 80 per cent.
- All staff must follow WHS guidelines.

National competency standards

Your job requirements as listed in your position description may be based on national competency standards. These standards are made up of industry-specific competencies that describe the technical skills, knowledge and behaviours required by an individual to effectively and efficiently undertake the day-to-day tasks and duties of their work. The standards contain descriptors of outcomes to be achieved and criteria for performance. By looking at the prescribed set of skills and knowledge you can assess whether you are competent or whether there are learning gaps.

This self-assessment process is the first step in identifying your skills. If you can also provide evidence of the skills you already have, then you can have these skills formally recognised. This process is referred to as recognition of prior learning (RPL) and recognition of current competencies (RCC).

The skill gaps that you identify indicate your development needs and can become the basis for a learning program, leading to a formal qualification. Such a program can meet both your needs and those of your organisation.

To research the competency standards for your professional field and industry, access the www.training.gov.au website.

Skills audit

A skills audit provides an overview of a person's current job role, the nature of their work and how they perform it. It systematically identifies:

- the skills and knowledge a person has
- the level of competence the person has achieved
- the importance of the person's skills and knowledge to their job role
- the skill level required by the person holding the job
- any training they have recently completed outside their current job that might benefit the organisation.

Be honest when completing an audit. It is better to admit a weakness and work towards improving your work practices than pretending you are competent.

Determine skill gaps and prioritise skill needs

Once you have gone through the exercise of identifying existing skills and benchmarking them against required standards such as your organisational standards and the national competency standards, you can tick off the skills you already possess and make note of the required competencies that have not been ticked. The un-ticked competency areas are your skill gaps where you may need to target further development and training.

When you identify areas in which you would like training, you need to prioritise them according to their urgency. For example, if you need training in a software application to be able to achieve your work goals more efficiently, then this may be your most immediate need. Further training in negotiation skills would enhance your work but it is not a major or current skill gap so can wait until next year's professional development budget is approved.

Example: skill audit template

In this skill audit template, look at each of the skills, indicate whether you consider you currently possess the skill, whether it is needed in your job, and what you consider to be your level in each skill.

Please tick (✔) the appropriate boxes. The skill levels are:

N/A = not applicable (not used) 1 = low level of skill 2 = medium level of skill 3 = high level of skill

Skills	Do you have this skill?		Do you need this skill in your job?		What is the level of your skill?			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	N/A	1	2	3
IT Skills								
Microsoft Word								
Microsoft Excel								
Microsoft PowerPoint								
Administration and organisation								
Handling inbound and outbound calls and mails								
Making travel arrangements								
Editing and proofreading								
Time management								
Delegating tasks								
Processing								
Picking orders								
Handling deliveries								
Operating and maintaining plant equipment & systems								
Other								

Practice task 8

Think about your own skills in relation to your current job, a past job or a job you would like to have.

1. Read your position description, including the required skills, qualifications and experience. Does it clearly define the skills and knowledge needed for the job?

2. Find out what benchmarks the organisation has that impact on the skills and knowledge you need.

3. Are you developing skills in your job role that could contribute to a national qualification?

4. Do you need further skill development? What are your skill gaps?

5. Prioritise the skills you need and those you would like to have.

Practice task 8

3B | Research opportunities for improvement and learning

Although personal development and career planning is the responsibility of both you and your organisation, you often need to research opportunities for improvement and source avenues of learning yourself.

Here are examples of professional training and development activities that can assist in professional improvement and learning.

Professional development activities
Analyse your interests, values, goals and capabilities, and source avenues for advancement that suit your personality and interests.
Make decisions relating to your current job by becoming familiar with the future direction of your organisation.
Establish personal development plans through identifying the benefits to you that are likely to also benefit your organisation.

Research your options

Once you have identified and prioritised your development and learning needs, research the opportunities that are available. Find out whether your organisation offers time for you to attend a study course during work hours, and/or provides financial support. Think of creative solutions to your needs. Often, a formal training course is not the answer. Coaching or mentoring from a colleague with expertise in the targeted area may be more beneficial in some instances, as well as more cost-efficient.

As you research, make a note of the courses offered, their duration, cost and what they cover. Are they relevant? Will they help you achieve your work goals? Do they target the specific needs you have? How will the information be delivered – in a workshop, as a seminar or one-on-one? Will you have to attend outside of work hours? Will you receive recognition for attending?

Sources to help you plan your professional development include:

- your colleagues
- professional advice from the Learning and Development team in your organisation
- mailing list, brochures and catalogues advertising relevant courses
- training institutions
- the internet
- your local library
- professional associations
- your network of business colleagues.

Professional development options

Professional development does not necessarily mean undertaking a formal training course.

Here are examples of what constitutes professional development activities.

Types of professional development
• Training programs; for example, certification, training courses, off-the-job training
• Workplace training
• An information session highlighting an identified need; for example, how to implement an email policy
• Coaching or mentoring in the workplace by an expert; for example, one-on-one advice and support
• A work exchange program; for example, where you work for a designated period in another department or organisation
• Attending a conference in your field
• Joining a professional association and attending their meetings
• Career counselling; for example, sessions with a professional careers advisor

Training courses

There is a wide range of training courses from a number of training providers for every field and industry in Australia. Some are accredited, which means that they meet national standards and you receive a qualification for successfully completing the course. Besides the traditional classroom/on campus style, a number of training delivery modes are often available (such as off-campus learning, online courses and blended learning) to cater for diverse work and lifestyle needs.

Keep in mind that the training course must develop the skills and knowledge you require, in the required time frame and at the right price. Research types of relevant courses available and follow your organisation's procedures to request professional development. For example, some organisations require you to complete a form supplying information about the course and explaining the benefits you can bring back to the organisation. Other organisations may require you to put your request in writing and have it signed by your manager.

Try to ensure that the course doesn't compete with your work schedule.

Types of training courses

Here are two examples of the types of training courses that are commonly available.

Workplace training

You can set aside time to learn from your team leader or a skilled employee either in your own or another work group. On-the-job training allows you to learn specific job-related or technical skills that are both relevant and easily transferable. This type of training is best suited to skills that can be learnt in manageable timeslots.

Off-the-job training

If you need to develop people skills, such as problem-solving, planning, decision making, leadership and communication, then off-the-job training is often more suitable. Off-the-job training is also preferable if you are seeking to extend your technical knowledge and understanding of elements of your job.

Coaching and mentoring

An important part of any training or professional development initiative is reliant on the support of a coaching or mentoring process. Here is a brief outline of each.

Coaching

Coaching is a cost-effective way of helping people gain important skills and knowledge from their peers, supervisors or others in the organisation with specific expertise. These people can:
- provide information
- suggest books to read
- suggest other people to talk to or consult
- recommend courses to attend.

Mentoring

You may need to talk with someone about your feelings and work performance, as well as receive advice about your career. Feedback from a mentor acts as a mirror – it can extend your self-awareness and help you to see yourself in new ways. Someone you admire, trust and value can also help you to identify and manage career choices.

Identify opportunities for improvement

If you have done your research thoroughly, you and your manager will have identified the type of professional development activity that most suits your needs and how you can access it.

You may find that a formal training course is not the only option and may not be appropriate. Other options may be online courses, coaching or mentoring programs, joining professional body, applying for recognition of prior learning (RPL), or attending conferences and seminars where you can meet inspiring leaders in your field and widen your network.

If you find a program, course or action that appears appropriate for your needs, take note of all the details, including cost, location, duration, available date/time on the delivery schedule and how it will support your professional development. You may be expected to present this information to your manager or another appropriate person. The action you have chosen must comply with your identified need, the budget allocation for professional development, the work schedule of your team and the needs of the organisation.

Develop a training plan

Once needs are identified and opportunities sourced, you need to develop a training plan. This outlines the objectives of the training and shows when and how training needs will be met. It should indicate priority areas, the time frame for achieving the objectives, the training methods to be used and the specific skills, knowledge or attitudes to be taught or developed.

Some organisations have a formalised training plan, while others have a professional development form that records the training and skill development undertaken by staff. These records provide crucial documentation for both employee and employer when making succession and promotion arrangements, undertaking personal appraisals and so on.

Link your plans for development to the strategic and business goals of your organisation. When sourcing opportunities for learning and skill development, you should also think about the long-term future of the organisation. There may be areas of expansion that suit your skills set or ambition to retrain, improve your skills or change careers.

Prepare for the learning

To get the most out of the professional development activity you have chosen, you need to be prepared. You may like to prepare a professional development calendar and enter the activities you undertake.

If you are attending a seminar, conference or training session, read any relevant material you have been given. Think of questions you can ask the trainer. If you will be away from your workstation during a training course, plan how you will fit the training around your day-to-day tasks. Reflect on the reason you are attending the session and what you aim to get out of it.

Example: application form

Here is an example of an application form for professional development.

Name: ....

Date: ....

Program or course name: ....

Organiser or Institution/location:..

Commencement date: .... / .... / .... Completion date: .... / .... / ....

Objectives of program or course: Match program or course objectives to company needs

Program/Course objectives	Company needs

Estimated costs: for information purposes only

Program or course fees for current year	
Resources, books etc.	
Travel	
Total	$

Applicant signature: ....

Date: .... / .... / ....

Approved by: ....

Date: .... / .... / ....

Study/examination leave days:

Financial support (please specify):

Total $ ....

Practice task 9

1. Explain the benefits of ongoing learning and professional development to yourself, your team and your organisation.

2. From the identified skill gaps that need further development, research appropriate training options you could attend to meet your professional development needs and your career aspiration.

3. What type of training courses have you already undertaken? Were they useful? What can you gain from the experience when seeking training options in the future?

3C | Use feedback to identify improvement opportunities

It is important to seek feedback from colleagues and others to identify and develop ways to improve competence within the opportunities that are available to you. You may receive feedback in a number of ways. Listen to the feedback and use it to further your development.

Feedback from your manager

Ask your manager for feedback as soon as you have completed a task or project. It is always a good idea to get immediate feedback so you can identify where you need to improve and close the skill gap. You can discuss the situation informally and seek advice about training and development opportunities. They will be able to guide you in your choice of an appropriate course or training that will meet your needs, fit in with the team's plans and benefit the organisation.

Use the feedback from your performance appraisal to target specific professional development opportunities. Your manager may suggest a number of options for you to consider. They may ask you to research relevant training courses or seek further advice from other professionals.

Feedback from colleagues

Talk to a colleague who has attended a course and ask them whether:

- the course met their needs
- it was well run
- the program gave them the opportunity to ask questions
- time for discussion and practice was allowed
- they received handouts they can use in their job
- they can follow up the course by contacting organisers
- they think the course would suit your needs.

Based on their response, you can either enrol in the same course or seek alternative courses.

Feedback from others

Here are examples of other sources of feedback.

Feedback from customers

Feedback from customers can be helpful in identifying a skill gap you were not aware of. For example, a customer may complain that their details are not correct. This may lead you to notice that the customer database is poorly constructed and you will need to make a recommendation to purchase a new customer management software program and learn how to use it.

Feedback from team discussions and brainstorming sessions

Feedback from discussions at team meetings can highlight a training need. For example, you might find that you need to learn a project management program to better allocate and follow tasks. Or perhaps you need to upgrade your personal planning skills after your manager reprimands you for missing an important meeting.

Feedback from coaching and mentoring

Tips, advice and suggestions from mentoring or coaching sessions should be recorded and followed up promptly. They may also include formal training options.

All feedback should be regarded as positive opportunities to improve your work practices and extend your skills and knowledge.

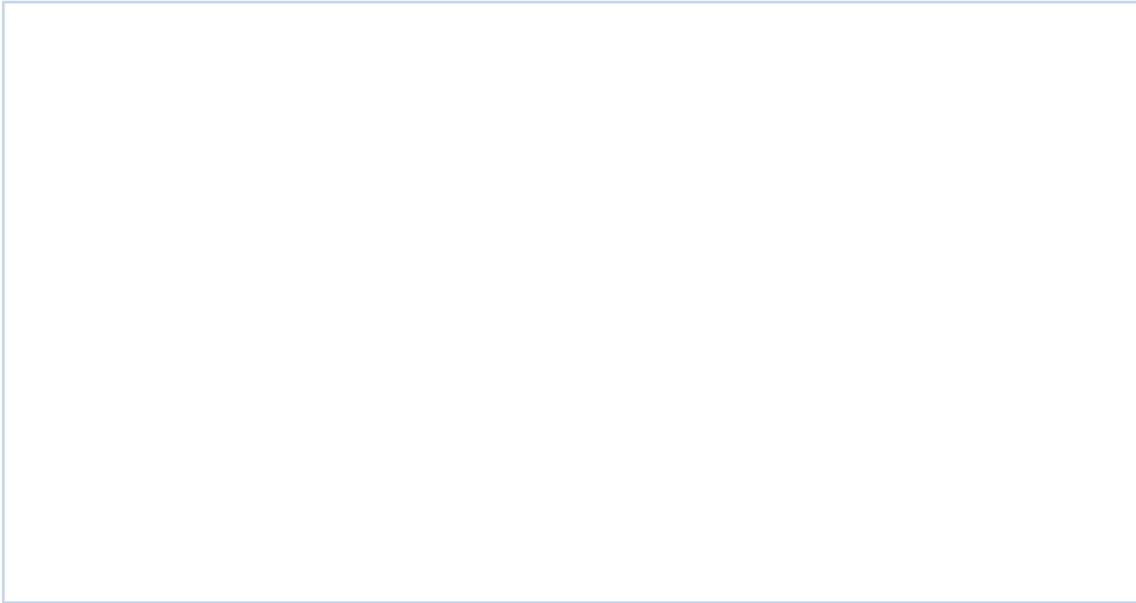**Feedback following professional development**

Once you have actually undertaken the professional development, feedback can be obtained from:
- formal or informal performance appraisals
- supervisors and colleagues
- customers and clients
- self-reflection on your behaviour and performance post training.

Practice task 10

How does feedback help you develop ways to improve your competence?

3D | Facilitate continuous learning

Professional development activities range from formal accredited courses of several years duration to one-off information sessions. In between, there are many ways you can learn new skills and knowledge. Because professional development should be seen as a continuous learning and development cycle, you need to reflect on the training you have completed and note how it has helped you achieve:

- short-term goals
- long-term goals
- team objectives
- organisational aims and objectives.

Continuous learning

In the face of constant change, organisations must develop a culture of learning and encourage employees to be 'learning individuals'. Learning individuals are those who reflect on their work and career experiences and strive to update their skills. Employees committed to lifelong learning are those who are best able to adapt and cope with constant change and who discover strategies to improve their skills and opportunities. For example, a role change in your organisation, new compliance training or mandatory refresher for license holders may mean you have to upgrade some skills or learn new ones.

Research and complete your own skill audit against the prescribed set of skills and knowledge from the national competency standards and your organisational standards. From this you can assess whether you are competent or if there are learning gaps and which area of personal development you should focus on for further career progression.

Plan to conduct a self-assessment regularly. If you can provide evidence of the skills you already have through work experience, on the job training, coaching sessions or other courses you have done previously, then you can have these skills formally recognised through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) or recognition of current competencies process.

Continuous learning and career development can mean:

- performing well and further improving your performance in your current job
- showing commitment and interest in your personal growth
- taking initiative to develop yourself
- assessing goals, choices and abilities in the context of your career plan
- increasing your skills to manage the next stage of your career.

Performance appraisals

Just before your next performance appraisal, you may have to complete a self-appraisal form. If your organisation does not have a form to complete before the appraisal, it is a good idea to prepare a statement of performance. This should include the goals you have achieved in the past year, the new skills you have gained and the strengths you bring to the organisation. By reflecting on the past year and what you have achieved, you will be prepared for the appraisal session.

A performance appraisal is an opportunity to discuss your personal development plans with your manager and get feedback on how well you are heading towards your work goals, both in the short and long term. This is a good time to alert your manager to possible career options that would suit your personal goals.

Work exchange opportunities

You might like to seek alternative ways of developing new skills. Explore opportunities such as shadowing or work exchanges. Some organisations have a scheme where you might move to another department for a term or swap with a colleague in a similar organisation. Working with other people and having a different focus can stimulate your outlook and help you with your career planning.

Career planning

Learning the skills of career planning and self-management is an integral part of total personal development. Just as you devise a work plan to manage and monitor your daily, weekly and monthly activities on the job, you should also consider planning your future career by developing a personal development plan.

Like a work plan, a career plan must also state clear development goals and objectives. To do this, carry out a career audit that examines your talents, abilities and options. Remember to keep the objectives of your career plan in focus. Make time to reflect upon and reassert your life goals and plan how you wish to accomplish them.

Here are prescribed career objectives and outcomes.

> **The objectives of a career audit**

- Reflect on your personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Evaluate your lifestyle considerations.
- Research your career options.
- Consider the opportunities available to you.
- Reflect on training and self-improvement needs.
- Reflect on your life goals, analyse what you have to do to achieve them and ascertain where you are in relation to these goals.

Outcomes of undertaking professional development activities

- A new job within your current team or work unit
- A new job in a different department
- An increased understanding of personal career development responsibilities
- An increased awareness of your skills and preferences
- A change in your career

Career audit

An important part of the career planning process is the career audit. Here are key elements of a career audit.

Elements of a career audit

Talents and skills – What are you good at? For example, working out problems; dealing with customers.

Abilities – What skills and knowledge have you acquired? For example, website design; self-management; a Level 1 First Aid Certificate.

Goals and objectives – What are your short-term and long-term goals? What would you like to be doing in two years, five years, 10 years?

Activities enjoyed most – What activities do you find most satisfying? Which tasks bring a greater sense of achievement?

Restrictions – What restrictions exist in a job? For example, you don't want to work weekends; you need to be home by 4.00 pm for the children.

Options – What type of career do your answers suggest you should pursue?

Career management model

A career management model is a useful tool to help plan a self-learning program. It can help you analyse your skills, self-assess and resolve career confusions and concerns.

The following is an example career management model devised by adult career development theorist and psychologist Paul Stevens. This may serve as a useful tool when evaluating your life goals, career choices and opportunities.

Career management model

1

Stage 1: Self-assessment
- Clarifying issues and concerns
- Assembling an information base through structured analysis
- Reviewing current job effectiveness
- Checking employment experiences
- Identifying your abilities, interests, values, primary needs
- Identifying employment environment preferences
- Reflecting on lifestyle considerations

2

Stage 2: Data analysis and interpretation
- Identifying transferable (employability) skills
- Identifying career requirements
- Resolving ambiguities
- Integrating career and lifestyle choices
- Identifying monetary needs and considerations
- Identifying barriers to success
- Identifying perceived and real constraints

3

Stage 3: Opportunity awareness
- Gathering information on professional development opportunities
- Cultivating a network
- Seeking and benefiting from mentoring
- Evaluating results
- Selecting career path options

4

Stage 4: Opportunity awareness
- Evaluating career action options
- Identifying trade-offs
- Deciding on goals
- Scheduling career transition

5

Stage 5: Transition training

- Rehearsing for negotiations
- Documenting short- and long-term goals
- Developing strategies for success
- Checking career action preparation
- Preparing requests for professional development approval
- Auditing career transition progress

6

Stage 6: Transition accomplished

- Reviewing completed career action plan steps
- Assessing wellbeing

Example: undertake professional development

When Juanita completes the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, she decides to enrol in the Diploma in Assessment and Workplace Training. She is in the habit of studying; she finds it challenging and a lot of hard work but it also gives her confidence to look for new opportunities. She also undertakes an advanced course in Microsoft Outlook and develops a team plan to provide training for workers in the shire.

These professional development activities help her to:

- map her own career, relying less on her employer to initiate training
- actively seek out opportunities within the shire for career succession and opportunities for advancement
- gain personal skills in career analysis, planning and goal setting.

Juanita is becoming a self-directed learner, capable of making the contribution she has always wanted to make.

When a job becomes available in the training department, Juanita's application is successful. She will now be responsible for providing induction to new employees as well as managing some work for the dole schemes.

Now that she has made the move, she is looking forward to a career change. She still gets anxious about her workload, but a course in stress management and organising chaos has helped her better manage her stress.

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Practice task 11

Prepare a career plan/audit and note the professional activities you may need to do to help you achieve your goals.

3E Record professional development achievements

An organisation's human resources department usually holds a personal file on each of its employees. This file contains confidential information relating to an individual's employment. It should also keep relevant documentation that pertains to your qualifications and your job.

Your personal file may include:

- your résumé
- a copy of your job description
- your employment contract
- relevant documentation on your qualifications
- performance agreements/appraisals from the annual performance planning and review process
- development plan
- courses, workshops and other professional development activities you have completed in the course of your employment.

Your personal file

You should always keep a copy of all your personal documentation that you have provided to Human Resources, your manager or other authorised personnel. Remember to keep your file current. You need to follow your organisation's policies and procedures for storing your records. For example, the organisation may have a filing cabinet dedicated to holding employee records and documents. It may be your responsibility to ensure that your documents are passed on to the appropriate person to file.

Here is a sample of what might appear in your personal file.

Brief reports

Brief reports can be of all professional activities you have completed. Record the information with physical evidence such as a certificate, transcript or report. This provides a useful basis for discussion at performance appraisals and internal job interviews. You may be asked to present or prepare a written report for your manager with recommendations for future development and learning. The report should include:

- description of the activity
- feedback forms
- report of the activity or transcript
- certificates gained or statements of attendance.

Performance appraisals

Performance appraisals provide a permanent written record of the relative strengths and weaknesses of employees and can be used for salary and wage changes, promotions, transfers, court evidence, retrenchments and training plans. These should also be kept with your personal file for future reference.

Self-assessment records

Self-assessment records may be a skills audit, training needs analysis or documents from recognition of current competency process, as well as the evidence you used to verify your competence. These may be samples of your work, reports from colleagues or evidence of qualifications.

Example: professional development evaluation form

You may be asked to complete a form similar to the following after attending a professional development activity.

Professional development evaluation form

Name: ....Date: ....

Program or course name: ....

Organiser or institution/location: ....

Commencement date: ....Completion date: ....

Course objectives and content

Were the course objectives clearly stated? ....☐ Yes ☐ No

Were the objectives achieved? ....☐ Yes ☐ No

Were the topics presented relevant to your work? ....☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the course meet your expectations? ....☐ Yes ☐ No

Explain why it did or did not?..

....

Course presentation

Were the concepts and techniques explained clearly?...☐ Yes ☐ No

Were you encouraged to actively participate during the course?.....................☐ Yes ☐ No

Were your individual questions/problems discussed to your satisfaction?.........☐ Yes ☐ No

How would you describe the trainer's knowledge of the subject?...

Was the presenter poor, fair, excellent? ....

If you rated the presenter as poor or fair, explain why..

....

What training materials/manuals/handouts were you provided with and where will these be located for reference by all staff?...

....

Course evaluation

List the new skills/knowledge you gained from this professional development program.

....

....

....

Practice task 12

1. Complete a report for a professional development activity you have recently undertaken.

2. Why is it important to keep a record of your achievements and performance appraisals?

Summary

1. National competency standards and qualifications can be used to assess your own knowledge and skills and determine professional development needs and priorities. Competency standards outline the skills and abilities required for someone occupying a particular position. These competencies can be generic or industry specific.

2. You must use your initiative to actively identify opportunities and sources for professional development. This means finding relevant training courses and other means of development, such as mentoring and coaching, from sources within your organisation.

3. Feedback must be sought to identify areas in which you need to improve, as well as ways to improve your competence in these areas. This can be repeated once professional development activities have been undertaken to assess whether your knowledge and skills have been developed.

4. New skills required for your role must be identified on a continuous basis and professional development activities accessed to obtain them. It is important that you develop a model or plan of career development.

5. Records and documents must be kept of professional development activities you have undertaken. These details are usually collected and stored by your organisation's human resources department.

Learning checkpoint 3
Coordinate professional development

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in coordinating professional development.

Part A

1. Explain why it is important for the organisation to record, document and store information on the professional development of employees.

2. Describe the systems that are or should be in place within your organisation for recording and storing personnel information.

3. What is the purpose of a training plan?

4. List three ways you can apply continuous learning.

Part B

1. Describe how you identify the generic and industry-specific skills, knowledge and abilities required for someone occupying your role.

2. Describe how you can assess whether you are meeting these standards.

3. Complete a self-assessment and identify at least two areas or two specific skills you feel require professional development.

4. Describe how you can use feedback to identify and develop ways to improve competence within available opportunities.

5. Describe how you can research and identify sources of learning and development for areas or skills that require professional development. List the names of the specific places you will go; for example, Lindhurst Training College.

Part B

6. List, in order of priority, some professional development courses and activities you could undertake to address your personal learning needs.