

BSB 7.0

BSBLDR301

**SUPPORT
EFFECTIVE
WORKPLACE
RELATIONSHIPS**

BSBLDR301

Support effective workplace relationships

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1



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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BBSBLDR301 Support effective workplace relationships*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

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

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

Foundation skills

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

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies textual information to determine regulatory requirements and adhere to job processes and internal policies
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses appropriate language to record key information related to the outcomes of the job Varies writing style to meet requirements of audience and purpose
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks clearly using tone and pace appropriate for the audience and purpose Uses appropriate techniques, including active listening and questioning, to clarify information and to confirm understanding
Initiative and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes personal responsibility for adherence to explicit and implicit organisational policies, procedures, standards and legislative requirements within own job role and in all interactions with others
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjusts personal communication style in response to diversity of individuals in the work context Implements strategies to respond appropriately to conflict and poor work performance
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes responsibility for planning, sequencing and prioritising tasks for own workload
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses familiar digital technologies and systems to access, present and communicate information

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: Gather information and ideas	1A Gather information on work roles and team objectives	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Communicate to work team organisational processes for communication and teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Consult team members on ideas, approaches and issues related to communication and teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2: Develop team relationships and networks	2A Encourage communication within the team	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Adjust interpersonal styles and methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Use workplace networks to build relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3: Contribute to positive team outcomes	3A Identify issues and support colleagues in resolving work difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Contribute constructively to conflict resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Review team outcomes and implement improvements	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



Topic 1 | Gather information and ideas

- 1A Gather information on work roles and team objectives
- 1B Communicate to work team organisational processes for communication and teamwork
- 1C Consult team members on ideas, approaches and issues related to communication and teamwork

1A Gather information on work roles and team objectives

Team objectives are the results that a team commits to achieving.

Team objectives provide team members with a framework for understanding their daily work and their place in the team, as well as the relationship between their role, their team and the company.

Companies have numerous documents that provide an indication of team objectives. The company's objectives should align with the objectives of each team.

Identifying team objectives

The objectives of your team will be informed by a range of key documents and organisational strategies.

These documents and strategies include:

- the overall objectives of the company
- the organisational vision and mission statements
- the long-term and short-term goals of the organisation.

Company objectives

Company objectives (also referred to as business objectives) are the results a company is aiming to achieve.

A company's objectives are different from its goals. A goal is a broad outcome, such as 'to produce the highest quality clothing at the best possible price'. An objective is measurable, such as, 'to increase our profits by 3 per cent in the next two years'.

Vision and mission statements

Vision and mission statements help companies achieve their goals and objectives. A company's vision and mission statements are typically outlined in a single document. The vision statement outlines what a company is hoping to be in the future. The mission statement outlines what a company wants to do now.

Each team in a company should work in a way that aligns with its company's vision and mission statements.

Source: Business Australia, 2020. 'Tips for differentiating between a mission and a vision statement'

Long-term and short-term goals

Company goals are broad outcomes that can relate to any aspect of the company's processes and operations. For example, a company could have goals relating to revenue, customer service and employee satisfaction.

Short-term company goals are typically those steps that need to be completed to meet long-term goals. For example, a company's long-term goal might be 'to increase customer satisfaction with our service'. The short-term goal might be 'to provide training to all staff to enhance their customer service skills'.

A company's goals inform the objectives of the individual teams in that company.

Source: Jennifer Williams, 2019. 'Examples of long- & short-term goals for a business'

Cascading objectives to team levels

The process of 'cascading objectives' involves translating goals from one level of the organisation to the next.

Cascading objectives is the process of setting and communicating goals down through the hierarchy of an organisation. The process starts with senior management, who specify the strategic goals they want to achieve as per the organisation's objectives. These goals are then taken, or cascaded down, to the next level of management where objectives for their departments or teams are set against senior management goals. This process continues level by level until each employee has set individual objectives.

For example, if an organisation comprises three branches and 14 teams, each branch will have objectives that align with the organisational strategic objectives and each team will have objectives that align with the branch objectives. These team objectives will then be used to set employees' individual objectives and goals.

Gathering information on team objectives

Team objectives are outlined in a range of documents.

Documents that outline team objectives include:

- team action plans
- meeting minutes
- performance plans
- project briefs.

Document	Definition	Information included
Team action plans	A document that outlines the tasks and duties a team needs to complete within a specific period. The tasks and duties are based upon the team's objectives	A team action plan typically includes information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> which team members are responsible for which tasks and duties (i.e. allocation of tasks) when each task and duty needs to be completed measures of success (so you can determine whether the task or duty has been completed)
Meeting minutes	The written record of a meeting held in an organisation. Minutes should be taken for all meetings, from senior management to team level	Meeting minutes typically include information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the list of participants issues or bottlenecks experienced by team members that are preventing them from achieving set objectives responses and decisions made for issues discussed that will allow continued pursuit of objectives
Performance plans	A formal business document that clearly sets out goals and performance expectations for individual employees	Performance plans should contain information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expected behaviour and performance as per individual and team objectives performance or issues (preventing the attainment of objectives) that require improvement actions to improve performance in achieving objectives dates for review and improvement activities
Project briefs	A document that provides a high-level overview of the approach your team is taking on a project	Project briefs may contain the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> objectives (of the project, team and organisation) target audience scope of the project deliverables milestones for meeting objectives budgets and resource requirements

Managers are also an important source of information about team objectives. Based on their ongoing discussions with other senior personnel, they may be aware of upcoming developments and updates to company goals, objectives and strategies.

Setting KPIs

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are indicators of progress towards a desired result.

KPIs can be used to measure the progress of individual employees, teams and businesses. They can relate to a range of different areas of business including marketing, sales, customer service, finance, social media, human resources and supply chains.

To be effective, KPIs need to be:

- clearly defined
- closely aligned to individual, team or organisational objectives
- quantifiable
- communicated to individuals, teams and departments.

Team KPIs can be a source of information on team objectives as they clearly outline the expected level of performance or end goal. For example, a helpdesk team may have the objective of improving customer satisfaction. To monitor this, the team leader might set the KPI 'to increase customer issue resolution by 2 minutes by end of month', which will involve analysing the number of new helpdesk inquiries and resolved inquiries, and calculating resolution times.

Sources: KPI.org, 2020. 'What is a Key Performance Indicator (KPI)?'

Communicating team objectives

Team objectives clearly communicate what is expected of a team during a specific period.

Team objectives are typically written according to the SMART acronym.

<u>S</u>pecific
Objectives should be clear and precise: who, what, where and when?
<u>M</u>easurable
Objectives should be quantifiable: how many, how much?
<u>A</u>chievable
Objectives should be achievable: how will you accomplish it? What steps need to be taken to accomplish the objective?

Relevant
Objectives should be relevant to the team, the organisation and the setting: is this relevant to the vision and mission statements of the organisation?
Time-based
Objectives should have a deadline: what needs to be achieved and by when?

The following are examples of common types of team objectives:

Cost

Minimising costs incurred by the organisation. For example, a team that reduces the cost of paper by using two-sided printing and cloud-based document sharing/storage

Productivity

Refers to the time taken to complete work. Tools such as automation or the use of applications typically help improve productivity

Revenue

Applies to sales and product management teams in particular. Their objectives will be reflected in their sales targets

Quality

Improvements made to the quality of services, products, communications or internal processes. For example, using high-quality tyres when replacing new for old so customers receive an extra 10,000 km

Risk

Actions taken to manage or mitigate risks. For example, completing risk assessments for upcoming projects or ensuring all data stored is encrypted and password protected

Customer service

Applying policies, procedures or training to improve customer service. This will typically be measured by customer satisfaction and retention

Identifying and gathering information on work roles

The number of work roles in a team depend on the size of your organisation, the sector and the organisational hierarchy.

For example, if you work in the construction sector, the work roles in your team might include surveyor, foreperson and labourer. Or, if you work in the hospitality sector, work roles could include sous chef, bartender and food server.

There are a range of sources you can use to identify and gather information on work roles including:

- organisational charts
- employment contracts
- position descriptions.

Once again, managers may be able to provide important information about the work roles in your team.

Individual work roles in a team

Each work role in a team has different responsibilities associated with it.

Some examples of work roles, and common responsibilities associated with these roles, are listed below.

Office assistant	Schedules meetings and send meeting invites
Customer service consultant	Takes orders and processes payments
Project manager	Monitors the progress of project tasks

Junior copywriter	Writes and proofreads blog posts
Senior technician	Investigates equipment and system failures
Assistant site manager	Monitors the costs of materials and equipment
Store manager	Recruits, interviews and trains new employees

It is important that all team members understand the expectations of their role, as well as the roles and expectations of their team-mates. This helps to ensure that team members do not overstep their role and impede or interfere with the work of others.

Allocation of duties and responsibilities

The tasks and duties allocated to team members must be relevant to their work role. For example, it would be inappropriate to allocate a management task to a junior staff member. Similarly, it would be inappropriate to allocate an office administration task to a technician.

Flexibility is important when allocating tasks. New projects may come up and priorities may change, resulting in tasks being reallocated. Other factors that may need to be considered when allocating tasks and duties are listed below.

Priority

Determine the priority of the various tasks and duties and begin by allocating those of the highest priority.

Skill sets

Regardless of their work role, each team member has a different skill set. Allocating tasks according to skill sets increases the likelihood of success.

Availability

Consider who is free to do the work, and who has the mental capacity to do it.

Development

Consider how the team member will benefit from the task: will it enhance their skill set? Employees need opportunities to develop and build their skills and experience.

Interests

If someone is keen to do a specific type of task, or has an interest in developing their skills in a specific area, allocate tasks according to those interests.

Fair allocation

Ensure that the workload is divided fairly. If high-performing team members are overloaded they can start to feel resentful. Similarly, if team members who complete tasks more slowly are given less work, they may find it difficult to stay motivated.

Source: Mike Figliuolo, 2014. '5 keys to successfully allocating work across your team.'

The scope of your work role

Understanding the scope of your own work role will help you clarify what is expected of you.

When you understand the scope of your work role, you will have a better idea of the boundaries of your authority and responsibility. The scope of your own work role will be outlined in the position description associated with your job.

Position descriptions

Position descriptions include information about:

- the skills, abilities, qualifications and experience required to perform a particular job
- the duties and responsibilities of a particular job
- any licences or accreditations required to undertake the job (e.g. drivers licence, police check).

Duties and responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities outlined in your position description should be detailed but concise. Everyday activities associated with the role may also be outlined.

Reporting channels

Your position description should include information on how your position fits into the organisation, including information about who the role reports to (the reporting channel).

Organisational charts

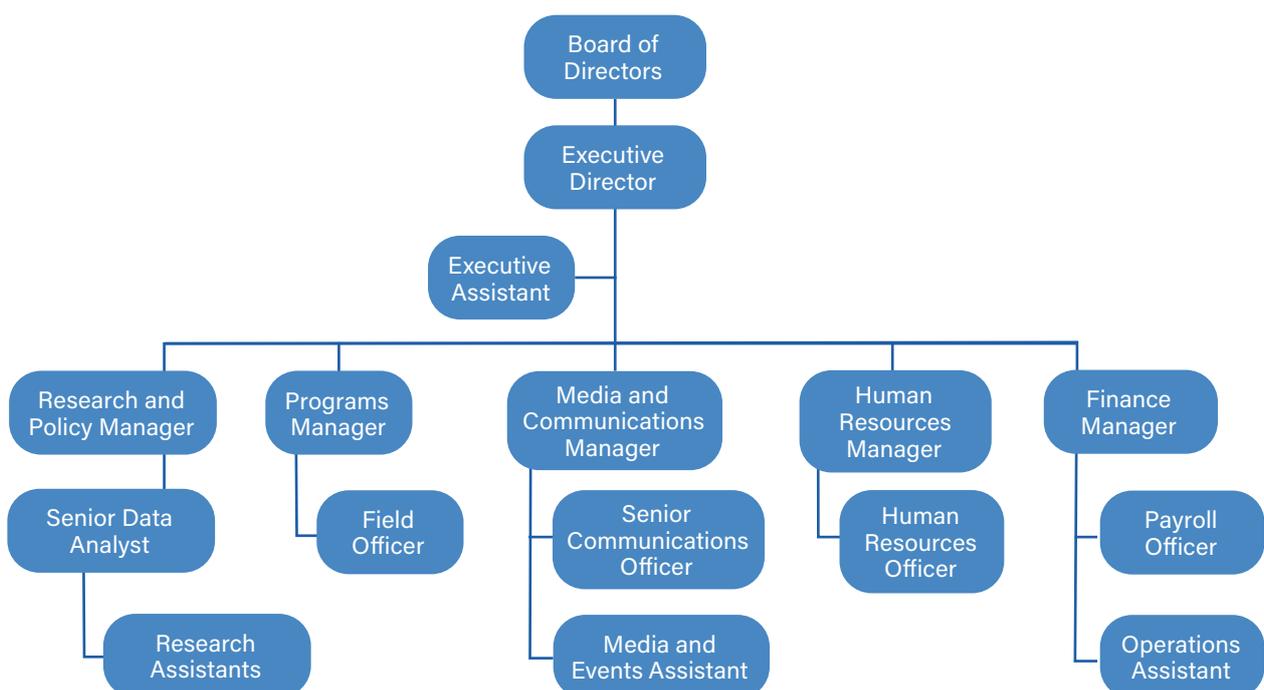
An organisational chart is a visual resource that outlines the reporting lines and the arrangement of different branches and departments in a company.

The purpose of an organisational structure is to:

- define the hierarchy in the organisation
- identify each role, team, branch and/or department in the organisation
- indicate the relationship between each role, team, branch and/or department
- indicate the lines of communication and authority (i.e. the 'chain of command') in the organisation.

Reporting lines

Organisational charts look like family trees, as the example below demonstrates. They show how individual roles fit into teams, how teams fit into departments and how departments make up an organisation.



From this example, you can track how each individual role relates to a team, how each team relates to a department and how the various departments make up an organisation. You can also see the 'chain of command':

- The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors
- The Executive Assistant reports to the Executive Director
- Five managers report to the Executive Director:
 - Research and Policy Manager
 - Programs Manager
 - Media and Communications Manager
 - Human Resources Manager
 - Finance Manager.
- Various staff report to these five managers.

Example

Gathering information on work roles and team objectives

Priya has just been appointed as team leader for a group of customer service consultants working at TuffStuff, a medium-sized equipment hire company. To get a better understanding of the objectives of her team, Priya reviews the team's action plan and the role of each of the six members of the team.

The team comprises junior and senior customer service consultants. The senior consultants have more responsibilities than the junior consultants, although some of the tasks seem to be allocated unfairly among the team. Priya makes a note of this so she can speak about it with her manager as the team action plan may need to be amended.

Priya wants to make sure she fulfils the expectations associated with her role as a team leader, but also wants to ensure she does not overstep the boundaries of her role. As such, she reviews her own job description to ensure she has a thorough understanding of her own role and responsibilities.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Which of the following sources can provide information on work roles and your level of responsibility? Tick all that apply.

- Code of conduct
- Organisational chart
- Position description
- Manager
- Performance management policy

Question 2

Which of the following statements regarding team objectives are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- a) Team objectives are derived from an organisation's mission, vision and short- and long-term goals. » Yes » No
- b) Team Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can only be a source of information on team objectives if those objectives are related to finance and customer service. » Yes » No
- c) Managers are crucial for conveying objectives to the team. » Yes » No
- d) Team objectives can be found in a variety of sources including team action plans, meeting minutes, performance plans and project briefs. » Yes » No

1B Communicate to work team organisational processes for communication and teamwork

Effective communication and teamwork are essential for a well-functioning and productive team.

Most organisations have established processes outlining how employees should communicate with each other as well as with people outside the company, such as clients, customers, contractors and stakeholders.

Organisations typically also have policies and procedures relating to teamwork. These might relate to how employees are expected to behave in their team and the values that underpin teamwork in the company.

It is important that every team in an organisation understands the procedures relating to communication and teamwork. Team leaders need to be able to source this information when it is needed and communicate it effectively with their team.

Locating information on organisational processes for communication and teamwork

Employees who are responsible for communicating processes to their team need to be aware of organisational and legislative requirements.

Information about processes relating to communication and teamwork is typically included in a company's:

- organisational policies and procedures
- planning documents
- business strategies
- code of conduct.

Organisational policies and procedures

Organisational policies and procedures are usually located on a company's intranet (the private online network that can only be accessed by employees). In some cases, organisational policies and procedures are available in a hard-copy resource.

The table below lists some of the most common organisational policies and procedures relating to communication and teamwork, as well as some examples of these. These are examples only – your organisation may have different or additional policies and procedures.

Common policies and procedures	Examples of policies and procedures
Internal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees should demonstrate courtesy and helpfulness when engaging with co-workers and managers Employees should refrain from shouting, yelling or swearing in the workplace
External communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will reply to digital correspondence from customers (email, website enquiries, tweets) within 24 hours Only the standard company logo can be used in official company documents and the use of the logo must follow the brand guidelines outlined by the marketing and communications team
Use of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees must not use workplace technology to harass, intimidate or threaten others Employees must not use workplace technology to access inappropriate content, such as pornography or gambling sites
Use of social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When using personal social media accounts, employees must not speak on behalf of the company When using personal social media accounts, employees should avoid speaking about the company, the leadership team or their co-workers

Legislation

There are three areas of legislation relevant to communication and teamwork in the workplace.

These are identified and defined in the table below.

Legislation	Definition
Anti-discrimination legislation	All employees must be treated equally regardless of their gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability
Equal employment opportunity legislation	All employees must be treated equally in all aspects of their jobs – from recruitment to job allocation, promotion and access to all benefits and opportunities
Fair work legislation	All employees are protected against unlawful discrimination and adverse actions such as dismissal or injury, having their position altered to their detriment, or discriminating between themselves and other employees based on their race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family or carer's responsibilities, pregnancy, or religion

Here are some examples of how this legislation relates to workplace communication and teamwork.

Language

Telling insulting jokes about someone because of their sex, race, disability or age can be considered harassment according to Australia's anti-discrimination laws.

Facilities

Companies need to make reasonable adjustments to work premises, schedules and equipment to ensure employees can perform the essential requirements of their job.

For example, a company might need to purchase or modify equipment so that all team members can listen to, record and contribute to team discussions. Or, a team leader may need to provide information in different formats to meet the needs of people who have a hearing or visual impairment.

Bullying

Most workplaces are subject to anti-bullying laws under fair work legislation. Bullying occurs when a person or a group of people act unreasonably towards another person or group and their behaviour poses a risk to health and safety.

Communicating information to your work team

An understanding of your team, the work context and your environment is essential when deciding on the best method of communication to use with your team.

Some common methods used to communicate information to work teams are:

- team meetings
- company intranet
- email
- memos.

The following table outlines which method is useful in which circumstance.

Method	This method is most useful when you need to communicate:
Team meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in a consistent way to an entire team information that requires, or is likely to generate, discussion among team members information that is likely to generate an emotional or heated response
Intranet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quickly to everyone in a company information that you would like feedback on information in an engaging format
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> straightforward information quickly to a lot of people privately with a team member or colleague
Memos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> straightforward information information that needs to be recorded information in a way that minimises employee disruptions

Communication techniques

A range of techniques can be used to communicate organisational processes to a team, including written and verbal communications.

You may need to use multiple methods of communication to ensure all your team members receive the same information.

Regardless of the technique or tool used, it is important that the process involves two-way communication.

Two-way communication

Two-way communication involves sending *and* receiving information. The sender sends a message; the receiver interprets the message and then sends back a response. Two-way communication is an active, not a passive, process.

On the other hand, one-way communication offers no opportunities for response or reaction from the receiver. A billboard is an example of one-way communication; a message is communicated via the billboard but there is no way for the receiver to respond.

Written vs verbal communication

There are numerous factors to consider when communicating to your work team verbally and in writing.

Recording communication

Where it is important for you to record information, it is best to send it in writing. If it is more appropriate to have the conversation face-to-face, follow up with an email that outlines what was discussed and ask your colleague to confirm the details. You can then use this email as a record of the communication.

If it is your responsibility to record information communicated to staff, you must use appropriate language. Your company may have its own guidelines and policies on how to record information for different purposes. However, in general you should:

- be clear and concise
- use a formal rather than an informal tone
- avoid the use of jargon and slang.

Editing and proofreading

When communicating in writing, you may need to edit and proofread your material. During this process, it is important to keep the purpose of the document and the audience in mind:

- Ensure the language you use matches the audience's level of education and knowledge of the subject matter. Avoid technical terms that the audience may not be familiar with.
- Cut out unnecessary words (e.g. don't write 'the issue was carefully considered'; just write 'the issue was considered').
- Don't use long words when a shorter word can be used instead (e.g. write 'use' instead of 'utilise').

Active listening

Active listening involves making a conscious effort to hear what another person is saying. When someone is actively listening, they are not distracted by what is going on around them.

Active listening involves five key strategies, each of which can be demonstrated through various means of verbal and non-verbal communication.

Strategy	How to demonstrate this when asking questions
Pay attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face the person you are questioning Give the person your undivided attention; don't look at your phone, watch or other people in the room
Show you are listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use brief verbal comments to encourage the person (e.g. 'Okay', 'I see', 'Yes, I understand what you're saying') Use facial expressions to encourage the person, such as nodding and smiling
Provide feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on what the person has said by paraphrasing Summarise the person's comments
Respond appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try not to interrupt the person unnecessarily Respond openly and honestly
Defer judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate empathy and a non-judgmental attitude Avoid making assumptions

Asking questions

Both the sender and the receiver in two-way communication can ask questions to clarify information.

- The receiver can ask questions to ensure they understand what is being communicated. For example, 'Are you saying that we will be hiring two new staff members to fill this role?'
- The sender can also ask questions to ensure the receiver understands what is being communicated. For example, 'Is there anything about the plan you'd like me to go over again?'

If you want to engage your team in a discussion, ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions require more than a yes or no answer. For example, if you have talked to your team about a new staffing plan and want their thoughts or input, you could ask questions such as:

- What do you think of the plan I have described?
- What impact do you think this plan will have on our productivity?

Open-ended questions encourage dialogue more than closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions can only be answered with a yes or no answer. For example, 'Do you have any questions about this plan?'

When asking questions, use a casual, rather than a formal tone. A casual tone is especially useful if you want to engage your team in discussion because it encourages people to be more forthcoming.

Tone and pace

Tone is the mood or attitude suggested by a person who is speaking. Certain tones are always inappropriate, including forcing your ideas onto your audience or using a sarcastic tone. The safest tone in the workplace is calm, objective and courteous.

If you typically speak quickly, in some circumstances you may need to slow down the pace of your speech. For example, if you are communicating with people who have limited English language skills, you may need to speak a little more slowly than usual.

Focus on facts

Whether you are communicating verbally or in writing, it is important to focus on facts, rather than anecdotes or opinions. For example, if you are giving feedback to a team member on their performance, focus on what actually happened (e.g. the deadline was missed, the employee was late) and the expectations of their role (e.g. to fulfil planned commitments, to arrive at a certain time).

Don't refer to what someone else told you about the team member's performance or behaviour (e.g. 'I've heard on the grapevine that you haven't been keeping up with your work') and don't present your feedback in terms of your own opinion (e.g. 'I believe that every team member should start work at 8am').

Body language

Body language includes gestures, posture, head and hand movements. A person's body language can indicate their emotions, attitudes and intentions. For example, folding your arms or legs indicates uneasiness or disinterest. Directly facing someone and keeping your hands apart on the arms of your chair indicates openness and attentiveness.

When communicating verbally with your team, it is important to be aware of your body language. Avoid body language that indicates disinterest. You can use gestures (e.g. nodding) to show you are listening to the other person. Also be alert to other people's body language – it may indicate that they are uncomfortable or worried about what is being communicated.

Example

Communicating work team organisational processes for communication and teamwork

Dale works as a team leader at Dovetail, a small cabinet-making business that produces and sells high-quality, 'one-of-a-kind' wooden furniture. Dale is a team leader in the warehouse, where he oversees the work of four employees.

During a team meeting, Yolanda – a team member – raises an issue regarding smoking breaks. 'Preston and Jay are going on a lot of smoking breaks,' Yolanda says. 'I don't think it's fair on Tran and me because we don't smoke, so we end up doing more work.' The discussion becomes heated when Preston yells at Yolanda, 'Mind your own business!' Yolanda yells back, 'You're way out of line, Preston!'

Dale asks Preston and Yolanda to calm down. 'I am happy to talk about the issue Yolanda has raised, but I have to remind everyone in the team that Dovetail has a strict policy about team members demonstrating mutual respect and courtesy when communicating with each other. Yelling at each other is not acceptable behaviour.'

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Which of the following would you use to find information on organisational processes for communication and teamwork? Tick all that apply.

- External and internal communication policies and procedures
- Code of conduct
- Legislative requirements
- Mission and vision statements
- Planning documentation (e.g. business strategy, team action plans)

Question 2

Draw lines to match each legislative act to its definition.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| » Anti-discrimination legislation | » All employees are protected against unlawful discrimination and adverse actions such as being dismissed or injured, having their position altered to their detriment, or discriminating between them and other employees based on their race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family or carer's responsibilities, pregnancy, or religion. |
| » Equal employment opportunity | » All employees must be treated equally regardless of their gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability. |
| » Fair work legislation | » All employees must be treated equally in all aspects of their jobs – from recruitment to job allocation, promotion and access to all benefits and opportunities. |

1C Consult team members on ideas, approaches and issues related to communication and teamwork

Teams work best when everyone can share their ideas, provide feedback and openly discuss problems.

Individuals within a team will have their own perspectives on issues and their own ideas about how to resolve them. By exploring and brainstorming ideas, teams can refine how they communicate and work together and thereby improve and enhance their team's efficiency, effectiveness and overall wellbeing.

Asking for ideas and about issues

Involving your team in decision-making and problem-solving is one of the important tasks of a leader.

Although many workplaces encourage open and collaborative approaches to resolving issues, there are numerous reasons why this approach can be difficult to implement.

Employees may not be accustomed to sharing their ideas, or they may have been discouraged from doing so in the past. Managers may be reluctant to ask employees about problems and issues because they do not have the authority to resolve them.

The way you ask questions about problems and issues is only one part of the equation. To encourage team members to respond to your questions, you need to build a culture that encourages critical, creative and innovative thinking. Here are some ways you can do this:

- Discourage team members from judging one another's ideas without a 'fair hearing'.
- Build shared problem-solving into your regular meetings.
- Encourage healthy debate.
- Promote and encourage respect, trust, openness, diversity and empathy.
- Discourage infighting, politicking and gossip – this behaviour damages respect and trust in the team.

Being accepting of ideas

People are often reluctant to share new ideas in the workplace.

They might think their idea is not worthwhile, too radical or poorly conceived. This undermines creativity and innovation. There are numerous ways you can demonstrate and encourage acceptance of ideas:

- When a member of your team puts forward a new idea, look for reasons to explore the idea further, rather than looking for reasons not to pursue it. Encourage other team members to do the same.
- Institute a 'no judgment' rule when you are discussing new ideas – this helps people 'think outside the box'.
- Be curious rather than critical when exploring other people's ideas. For example, rather than asking, 'What makes you think that idea would work?', say, 'I'm interested in exploring your idea further – can you tell me a bit more about how it might work?'

Turning ideas into action and taking action on issues

People are more willing to share ideas and raise issues if they believe they will get a 'fair hearing' and their efforts could lead to action.

Not every idea or issue can be acted upon, but every reasonable idea and issue that is raised should be considered in a meaningful way.

For example, if your colleague shares an idea in a meeting and it is immediately dismissed because it is unworkable, they are unlikely to share ideas in the future. On the other hand, if their idea is discussed or added to a list of ideas to explore further, it will encourage them to share their ideas again. It might also encourage other team members to share their ideas.

The same goes for raising issues and problems. For people to share issues and problems, they need to believe that their concerns will be taken seriously.

If your team – or a team member – raises a problem or an issue, it is important to respond promptly. Some problems can be resolved as a team, using the type of problem-solving methods described below. Other problems – especially those relating to a company's legal responsibilities (e.g. bullying, harassment) – will require a more targeted response.

The following process is designed to help managers and team leaders in situations where an employee has raised a problem relating to fair work legislation. However, the tips (e.g. clarify the problem) are useful for any situation where a team member has identified a potential problem.

Clarify the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate that you are willing to listen ▪ Ask questions if you do not understand the problem ▪ Reassure the person/people that you take the problem seriously ▪ Let the person/people know when you will respond
Check the law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Once you understand the problem, check your rights and responsibilities under the law
Talk to the relevant people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare for conversations with the people who are relevant to the problem ▪ Stick to the facts when having these conversations ▪ Invite the person/people to share their point of view and listen to what they have to say ▪ Keep an open mind – there may be issues you are unaware of
Resolve the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depending on what the problem is, there may be numerous ways to resolve it ▪ Resolution could involve amendments to company policies and procedures or additional training ▪ Once the problem has been resolved, inform the person/people who are affected by the problem (e.g. your team or a team member)
Seek further assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the four steps above have not led to a resolution, ask for assistance from a relevant person or people in your company, such as your manager or someone with expertise in human resources

Refining ideas and approaches

Techniques used to refine ideas and approaches require a curious, rather than a critical, mindset.

Each of the following techniques for refining ideas and approaches can be challenging – especially in teams where employees have not been encouraged to be innovative or creative – but the techniques can also lead to important breakthroughs and solutions to issues and long-standing problems.

Creative thinking processes

Creative thinking is often described as thinking ‘outside the box’. It requires you to be open-minded and non-judgmental.

The goal of creative thinking is to make something out of nothing. It is useful for problem-solving because it encourages the generation of new and often unexpected ideas.

Although it comes more easily to some people than others, everyone can think creatively. Various tools and methods – such as brainstorming and mind mapping – can also be used to encourage creative thinking.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one of the most well-known methods for generating solutions to problems. The technique involves a group of people generating ideas together.

Despite being very well-known, brainstorming is widely misunderstood and often poorly applied. To ensure it is done correctly, it is important to follow five basic rules.

Criticise nothing	People often feel nervous about sharing new ideas in a group. Criticising or mocking new ideas suppresses creative thinking; those people who have new ideas will be less likely to share them
Aim for a lot of ideas	Although one idea might sound great, try to come up with as many ideas as possible – the more ideas you come up with, the richer the rewards
Be daring	Don't limit the discussion to 'sensible ideas'. Be daring. Don't hold back
Build on ideas	Build on the ideas that emerge by asking a lot of 'What if ...?' and 'What else ...?' questions. See where those questions take you
Stay focused	Avoid 'drifting off' from the problem – the potential to lose focus is common when multiple people are discussing new ideas and concepts

Source: David Cox, 2013. *Creative Thinking for Dummies*.

Mind mapping

Mind mapping is another technique that your team can use to refine their ideas. A mind map is a visual representation of ideas that incorporates words, images and colours. Mind maps can be created on paper, on a whiteboard or with a digital tool (e.g. FreeMind).

The general approach to mind mapping is:

- Write your topic in the centre of a blank page; it could be a problem, decision or idea.
- Write down whatever comes to your mind when you think of the topic and draw a line linking that idea to your central topic.
- Keep writing down whatever comes to mind when you think of the central topic and write down whatever comes to mind when you think of sub-topics.
- Map the relationships between topics and sub-topics with lines, arrows, symbols and colours.
- *Do not* censor your ideas – add whatever comes to mind.

Even when it feels as if you and your team have exhausted every possible idea, challenge yourselves to spend 5 to 10 more minutes reviewing the mind map. One single idea can set off a whole new train of ideas, even when it feels like there are no new ideas to explore.

When you have filled the page with ideas and feel you have exhausted every possible sub-topic, take a break. When you come back to the mind map, have a discussion as a team about which ideas should be pursued.

Remind yourself and each other to be accepting of one another's ideas and opinions and give everyone a fair hearing. Once you have agreed on which ideas should be pursued, you can prioritise tasks and develop an action plan.

The Six Thinking Hats technique

Six Thinking Hats is a technique based on the idea that people have a preferred thinking style, which can cause them to overlook solutions to problems.

According to this technique, by taking on different 'thinking hats' (or thinking styles) you can look at problems from different perspectives and make better decisions. It can be used by an individual or a group.

White hat

- Focuses on information and objective elements relating to the idea
- Identifies gaps in knowledge
- Analyses trends and data

Red hat

- Focuses on feelings, hunches and intuition
- Looks at ideas using gut feelings and emotion
- Not required to justify feelings with logic

Black hat

- Focuses on weaknesses and shortcomings of an idea
- Commonly referred to as the 'devil's advocate'
- Considers the 'worst case scenario'

Yellow hat

- Examines ideas from a positive and optimistic standpoint
- Looks at why ideas will work and why they are beneficial
- Considers similar past actions that have worked well

Green hat

- Focuses on creativity
- Considers possibilities and alternatives
- Involves 'thinking outside the box'

Blue hat

- Manages the thinking process
- Sums up what has been learnt or presented
- Identifies ways of moving forward

Identifying team issues

Teams help organisations operate efficiently and achieve organisational goals and objectives.

Definitions of the word 'team' differ, but all have one thing in common: a team is a unit of two or more people who interact and work together towards a common goal. The benefits of team-based work to organisations include creativity and innovation, support networks and shared workloads. Working as part of a team can be both rewarding and challenging.

Potential team issues

Some of the issues that teams commonly experience are outlined below, along with the potential impacts of each issue and signs that your team may be experiencing that issue.

Issue	Impact of the issue on the team and organisation	Signs that your team may have this issue
Difficulty making decisions	When a team has difficulty making decisions, it can lead to inefficiency and dissatisfaction with outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When participating in decision-making, team members repeat the same argument rather than introducing new information The team is consistently unable to come to a satisfactory decision and look to their manager to make the 'final call'
Poor communication	Poor communication can lead teams to miss deadlines and fail to meet customer expectations. It can also increase stress and tension in the workplace and damage staff morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team members often interrupt or talk over each other Certain team members are often silent during meetings Employees are unsure what their priorities should be
Lack of participation	To function efficiently and effectively, team members need to actively participate in the processes and decisions that affect them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team members do not respond to requests There is low energy during team meetings
Inability to solve conflict	When working with other people, conflict is inevitable. However, ongoing, unresolved conflict can lead to poor productivity, absenteeism and stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetitive disagreements Team members are rude to one another Inappropriate displays of anger
Groupthink	Groupthink is the tendency to make decisions in a group based on consensus and without critical reasoning Groupthink can undermine a team's ability to come up with new ideas and can also lead to poor decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When one team member disagrees with a popular viewpoint, they are pressured to conform to the majority view The team dismisses constructive criticism from 'outsiders' (e.g. people in another team, branch or department)
Role uncertainty	Role uncertainty can undermine team cohesiveness and productivity and can have a negative effect on morale and motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team members are interfering with one another's work or engaging in 'turf wars' Team members find it difficult to prioritise tasks – they focus on low-priority tasks at the expense of higher priority tasks

Example

Consult team members on ideas, approaches and issues related to communication and teamwork

Bharg works at Data Solutions, a large company that collects and analyses market research data. Bharg is the leader of a team of seven data analysts. Bharg is trying to encourage the team to share their ideas more openly and be more open about problems and issues they are encountering in their work. He has included a new item in the team's weekly agenda titled 'problem-solving' and asked two team members per week to share an issue they are facing so the team can problem solve together.

After two weeks, Bharg realises his approach is not working. All the analysts who were asked to share issues have reported that there are no problems and they have nothing to contribute. Despite the reported lack of problems, the team is displaying an overall lack of energy.

Bharg takes a different approach at the next meeting. 'I have identified a problem,' he announces. 'And the problem is a lack of participation. Today we're going to brainstorm ideas for how to solve this issue.' Bharg tells the team about the five key rules of brainstorming and then starts the ball rolling by recommending a solution of his own. 'Every week, at least two team members need to either share a problem or talk about something they have achieved.'

'I really don't like that idea,' one of the team groans.

'Remember the rules we agreed to?' Bharg says. 'Criticise nothing. If you don't like this idea, give me another idea that you think would work.'

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Which of the following are potential issues for a work team? Tick all that apply.

- Difficulty making decisions
- Groupthink
- Brainstorming
- Poor communication
- Inability to solve conflict

Question 2

Draw lines to match each approach to refining ideas and approaches to its definition.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| » Brainstorming | » A technique used to look at a problem or issue from different points of view; for example, analytically, intuitively, defensively, optimistically and creatively. |
| » Mind mapping | » A technique used to find a solution to a specific problem by generating and listing ideas that team members contribute spontaneously. |
| » Six Thinking Hats | » A visual representation or diagram that organises and links information around a central issue or concept. It is also used to illustrate relationships between pieces of information. |

Question 3

Which of the following strategies could be used to encourage team members to contribute ideas? Tick all that apply.

- Ask for ideas
- Be respectful and listen to team members
- Role model expected behaviour
- Create a teamwork policy
- Be open to contributions

Summary

- A company's objectives, vision and mission inform the objectives of their teams.
- Individual team members need to understand their role and responsibilities, as well as the roles and responsibilities of their team-mates.
- Expectations and requirements regarding communication and teamwork are outlined in a company's policies and procedures and informed by relevant legislation.
- Two-way communication is an active process that provides the receiver with an opportunity to respond.
- Team leaders play a key role in ensuring individual team members feel safe and confident about sharing ideas and communicating openly.
- A range of creative techniques – such as brainstorming, mind mapping and the Six Thinking Hats technique – can be used to help teams refine their ideas and approaches.

Learning Checkpoint 1

Gather information and ideas

Part A

1. Which of the following social and ethical requirements should be applied when seeking contributions from your team? Tick all that apply.
 - Give everyone a chance to contribute their ideas
 - Respect the opinions of others in the team
 - Use inclusive language – avoid stereotypes and cultural sensitivities
 - Be honest in your feedback
 - Be upfront and provide advice to the team as they can learn from your experience
2. Under anti-discrimination and fair work legislation, which of the following must be applied to communication in teams and the workplace? Tick all that apply.
 - Language used must be inclusive and respectful, not discriminatory or threatening
 - Team members should be treated equally, regardless of gender, age, race, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, pregnancy or religion
 - Communication must be honest and transparent
 - Employees from marginal groups have the right to use cultural and social stereotypes
 - Equipment must be purchased or modified so that all team members can listen to, record and contribute to team discussions

Part B

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

Case study

Selena is the sales team leader at an inner-city prestige car dealership. Her team is made up of three full-time and five part-time sales consultants. Full-time staff work four week days and alternating weekend days. Part-time staff have varying work days and hours. As such, over the past month, Selena has found that the part-time staff are missing out on important information, such as special promotions, upgrades and exclusive member offers. This has significantly impacted the level of customer service provided to customers, many of whom have returned after purchasing or servicing their vehicle because they were not given information or provided the opportunity to take up available offers and promotions.

Selena realises that communication and teamwork in the sales team is at fault and that this must improve immediately.

1. Identify and explain:
 - a) the communication method best suited for communicating these issues with her team

- b) three communication techniques that Selena should use when communicating these issues with her team.

1. What potential work-related issues should be raised with the sales team?

2. To reinforce the need for communication and teamwork, what sources of information can Selena use to:
 - a) explain her own and team work roles, and team objectives?

- b) explain the organisational processes for communication and teamwork?



Topic 2 | Develop team relationships and networks

- 2A Encourage communication within the team
- 2B Adjust interpersonal styles and methods
- 2C Use workplace networks to build relationships

2A Encourage communication within the team

The ability to communicate effectively with one another is one of the key foundations of a successful team.

When members of a team can communicate in an open, honest and respectful way, it eliminates confusion, provides clarity and helps to build strong working relationships.

Workplace leaders can play a key role in encouraging effective communication within their teams by demonstrating respect for cultural differences, helping to build confident and engaged teams and facilitating relationships built on trust.

Social and ethical requirements

Every company has requirements relating to communication.

Workplace communication requirements relate to social expectations such as basic courtesy and levels of formality, as well as ethical issues such as privacy, confidentiality and respect for diversity.

Employees may need to adjust their communication style in the workplace to ensure they meet its social and ethical requirements.

Workplace culture

Workplaces have spoken and unspoken rules and expectations regarding communication. Some rules and expectations will be documented in a company's policies and procedures; others will be unspoken.

Unspoken rules and expectations might relate to issues such as:

- when to send an email to a colleague and when to have a face-to-face conversation
- how to approach senior managers (e.g. direct approach or via appointment)
- acceptable noise levels in open plan office settings.

Adjusting your communication style to align with these unspoken rules and expectations will help you forge positive relationships in the workplace.

It is your responsibility to ensure you adhere to your company's policies and procedures when you are interacting with other people, whether they are members of your team, colleagues, clients or stakeholders. Where appropriate and necessary, remind your team members of unspoken rules and expectations.

Example

Encourage communication within the team

Ross works at Germane, a small interior design company. Germane has a laidback and informal workplace culture. The CEO regularly interacts with employees, asking for their advice and opinions.

Imbi has just started at Germane as an office administrator. Ross is Imbi's manager. Imbi has started to regularly communicate with the CEO via email. The emails are written in a formal style, which goes against the CEO's general approach to her work.

Ross stops by Imbi's desk one afternoon when most employees have gone home. He asks her how she's going and talks to her about her plans for the weekend. 'Hey,' Ross says, 'just a heads-up. You might be better off approaching Maureen directly about the plans you have for the upcoming audit, rather than sending emails'.

'Sorry,' Imbi looks concerned. 'Have I done something wrong?'

'No, not at all,' Ross replies. 'It's just a thing we have at Germane – we like to talk to each other directly most of the time, rather than sending emails. It's such a small office and Maureen's door is always open. Don't be afraid to just knock on the door if you have something to tell her.'

'Sure,' Imbi replies. 'I'll do that from now on. I didn't realise it was okay to do that.'

Cross-cultural communication

Different cultures have different rules and expectations around communication.

Communication styles that are acceptable in one culture could be unacceptable in another. For example, in some cultures people express their emotions freely, whereas people from other cultures tend to hold their emotions back.

A lack of awareness of different cultural rules and expectations can lead to miscommunication. For example, messages that are intended to be neutral could be interpreted as offensive if they are communicated in the wrong way.

Even non-verbal cues can have different meanings. For example, in some cultures winking is used to communicate romantic intentions, whereas in other cultures winking has no romantic connotations and is simply used to signal agreement.

When working in a diverse workplace and when communicating with people outside your organisation, you may need to adjust your communication style. This is known as 'adaptive communication'. Adaptive communication involves switching between communication styles based on the context.

Here are some tips for communicating in a diverse workplace:

- Use active listening skills and verbal encouragement to show you are listening and ask questions to clarify information.
- Build rapport by demonstrating integrity and showing empathy.
- Try not to make assumptions based on stereotypes, as this could lead to false or negative assumptions. Challenge others when they make assumptions based on stereotypes.
- Make a conscious effort to learn more about cultural differences. Reflect on your own cultural bias and encourage your team to do the same.
- Learn about and implement the principles of cultural competency. Encourage your team to participate in training related to cultural competency.
- Request feedback from your colleagues and peers about your communication technique and potential areas for improvement.

English as a second language

Not everyone who comes from a non-English speaking background has difficulties communicating or interpreting English; however, some will. In these cases, you may need to adjust how you communicate.

For example, you might need to slow down when you are speaking or adjust the tone of your voice. Make sure your language is free from slang, colloquialisms and jargon.

Using 'plain English' is useful when communicating with any audience in writing, and especially useful when writing for an audience with limited English language skills. Plain English is easier to understand and more accessible than other forms of writing.

Here are some guidelines for using plain English:

- Use active rather than passive language; for example, 'John wrote the document' rather than 'the document was written by John'.
- Use inclusive language; for example, use 'they' rather than 'he' or 'she' and avoid discriminatory language.
- Use short sentences with one main point.
- Vary sentence and paragraph lengths to improve readability.
- Avoid repeating content unnecessarily.

Building trust and confidence in a team

Trust and confidence are the critical building blocks of an effective team.

When people trust each other, they are more likely to share information and more willing to support each other. A lack of trust can undermine the confidence of a team. If team members do not trust one another, they will be less confident about their ability to achieve shared goals and objectives.

Building trust and confidence among teams in the workplace is one of the most important tasks of workplace leaders.

Encouraging and facilitating communication

One way to build trust and confidence within your team is to encourage and facilitate effective and open communication. When people communicate their ideas and experiences, they will better understand each other's needs and points of view.

You can encourage and facilitate communication within your team by:

- promoting two-way communication – encourage your team to share information and ask for and provide feedback to one another
- promoting an environment where people feel safe to express their thoughts and make mistakes
- leading by example – practise two-way communication when working with your team and with colleagues; role model the expected standards of behaviour
- incorporating opportunities for two-way communication in standard processes, such as regular team meetings
- getting to know your team and demonstrating the principles of active listening
- encouraging employees to follow the communication processes embedded in the company policy and procedures, position descriptions, employee handbooks, code of conduct and performance management procedures.

Adapting communication for diverse audiences

The circumstances of your team may require you to adapt your communication style.

If some or all your team are working remotely, there are some important adaptations you will need to make to the way you communicate.

Remote teams

Working in or leading a remote team poses unique communication challenges. For example, it can be difficult to keep track of the progress of tasks and projects when your team is not working in the same office. It can also be difficult to create a sense of belonging when people are working in shifts or in different time zones.

These challenges can be exacerbated when remote staff are employed on short-term or freelance contracts (often referred to as the ‘gig economy’). Being paid on commission can encourage competition within a team and discourage teamwork.

Here are some tips for how to adapt your communication when working with or leading a remote team.

Set out your expectations clearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure each member of the team knows what they should be focusing on Revisit expectations regularly to reduce doubt and uncertainty
Reach out and check on people regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help people settle into their role by reaching out to check on them Share your own tips on managing remote work Send out a daily email update to your team
Be upfront when checking on progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask team members directly about their progress on tasks and projects Adjust when and how you check in with team members and teams, depending on their working style and the type of work they are doing
Demonstrate and encourage inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use different methods of communication (e.g. email, apps) to keep in touch with your team Encourage team members to connect with one another
Avoid anything that might make people feel isolated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond promptly to phone calls and emails from your team Stick to meeting times – avoid cancelling or constantly rescheduling meetings Acknowledge special events and occasions (e.g. birthdays, anniversaries) in daily updates
Celebrate efforts and wins publicly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge team members’ achievements during team meetings Collate the achievements of the team and post them in a forum that your team has access to (e.g. intranet)
Respect people’s time and work hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If team members are working in different time zones, schedule meetings at a mutually convenient time Regardless of time zone differences, do not contact people for work purposes outside of their work hours unless it is an urgent matter

Encourage fun and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share inspiring or humorous photos and videos with your team and encourage them to do the same ▪ As a team, share photos and videos of your activities outside of work – such as walking and cooking ▪ Take lunch breaks and avoid unnecessary overtime – role model a healthy work–life balance for your team
Make effective use of video conferencing and team communication software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When using video conferencing software, mute your microphone unless you are talking, and keep your camera on (unless you have bandwidth problems) ▪ Be patient with people who are having bandwidth problems; suggest they turn off their camera to save bandwidth ▪ Encourage team members to customise team communication software so they are not interrupted outside work hours

Mixed teams

Mixed teams include employees who work on-site and employees who work remotely. One of the risks of mixed teams is that on-site and remote employees become disconnected from each other. As a result, the team can become ‘out of sync’ – where one group is unaware of what the other group is doing. This can lead to errors and inefficiency.

There are two steps you can take to improve communication within a mixed team:

- *Include everyone in the information loop:* make sure everyone is included in updates, relevant meetings and important events. Use project management software that allows team members to record their actions and responsibilities, and track timelines.
- *Meet frequently:* make sure your team has time to get together, either in person or virtually. Try to bring the team together in the same location once or twice a year. If that isn’t possible, encourage team members in the same region to get together in person and bring the groups together on a video conferencing call.

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Which of the following factors encourage communication with a team? Tick all that apply.

- A hierarchical organisation structure where decision-making flows from the top down
- A workplace where team members feel safe to express their thoughts and make mistakes
- A leader who role models expected standards of behaviour
- A workplace with communication processes embedded in a range of policies and procedures, position descriptions, employee handbooks, codes of conduct and performance management
- A team that brainstorms, bringing together diverse members' experiences and thoughts

Question 2

Draw lines to match each technique for building trust and confidence in a team to the relevant audience.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| » Mixed teams (on and off site) | » Allowing flexible working hours to ensure communication is ongoing despite differences in time zones |
| » Culturally diverse teams | » Using video conferencing and team communication software |
| » Remote teams | » Including everyone in the information loop |
| » Culturally diverse teams | » Organising meetings more often to ensure everyone receives the same message and is on the same page |
| » Remote teams | » Using a tone and pace suitable to the audience and language that is free from slang, colloquialisms and jargon |
| » Mixed teams (on and off site) | » Ensuring adaptive communication tools are available where required |

2B Adjust interpersonal styles and methods

People interact and communicate with one another in different ways depending on their personality, upbringing and cultural background.

Some people have very direct communication styles. They do not 'beat around the bush' and they want others to communicate with them in the same way. Other people want to engage in small talk to build rapport and then discuss more important issues.

Interpersonal styles are not set in stone. Although most people tend towards one style more than another, it is possible to adjust your interpersonal style to meet the needs of a specific audience or situation.

Interpersonal styles

There are four interpersonal styles, each of which has a different approach to communication and teamwork.

Interpersonal style	Characteristics
Director/Driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to take control and lead Focused on results and objectives Very direct communication style 'Do it now' attitude – likes to see productive work
Analyser/Analytical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic, organised, details-oriented Interested in facts and numbers Likes to think before they speak Logical approach to work and decision-making
Socialiser/Amiable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to build rapport Good at motivating people Nurturing, expressive and likes to listen to others Cautious decision-making style
Relator/Expressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on the big picture Creative, optimistic and good at adapting to change Prefers to leave planning and details to others Enjoys being involved in and included in conversations

Interpersonal communication methods

When you understand other people's interpersonal styles, you can communicate more efficiently and effectively with them.

By communicating with people in a way that reflects their personal preferences and style, they are more likely to engage in and respond positively to the information you are relaying.

For example, if you are working with someone who has a 'relator' interpersonal style, focus on the big picture rather than the details. On the other hand, if you are working with someone who is an 'analyser', use data to back up your arguments and give them a chance to take in information rather than pushing them to respond immediately.

Here are some other tips for communicating with people with different interpersonal styles.

Interpersonal style	Best method of communication
Director/Driver	Be direct (don't 'beat around the bush') Focus on results and objectives
Analyser/Analytical	Describe the background to tasks and projects Specify the deadlines for tasks
Socialiser/Amiable	Personalise communication – don't use an overly formal tone Use humour and stories to highlight important points
Relator/Expressive	Use a friendly and relaxed tone Communicate over the phone or face-to-face if there is an existing relationship; otherwise use email

Adjusting your communication style

Although everyone tends towards one of the four interpersonal styles, it is possible to strategically adapt your communication style. This is referred to as 'flexing' or 'stretching' your communication style.

Here are some examples of situations where it might be useful to adapt your communication style.

Situation	Interpersonal style best suited to this situation	How to adapt your communicate style
You need to motivate your team to finish a project	Socialiser/Amiable	Go out of your way to listen to team members' concerns, and offer certainty by working with them to develop an action plan
You want to communicate the team's KPIs and introduce a plan for achieving them	Director/Driver or Analyser/Analytical	Communicate the plans assertively in a direct style Delve into the details of the plan and explore the logic of the plan
You need to communicate procedural changes to your team	Relator/Expressive	Focus on the positives associated with the changes
You want to motivate your team to come up with creative and innovative ideas	Socialiser/Amiable or Relator/Expressive	Promote a friendly, relaxed and informal atmosphere Use humour and your imagination to encourage your team to think outside the box

Adjusting interpersonal styles to the workplace environment

You may need to adjust your interpersonal style to a workplace environment. For example, if you naturally tend towards an analytical interpersonal style and you are working in a company that requires or expects a high level of collaboration, you may need to adopt some of the characteristics of a socialiser.

Or, if you are a relator and you work in a company that expects regular, detailed updates on the progress of a task, you may need to put aside your big picture thinking at times and adopt some of the characteristics of an analyser.

Adjusting interpersonal style to cultural settings

In different cultural settings, certain interpersonal styles are more prominent and valued than others. For example, in some cultures:

- a very direct interpersonal style is considered rude, whereas in others a direct interpersonal style is encouraged and expected
- people are less comfortable with uncertainty – they want to know what is going to happen next – whereas other cultures encourage a more 'go with the flow' attitude
- people expect one person or group to exercise power and authority, whereas other cultures expect a distribution of power
- there is an expectation that individuals will work together as a team, whereas other cultures value individual achievement.

There is diversity *between* and within cultural groups. In other words, not everyone in a cultural group will share the same interpersonal style, nor will they value and appreciate exactly the same things.

However, every culture has some dominant values and expectations when it comes to communication. These values and expectations influence how people behave and how they work together. If you are aware of your own interpersonal style and the interpersonal style of others, you can adjust your communications accordingly.

Example

Adjust interpersonal styles and methods

Jerome works as a team leader at DesignFX, a small business that creates visual effects for film studios. DesignFX is currently hosting a group of film producers and film-makers from Finland who are interested in working with DesignFX on an upcoming film they are working on.

Jerome's natural interpersonal style is socialiser/amiable. He likes to build rapport with people and is very nurturing and expressive when he communicates with others. However, Jerome knows that Finnish people tend to be very reserved and are uncomfortable with strong displays of emotion. They are also comfortable with silence.

Jerome is chairing the first meeting at DesignFX for the team from Finland. He tones down the interpersonal style that comes naturally to him and takes on some of the characteristics of the director – knowing that Finnish people typically appreciate a direct communication style; and some characteristics of the analyser – expecting that the team will be comfortable discussing the details of what DesignFX can offer.

The team from Finland respond positively to this first meeting and, over the course of the next couple of days, Jerome gets to know each member of the group a bit better. He realises that some of the team are less reserved than others and are more comfortable with Jerome's natural tendency to express his feelings.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

Draw lines to match each interpersonal style to its definition.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| » Director | » A highly organised and logical individual who likes dealing with facts and having policies and plans in place |
| » Analyser | » An individual who enjoys being creative, adapting to change and is always optimistic and friendly |
| » Socialiser | » This individual likes to take charge, wants to see productivity and is focused on getting results and meeting objectives |
| » Relator | » Nurturing and sensitive, this individual likes building relationships, teamwork and listening to others |

Question 2

Which interpersonal style is best suited to communicating procedural changes to a team?
Tick the correct response.

- Director
- Analyser
- Socialiser
- Relator

Question 3

Which interpersonal styles are best suited to communicating KPIs to a team and putting plans in place to achieve these measures? Tick all that apply.

- Director
- Analyser
- Socialiser
- Relator

2C Use workplace networks to build relationships

Workplace networks are a valuable resource for employees and organisations.

Workplace networks provide employees with opportunities to share information, offer and receive support, and develop their skills. Networks also provide people with a sense of belonging and connection.

Organisations benefit from strong internal and external networks that increase performance and productivity. When employees have strong external networks, they can identify business opportunities that benefit their company and stay up-to-date on key issues and trends in their sector.

What is networking?

Networking is an activity that involves developing and maintaining connections with people who share a common workplace, profession or interest.

Networking is a constant feature in all workplaces. Every time two colleagues talk to each other in the hallway or converse over the phone, they are networking. Networking can also be more deliberate, such as when someone attends a professional networking event.

Types of workplace networks

In your workplace, there are different types of networks you could pursue and develop. These include networks:

- within your own team
- across different branches or departments
- among managers and the management team
- across an entire organisation (e.g. an online resource where employees can ask one another questions and share resources).

Make the most of opportunities in your workplace to develop networks within and beyond your team by attending staff and social events and, where appropriate, using digital technologies designed to build and strengthen professional relationships and networks (e.g. intranet resources, Slack, LinkedIn).

Other types of relationships

Your own workplace is not the only place where you can build valuable networks.

Personal networks – such as mentors, friends and acquaintances – might be able to introduce you to important people in your industry or sector. They may also be able to offer other types of support such as coaching and skill development (e.g. communication skills, negotiation skills).

You could develop networks outside your industry, which can help you avoid groupthink because they can offer different perspectives and points of view. They can also help your own personal development by encouraging your curiosity and exposing you to different ideas.

Impact of the cultural and social environment

The cultural and social environment of the workplace has a major impact on whether employees are willing or able to develop positive relationships and achieve shared goals and outcomes.

For example, a workplace that encourages competition and pits employees against each other can discourage people from working collaboratively. To work collaboratively, people need to share information and provide each other with support; in an environment where competition between employees is encouraged, collaborative working styles could be viewed as risky.

Workplaces that have a 'siloes' mentality can also undermine the ability of employees to build networks and achieve organisational objectives. In these organisations, teams operate in 'silos' – that is, disconnected from one another. Weak bonds among teams can lead to inefficiencies; if one team does not know what the other team is doing, they may repeat tasks unnecessarily or overlook opportunities to share resources.

Networking to build relationships

There are numerous steps you can take to build and make the most of your workplace networks:

- Maintain regular contact with the people in your networks, even if you do not need anything from them.
- Find opportunities to offer support and contribute to help others.
- Make networking part of your weekly schedule – commit to one networking event a week, or commit to contacting two networks per week via social media or face-to-face.

- Identify commonalities between your work or your team and colleagues in other branches and departments (e.g. working on similar projects, experiencing similar challenges).
- Share resources between teams, departments and across the organisation.

Best practices

The following best practices for networking will help you build and maintain strong professional networks:

- *Develop genuine friendships with colleagues:* share your goals, thoughts and challenges and ask them about theirs.
- *Ask open-ended questions:* open-ended questions encourage people to elaborate and share more – they will help you to get to know the other person.
- *Be consistent:* find the networking opportunities that suit you and stick with them – this will help you develop strong relationships.
- *Demonstrate active listening:* people love being listened to – show that you are interested in what the other person has to say and that you appreciate their taking the time to speak with you.
- *Network with integrity:* be your ‘best self’ when you’re networking, but don’t try to be someone you’re not – be honest and accountable and demonstrate respect for other people’s opinions, even if they differ from your own.
- *Follow through:* do what you say you’re going to do – you only get to make one first impression and reputation is extremely important in any business.
- *Focus on helping others:* find ways to help others by sharing information or facilitating connections.

The value of networks and strong work relationships

Networking helps employees build rapport and foster relationships founded upon mutual trust and respect.

Strong work relationships built via networking can enhance employees’ wellbeing and satisfaction at work, which can lead to greater productivity.

Networks and strong workplace relationships can also have benefits for teams and entire organisations.

Value of networking for teams	
Better communication	When networks share information, teams can stay up-to-date on key issues and developments, such as changes to project plans, or potential obstacles
Improved employee satisfaction	Networks provide team members with a sense of connection and belonging, which can enhance employee satisfaction. Strong and supportive connections and relationships have been shown to enhance health outcomes
Better understanding of the organisation	By facilitating information-sharing across an organisation, networks can enhance a team's understanding of their role and purpose in the organisation
Increased capacity	Sharing expertise and offering one another support and encouragement can enhance a team's performance and productivity

Value of networking for an organisation	
Increased productivity and performance	Positive mental health and high levels of workplace satisfaction can benefit organisations through enhanced performance and productivity
Greater collaboration and information sharing	When employees in an organisation collaborate and share information within and across teams, it leads to greater clarity around objectives, increased efficiency and greater innovation
Improved client and customer satisfaction	The information shared through internal networks can enhance the capacity of employees to meet client and customer needs. A healthier and happier workforce will be more positive when dealing with clients and customers and provide a better service

Example

Use workplace networks to build relationships

Marius works as a data analyst at Edison, a large energy retailer. Marius has been employed at Edison for five years and is interested in applying for a more senior position.

Marius has strong relationships with the research and development team but not across the company overall. Each of Edison's departments is based on a different floor of a multi-storey building and Marius rarely attends organisation-wide meetings or functions.

All the managers in Marius's team work on projects involving multiple teams across the organisation. To achieve his goal, Marius needs to develop stronger relationships with other people in Edison, beyond his own team.

Marius starts going to the regular all-staff meetings and the weekly Friday night social group. Marius is naturally quite shy but goes out of his way to introduce himself to people he does not know. Although networking is challenging at first – Marius sometimes feels awkward and out of place – he sticks with it and gradually starts to develop connections with numerous people, including colleagues from the IT department.

When Marius's boss comes to him about a problem he is having with a software program, Marius already knows how to solve it because of the conversations he has been having with his new friends in the IT department. 'I'll fix it for you,' Marius tells his boss, 'but don't lose too much sleep over it. Apparently, Edison is investing in some new software soon which is much easier to use'.

Marius's boss thanks him for his help and notes how much time he has saved now that he doesn't need to call the IT department himself.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

Which of the following are types of workplace networks? Tick all that apply.

- Own work team including supervisor and colleagues
- Employees from different departments actively sharing knowledge
- Two colleagues organising a fundraiser
- Workers across the organisation using an office messaging system to ask questions and share resources
- An employee discussing their performance with their supervisor

Question 2

List three networking practices that help build relationships with colleagues.

Question 3

Which of the following statements are examples of how organisations can use work relationships to achieve organisational objectives? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a) When participating in workplace networks, team members feel more connected and have a better picture of the organisation's purpose. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Internal networking results in greater collaboration and information-sharing between different departments/teams. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Networks encourage competition among employees and push them to strive for excellence. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Networking helps foster relationships, and establish rapport and a mutual trust and respect that promotes higher productivity and a better overall work experience. | » Yes | » No |

Summary

- Every workplace has spoken and unspoken rules around communication.
- Different cultures have different rules and expectations regarding communication.
- Employees may need to adjust their communication and interpersonal styles in the workplace, especially in diverse workplaces.
- There are four interpersonal styles, each of which has a different approach to communication and teamwork.
- Understanding other people's interpersonal styles helps with effective communication.
- Workplace networks are valuable to employees and organisations.
- Social and cultural factors in the workplace can pose a barrier to networking and effective teamwork.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Develop team relationships and networks

Part A

1. How can you build relationships through workplace networks? Tick all that apply.
 - By spending time away from your work desk getting to know colleagues
 - By maintaining regular contact with colleagues, including when you don't need anything from them
 - By finding opportunities to make offers and contributions that help others
 - By discussing team conflict with colleagues in other departments
 - By establishing commonalities with colleagues in different departments and sharing resources across the organisation

Part B

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

Case study

After identifying that teamwork and communication were lacking among her sales team, Selena decides that she needs to effect change. She speaks to the sales manager and HR manager about the current situation. The sales manager reminds Selena that the very nature of sales requires team members to be competitive, independent and often secretive – all traits incompatible with teamwork. Besides, as an organisation, departments tend to work in silos with little interaction.

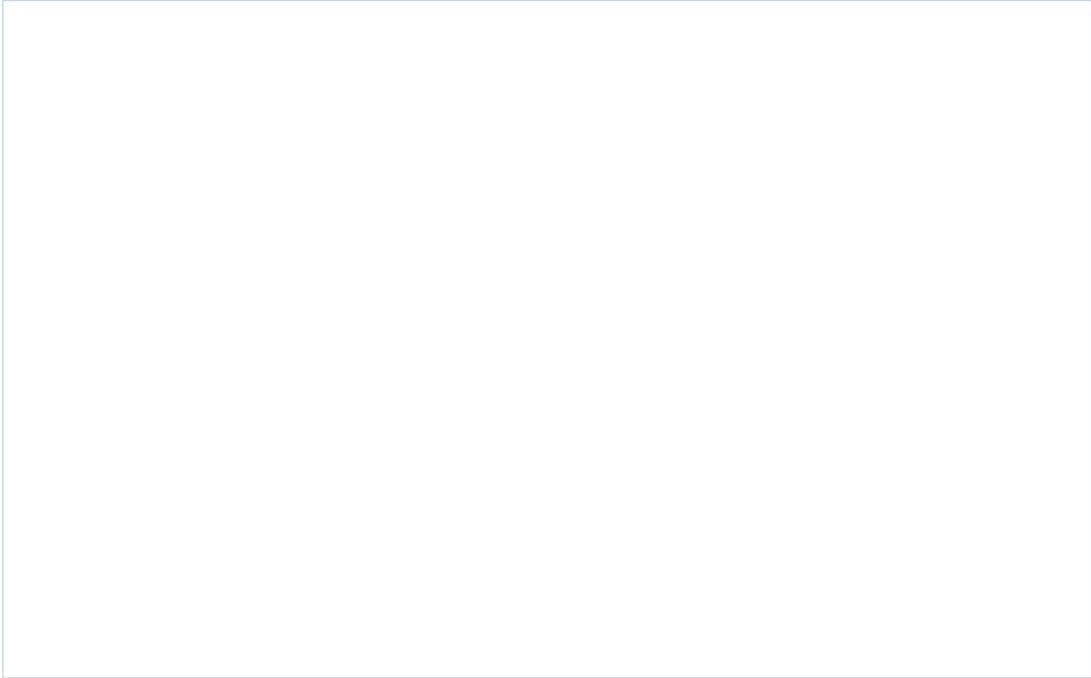
Selena believes that teamwork should be a priority for her work team and that 'healthy' competition can be a part of that. She also thinks the organisation as a whole would benefit from internal networking. As such, she sets about planning her approach to fostering communication and building relationships within her team.

1. How can Selena encourage communication within her team given the organisation's social and cultural environment?

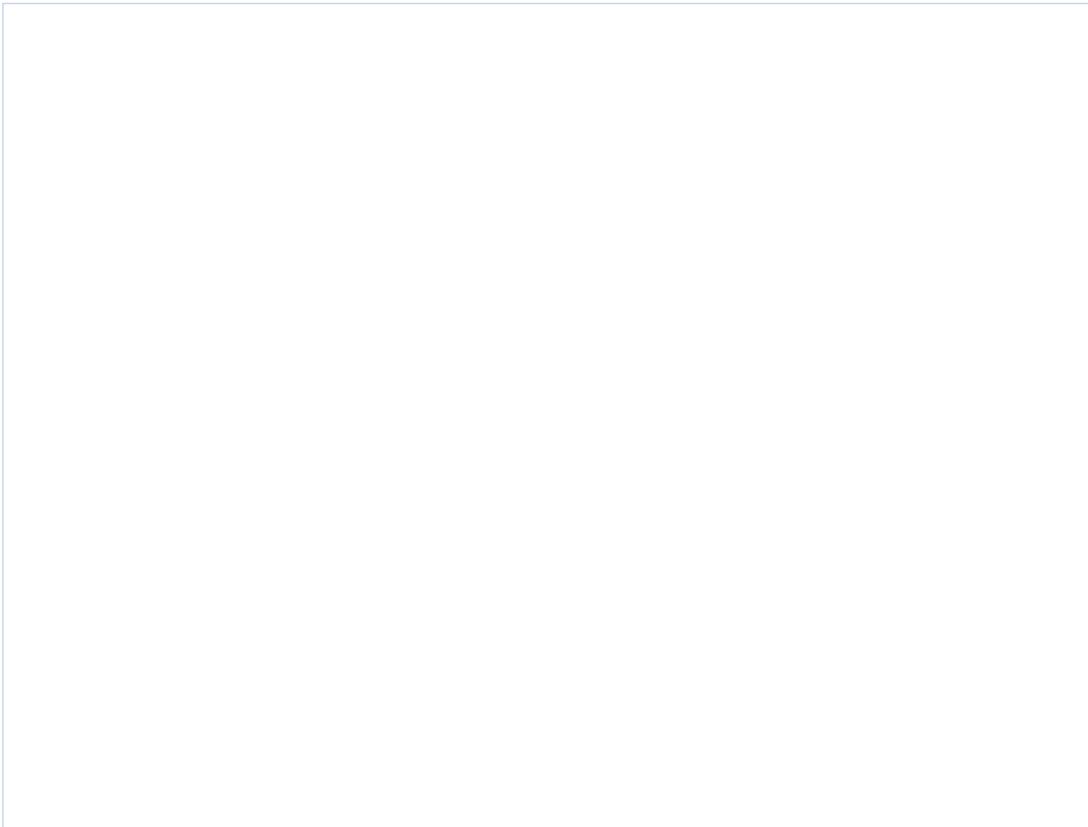
2. Identify and explain which interpersonal style Selena should use when encouraging team members to communicate more openly.

3. Identify three networks Selena's team can develop and build in the workplace.

4. Explain the value of networks and other work relationships to:
- a) Selena's team



- b) the organisation, a prestige car dealership.





Topic 3 | Contribute to positive team outcomes

- 3A Identify issues and support colleagues in resolving work difficulties
- 3B Contribute constructively to conflict resolution
- 3C Review team outcomes and implement improvements

3A Identify issues and support colleagues in resolving work difficulties

Everyone has challenges to contend with and sometimes this makes it difficult to fulfil your workplace responsibilities.

These challenges can relate directly to work, such as low morale and disagreements with co-workers, or to life outside of work, such as relationship problems and mental health difficulties.

Teams can also experience difficulties that impact their productivity and performance. Team leaders and managers have a critical role to play in identifying difficulties within teams and supporting them through the process of resolving those difficulties.

Reasons for work issues

There are many reasons why a person or a team might be underperforming.

Here are some of the most common reasons for underperformance:

- Individuals' goals and responsibilities are unclear.
- The employee/team does not have the knowledge or skills they need to do the job.
- Employees do not know or are not respecting the boundaries of their role (e.g. interfering in the work of others).
- Employees are not communicating effectively.
- Low morale in the workplace is affecting motivation levels.
- Problems outside of work such as mental and physical health difficulties and family issues are affecting the employee/team members.
- Delegation of tasks is unfair or inefficient (e.g. some people have too many tasks, others have not enough).
- Issues with time management are leading to delays and bottlenecks.
- Conflict has arisen based on a difference of opinion.
- Workplace bullying or harassment is occurring.
- There is poor or absent leadership.

Operating within your own level of responsibility

Any support you offer your colleagues to resolve work difficulties must be within the scope of your role and level of responsibility.

You cannot initiate a performance management process for a colleague who is struggling unless they report to you.

It is important also to maintain personal boundaries when supporting colleagues at work. Remember that you cannot solve your colleagues' problems for them; you can only support them to achieve the outcome that is best for them and the organisation. Becoming overly involved in colleagues' problems can have a negative effect on your own work performance and productivity and can lead to stress or even burnout.

Organisational and legal requirements

There are numerous organisational and legal requirements you may need to consider when seeking to address issues experienced by your colleagues or within your team.

Performance management policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular performance management is important because it helps employees understand what areas they are doing well in, which areas might need improvement and when additional training or support might be required. ▪ Most businesses have a performance management policy. It will typically include information such as how often performance reviews should take place, the process for undertaking performance reviews, how underperformance will be managed and the potential consequences of underperformance. ▪ Performance management policies are useful because by clearly outlining the consequences of underperformance, employees are more likely to understand their responsibilities.
Fair work laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Australia's fair work laws set out the behavioural and ethical standards employees need to abide by and, should these be breached, provide an overview of the disciplinary action that can follow. ▪ These laws include legislation relevant to the process of identifying work issues. For example, under the <i>Fair Work Act 2009</i> employee warnings must identify which aspect of the employee's performance is of concern.
Anti-discrimination laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Australia, it is unlawful to discriminate against someone based on attributes such as their age, race, gender, sexuality or disability.¹ Anti-discrimination laws set out the behaviour and ethical standards employees need to abide by and should these be breached, provide an overview of the disciplinary action that can follow. ▪ The laws cover both direct and indirect discrimination. ▪ Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated unfavourably due to an attribute such as their age, race, gender, sexuality or disability. ▪ Indirect discrimination occurs when there is an unreasonable rule or policy that is the same for everyone but has an unfair effect on people who share a certain attribute. For example, if the only way to enter a building is by a set of stairs, this indirectly discriminates against people who use wheelchairs.

¹ The laws apply at a national level but are applied in slightly different ways depending upon state/territory legislation.

Managing performance to solve work difficulties

There are two reasons why it is important to address underperformance as soon as you become aware of it.

Firstly, in most cases employees do not know they are underperforming and, unless it is brought to their attention, will not have the opportunity to demonstrate improvement.

Secondly, problems that are not addressed promptly can worsen over time and affect the productivity of multiple people and multiple teams.

Performance management processes are useful because they provide team leaders and managers with an opportunity to:

- collect information on the problem
- monitor the resolution of the problem
- work with an employee or team to develop a plan to address the problem
- implement actions
- assess performance
- provide feedback to the employee/team
- review outcomes, plans and strategies.

The following table outlines a four-step process for performance management. This process can be used to manage the performance of individuals or teams.

1. Assess and analyse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the seriousness of the problem and how long it has existed ▪ Assess the gap between what is being delivered and what is expected (i.e. the extent of the underperformance)
2. Meet and plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organise a meeting with the employee/s and let them know in advance what the meeting is about so they can prepare for it ▪ Clearly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – what the problem is – why it is a problem – how it impacts on the workplace – why there is a concern ▪ Discuss the issues openly and make sure the employee/s have the opportunity to share their point of view ▪ Devise a joint solution to the problem and develop an action plan. Solutions might include internal coaching, external training, counselling or other forms of additional support

3. Implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the actions outlined in the action plan according to organisational policies and procedures
4. Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with the employee/s to review and discuss performance. (Even if there is no longer an issue, it is important for you and the employee/s to acknowledge that the problem has been resolved) Provide the employee/s with feedback and work with them to ensure improvements are maintained

If the employee's or team's performance does not improve, there are some steps you could take:

- Organise additional support.
- Take disciplinary action.
- Issue a formal warning to the employee or employees involved.

Termination of an employee may also be an option. The *Fair Work Act 2009* sets out the legal obligations of businesses when it comes to terminating employees.

Other problem-solving methods

Performance management is not always the most appropriate or most effective approach to use for resolving work difficulties. If the problem exists within a team, you could use some of the techniques described previously – such as creative thinking processes, brainstorming and mind mapping – to explore potential solutions to problems.

Other problem-solving methods include:

- *trial and error*: solving a problem through repeated yet different attempts that are continued until success is achieved
- *lateral thinking*: solving a problem through creativity and reasoning that is not immediately obvious. This requires looking at the problem from different perspectives
- *divide and conquer*: solving a problem by breaking down a large, complicated problem into smaller problems that have solutions.

Tips for facilitating problem-solving sessions

If you are leading a team through a process of solving a collective problem, here are some tips for facilitating the session:

- Be clear about the objectives and outcomes of the session.
- Get participants engaged prior to the session by asking them to do some preparation beforehand – perhaps give them some information about the problem, the objective or the techniques you are planning on using.
- When introducing a technique:
 - clearly explain the requirements for participants
 - give participants the opportunity to ask questions about the techniques
 - employ active listening techniques when listening to and responding to participants' questions.
- Discourage any one person or group from dominating the conversation.
- Ask participants not to raise their voices or silence other people.
- Ask participants to be clear, direct and concise.
- Remind participants that productive group discussions occur when everyone is contributing ideas, sharing information and participating.
- Remind participants not to judge ideas based on their initial impressions or feelings and to give unfamiliar ideas (and the people who are proposing them) a 'fair hearing'.
- Help people who are struggling to make their point by:
 - restating your understanding of their point
 - asking them to give an example or explain their point further.

Source: Vincent Ryan Ruggiero, 2004. *The Art of Thinking: A Guide to Critical and Creative Thought*.

Example

Identify issues and support colleagues in resolving work difficulties

Gem manages a team of eight IT staff at Big Talk, a large telecommunications company. Recently, the team have had some difficulties meeting their targets. When Gem investigates the problem, she realises that one team member in particular – Jackie – is struggling to get her work done on time, which is causing a bottleneck for the whole team and leading to them not being able to meet all their targets.

When Gem meets with Jackie, she carefully outlines the facts. Jackie starts to cry and explains that she is having some trouble at home, which is distracting her from her work. 'I'm sorry to hear you're struggling at home,' Gem says. 'Perhaps we can come up with a plan together to help you manage?'

Gem and Jackie come up with a plan. Jackie agrees to check in with Gem more regularly on her progress and let Gem know immediately if she cannot meet a deadline. Gem delegates some of Jackie's tasks to another team member who has offered to help and has the capacity to take on more work until Jackie catches up. Jackie also agrees to consider using the counselling service provided to employees as part of their employment benefits.

The action plan includes a series of interim meetings for reviewing progress over the next two months. During this process, it is up to Gem and Jackie to decide together whether the plan needs to be amended if it is not working out for either of them. When the eight weeks is over, Gem will submit a final report to human resources to make a recommendation about next steps, which may include no further action. This process is in line with Big Talk's performance management policy.

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Which of the following are issues a team may experience? Tick all that apply.

- Conflict based on a difference of opinion
- Unclear goals and responsibilities of individual team members
- A leader who is not present
- Weekly meetings that require attendance
- Team members interfering in the work of others

Question 2

Draw lines to match each organisational and legislative requirement with its impact on resolving work difficulties.

- | | |
|---|---|
| » Performance management policy | » Provides dispute resolution services, as well as information about workplace laws and tools to address workplace difficulties |
| » Fair work and anti-discrimination legislation | » Sets out the behaviour and ethical standards employees need to abide by and should these be breached, provides an overview of the disciplinary action that can follow |
| » Code of conduct | » Performance should be regularly reviewed to help team members understand in what areas they are doing well and to address issues and areas that need improvement; and to provide opportunities for training and improvement |

Question 3

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

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| a) Work difficulties need to be addressed by applying disciplinary action or complaints handling procedures, not performance management. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Employees can be supported in overcoming work issues through a process of training, coaching, feedback and review. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Solving work difficulties is an individual task that should be handled by an individual employee and their direct manager. | » Yes | » No |
| d) To solve work difficulties, there needs to be open communication between team members and management so that everyone's point of view and concerns are conveyed. | » Yes | » No |

3B Contribute constructively to conflict resolution

Conflict is inevitable in the workplace and not always a bad thing.

Healthy disagreements and debates can fuel new and innovative approaches. Disagreements and debates can also be an indication that a team is not ruled by groupthink.

Conflict is unhealthy and unproductive when it involves anger, blame or manipulation. In contrast to healthy conflict – where parties are calm, non-defensive and respectful of each other's points of view – unhealthy conflict involves a lack of respect and aggressive, explosive or reactionary responses.

A range of processes, methods and approaches can be useful to help resolve workplace conflict in a constructive and effective way.

Organisational and legal requirements

Numerous organisational and legal requirements need to be considered when you are involved in the process of conflict resolution.

Here are some examples of these requirements.

<p>Grievances / complaints handling</p>	<p>Grievance or complaints policies are used by organisations to ensure that employee concerns and appeals are considered and resolved efficiently.</p> <p>Grievance policies can require or encourage the use of an external independent party, such as a mediator, to assist in the resolution of a complaint if it cannot be resolved internally.</p> <p>When employees know that their grievances will be taken seriously, and can take their grievances to an independent party if they choose to do so, they are more likely to be engaged in the resolution of work difficulties.</p>
<p>Code of conduct</p>	<p>A code of conduct is a framework or standard of behaviour that employees have an obligation to uphold.</p> <p>A code of conduct sets out step-by-step procedures to follow when resolving conflict or work difficulties and typically provides guidelines around how an employee should conduct themselves in the workplace, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ how they should behave and work with one another ▪ how they should work with clients, contractors and stakeholders ▪ proper use of company resources.

Disciplinary procedures	<p>A disciplinary procedure is a process that is used to manage potential employee misconduct. It is used to ensure that employees' behaviour aligns with organisational and legal requirements.</p> <p>A company's disciplinary procedure will typically include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • definitions of terms such as 'misconduct' and 'serious misconduct' and an outline of which steps are appropriate in which circumstance • a description of who is responsible for which tasks (e.g. manager, human resources, CEO).
Relevant legislation	<p>Fair work and anti-discrimination laws include legislation relevant to the process of conflict resolution.</p> <p>For example, under the <i>Fair Work Act 2009</i> employees have a right to be protected from bullying, which is any behaviour that sees a worker repeatedly act unreasonably towards another colleague or puts an employee at risk of mental or physical harm.</p>

Identifying conflict resolution methods used in the workplace

There are three main conflict resolution methods used in the workplace.

Negotiated method	The conflict is resolved by the employee and employer
Mediated method	The employer and employee use an independent mediator to help them resolve the conflict
Arbitrated method	An independent arbitrator or court decides how the conflict will be resolved, making a binding decision or order to ensure resolution

The method selected by a manager or organisation to resolve conflict will depend on the nature and severity of the conflict, the needs of all parties, existing policies and procedures, and the legal framework. If the conflict involves unlawful actions perpetrated by an organisation on an employee, regardless of whether the organisation wants to use a negotiated method or not, they may not have a choice in the matter as the court will have the final say.

Effective conflict resolution processes

Effective conflict resolution involves four key stages, each of which involves specific tasks.

The four stages of conflict resolution, as well as the tasks involved during each stage, are outlined below.

Conflict resolution stage	Tasks involved
1. Identify and understand the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet with the people involved in the conflict ▪ Give each person the opportunity to describe their point of view ▪ Use your active listening skills to indicate that you are listening and engaged, and that you understand them ▪ Focus on facts ▪ Use 'I' statements to describe your perspective; this draws attention away from reactions and emotions and helps you to avoid placing blame ▪ Ask questions until you and all the affected parties understand the issue ▪ Allow for silence – people may need time to reflect and absorb information ▪ Obtain as much information as possible about the conflicting points of view
2. Establish common goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify what each affected party would like to see happen ▪ Find a commonality on both sides (e.g. 'Both of you want to feel motivated and good about yourself when you come to work') and use that as the starting point for establishing common goals
3. Collaborate to find a win-win solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listen, communicate and brainstorm together to come up with ways to meet common goals ▪ The solutions should be 'win-win': a win-win solution is one that benefits and satisfies all parties ▪ Do not stop listening, communicating and brainstorming until you have exhausted all options; then agree on the best solution ▪ Clarify each party's responsibility in achieving the common goals ▪ Ask each party to verbally explain the solution and their responsibility ▪ Document the agreement so all parties understand the solution and their responsibilities
4. Monitor and evaluate the solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observe how the affected parties and the team are performing now that the solution has been implemented ▪ Bring the parties together again after the solution has been in place for a reasonable period of time and ask them to share their thoughts on how the solution is working ▪ Share your observations, focusing on facts rather than opinions and feelings ▪ Work together to come up with a plan to prevent the conflict occurring again

General approaches to conflict resolution

In addition to methods and processes of conflict resolution, it is important to also understand general approaches to conflict resolution – some of which are described below. Certain approaches lead to better outcomes than others. The best result is a win-win outcome.

Collaboration

- Produces a win-win outcome using a problem-solving approach where the interests of all parties are met
- This strategy helps maintain strong group relationships and ensures that all employees involved achieve their interests

Compromise

- Produces a solution that partially satisfies the parties involved
- This approach sees each party try to win as much as possible while also trying to keep the group relationships intact

Accommodation

- A solution is produced when one party yields to the other party
- This is mainly done to protect the relationships involved

Controlling

- One party imposes a preferred solution on the other party
- This approach sacrifices the relationship in order to achieve a desired outcome, without any regard for the consequences faced by the other party

Avoiding

- A strategy that sees both parties withdraw and leave the conflict, abandoning the relationship and desired outcome

Fair Work Ombudsman

The Fair Work Ombudsman is a government organisation that promotes and monitors compliance with workplace laws.

The Ombudsman also:

- investigates breaches of the *Fair Work Act 2009*
- provides individuals and businesses with education, assistance, advice, tools and guidance relating to workplace relations, including conflict resolution
- provides dispute resolution services.

Example

Contribute constructively to conflict resolution

Andreas is an office manager at a medium-sized courier service. One of the members of his team, Laura, has come to him to complain about the behaviour of their colleague, Bronwyn. Laura tells Andreas that Bronwyn is condescending towards her and often leaves her out of conversations. She micromanages Laura's work, even though she is not her line manager, and frequently rolls her eyes when Laura tries to contribute to team discussions.

Andreas thanks Laura for letting him know about the problem and lets her know that the company policy for managing issues like these is to call a meeting between the affected parties so they can try to resolve them.

Andreas, Laura and Bronwyn meet to discuss the issues that Laura has raised. Andreas begins by asking Laura to share her concerns, and then provides Bronwyn with a chance to respond. Andreas makes sure he is demonstrating active listening by focusing on the person who is speaking and nodding his head.

Andreas then asks both Laura and Bronwyn what they would like to happen. Laura says she would like Bronwyn to treat her more respectfully. Bronwyn says she would like Laura to stop over-reacting and 'toughen up'.

'I want you both to feel safe and positive when you're at work,' Andreas replies. 'Do you agree that both of you deserve to feel safe and positive about the work you're doing?' Laura and Bronwyn nod. 'Great – that's a good starting point. Now let's see what ideas we can come up with together to resolve this problem.'

Andreas, Laura and Bronwyn come up with a plan that they are all happy with. They document the plan and Andreas asks Laura and Bronwyn to explain their responsibilities according to the plan they have come up with. Andreas then sets up a meeting for the following week – in accordance with the company's grievance policy – to discuss how it's going.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

Draw lines to match each conflict resolution strategy with its definition.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| » Collaboration | » One party imposes a preferred solution on the other party. This approach sacrifices the relationship in order to achieve a desired outcome, without any regard for the consequences faced by the other party. |
| » Compromise | » Produces a win-win outcome using a problem-solving approach where the interests of all parties are met. This strategy helps maintain strong group relationships and ensures that all employees involved achieve their interests. |
| » Accommodation | » Produces a solution that partially satisfies the parties involved. This approach sees each party try to win as much as possible while also trying to keep the group relationships intact. |
| » Controlling | » A strategy that sees both parties withdraw and leave the conflict, abandoning the relationship and desired outcome. |
| » Avoiding | » A solution is produced when one party yields to the other party. This is mainly done to protect the relationships involved. |

Question 2

Which of the following actions can a manager take to help resolve conflict in the workplace?
Tick all that apply.

- Identify the issues causing the conflict
- List possible solutions that would work for both parties involved
- Adjust KPIs for the team to include conflict resolution metrics
- Evaluate the different solutions and select an option that results in win-win
- Document the agreement so that the solution is understood by all parties

Question 3

List two organisational policies or procedures that managers could refer to when contributing to conflict resolutions.

3C Review team outcomes and implement improvements

Team performance should be monitored so that potential improvements can be identified to ensure ongoing success.

Team leaders and managers can play a key role in pulling together relevant information and personnel to identify and implement improvements in workplace relationships.

The process of reviewing team outcomes and implementing improvements involves five key stages:

- monitoring performance
- reviewing and assessing performance
- communicating progress and findings
- identifying suitable improvements
- implementing improvements.

Monitoring performance

Monitor the ongoing performance of the team by examining the data you have available.

This could include workflow data and quality checks. Use the objectives in the action plan as a measure of the team's performance.

To help you monitor team performance, you can establish Key Result Areas (KRAs) and KPIs for your team.

KRAs are a short list of overall goals that guide the progress of a team. They relate to broad areas such as recruitment, manufacturing and sales. KPIs are a measure of performance linked to a KRA.

One way of understanding the relationship between KPIs and KRAs is to imagine yourself going to see your GP. You are going to your GP because you want to stay healthy (the overall goal). Your blood pressure and BMI indicate how healthy you are – they are measures of your performance towards the desired result (good health).

If you are responsible for developing KPIs for your team, here is a list of the characteristics of good KPIs:

- They are a measure of performance linked to a particular result area (KRA).
- They offer an objective indicator of progress towards intended goals and objectives.
- They have a specific unit of measurement (e.g. day, time, cost).
- They measure what is intended to be measured.
- They provide a point of comparison to allow for an assessment of change over time.

You could also monitor performance by simply observing the team in action. Look at how the team members are communicating with one another – are they following the organisational policies and procedures? Look at how they work together as a team – could anything be improved?

Reviewing and assessing performance

Review and assess the performance of the team by analysing the data available.

Are the team meeting their objectives according to the action plan? Are they meeting the KPIs established in the plan?

Collect information

An important task to undertake when reviewing and assessing performance is to collect information. You cannot know how a team is performing unless you have information (data) that illustrates where they are succeeding and where potential improvements could be made. This information could come from:

- manual or electronic records of output
- sampling procedures (to assess quality)
- your own observations.

Another way to collect information about team performance is by consulting with the team themselves. This is an especially useful technique when you are assessing factors that might be difficult to measure in other ways, such as team cohesiveness.

You could do this with team members as a group. Although, if your team has not yet developed a strong sense of trust, it may be better to consult with team members individually – this will help to make them feel more comfortable about sharing their ideas and experiences.

Communicating progress

Keep your team informed about their progress and inform other relevant personnel, such as your manager.

You may need to complete documentation on a regular basis (e.g. monthly progress reports) for your manager or a management team to update them on the progress of your team.

If your team are not meeting their targets, speak with them about what changes might help them to improve. Speak to other team leaders about how they handled similar challenges.

Identifying suitable improvements

The fourth step in the process is to identify suitable improvements.

You may want to identify improvements as a team, rather than undertaking this task alone.

The benefits of identifying improvements as a team are that the team will have first-hand experience of what is likely to work 'on the ground'. Also, if the team collectively decide on which improvements to implement, they are likely to be more engaged and invested in the outcome. In other words, if they have decided for themselves what they want to improve on, they will be more motivated to make those improvements.

There are no standard criteria for identifying the most suitable solutions; it depends on numerous factors including the problem itself, the business setting and the context. The following criteria, commonly used in business decision-making, may help you and your team decide on the most suitable improvements.

Common decision-making criteria	Example of criteria
Ease of implementation	The solution can be integrated into current systems and processes
Costs	The solution will lead to cost savings for the business
Sustainability	The solution will work even if conditions change (e.g. periods of high and low demand)
Employee morale	The solution has no foreseeable negative effects on employee morale
Risks	The solution complies with necessary laws and regulations
Ethics	The solution does no harm to staff, customers, the environment and/or the broader community
Organisational alignment	The solution aligns with the overall vision and mission of the business

Here are some examples of steps that could be taken to improve communication, teamwork and outcomes within your team:

- Actively work at keeping communication lines open to allow everyone the opportunity to provide one another with feedback, share information and exchange ideas.
- Take workplace problems and complaints seriously.
- Work towards building relationships of trust within the team.
- Lead by example, showing team members that you are willing to take on little jobs and put in the hard work.
- Set attainable and realistic goals or objectives to encourage hard work and commitment.

Implementing improvements

The final step is to implement the improvements identified through the process.

Adjust the action plan and then start monitoring the team's performance accordingly.

Example

Review team outcomes and implement improvements

Rusty is a team leader at a timber supply company. As team leader, it is Rusty's responsibility to monitor team outcomes and implement improvements identified by him or his team, or the management group.

Rusty monitors team performance by regularly reviewing workflow data and the data received from quality checks. During team meetings, Rusty regularly updates his team on their progress and every two months Rusty completes a progress report for the management group.

When improvements need to be made, Rusty brainstorms with his team on how those improvements could be achieved. The team has unique insight into the challenges and obstacles that can affect their performance, so their input during these discussions is worthwhile and valuable.

Practice Task 9

Question 1

Put the following steps in order of how you would review team outcomes and implement improvements by writing the numbers 1 to 5 in the correct boxes.

- Identify suitable improvements in collaboration with team members and plan next steps
- Communicate progress and findings to team members
- Monitor the team's performance and collect information such as individual and team feedback and observations
- Implement improvements in line with organisational policies and procedures
- Review and assess performance against set team KPIs

Question 2

Which of the following techniques can be used to improve team outcomes? Tick all that apply.

- Increase the frequency of meetings to check that team members are on track and in constant communication
- Keep communication lines open to allow for feedback, sharing of information and exchange of ideas
- Take workplace problems and complaints seriously and be the person who encourages the trust of team members
- Lead by example, showing team members that you are willing to take on little jobs and put in the hard work
- Set attainable and realistic goals or objectives to encourage hard work and commitment

Summary

- Issues at work and outside work can affect an employee's performance.
- When offering support to colleagues, it is important to operate within the boundaries of your role and responsibilities.
- When seeking to resolve issues or conflicts, a range of organisational and legal requirements need to be considered.
- Performance management is one – but not the only – approach that can be used to resolve work difficulties.
- The best solution to a conflict is a win-win solution; this requires a collaborative approach.
- Monitoring and reviewing team outcomes is necessary to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of a team.
- Team members can provide a unique insight into potential improvements to their team.

Learning Checkpoint 3

Contribute to positive team outcomes

Part A

1. Which of the following methods can be used when resolving conflict between colleagues?
Tick all that apply.
 - Organise a meeting to discuss the issue with all parties involved, allowing each person to speak and ensuring all sides are heard in order to gain a full understanding of the conflict
 - Use active listening techniques to understand where each person is coming from and to show you are listening, engaged and comprehending what is being said
 - Use 'I' statements to focus thoughts and feelings on yourself instead of placing blame on others or focusing on reactions and emotions
 - Don't allow for silences as this can intensify emotions
 - Aim to achieve a win-win solution that benefits and satisfies all parties as this will encourage commitment to the resolution and action plan

2. Which of the following statements regarding organisational and legislative requirements are correct? Answer yes or no for each one.
 - a) Managers have a responsibility to identify any behaviour that sees a worker repeatedly act unreasonably towards a colleague or put an employee at risk of mental or physical harm » Yes » No

 - b) A grievance policy ensures that all employees receive consideration and efficient resolution of any grievance, complaint and appeal » Yes » No

 - c) A code of conduct sets out step-by-step procedures to follow when resolving conflict or work difficulties » Yes » No

 - d) Under equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, workplace conflict that has resulted from discrimination, bullying or harassment because of age, gender, race, sexuality or disability is unlawful and can be prosecuted » Yes » No

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

After some initial success in getting her work team to collaborate and communicate openly, Selena starts to notice that several of her team members are growing more agitated, tired and moody as the days go on.

Selena decides to observe her team during a team brainstorming session. She observes the following:

- outspoken, extroverted personality types are dominating the conversation
- only the loudest voices are heard with regards to new ideas and approaches to sales
- the delegation of tasks is unbalanced with report writing and data entry tasks assigned to the more introverted personality types.

Selena understands that she needs to address this behaviour immediately or risk the team breaking down.

1. List three issues that Selena needs to rectify about her own level of responsibility as the team's leader.

2. Describe two techniques Selena can use to support her team in resolving these work difficulties.

3. How can performance management help Selena monitor, analyse, implement and review strategies to improve work relationships?

