BSBINN301
Promote innovation in a team environment

Release 1

Learner guide

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Aspire Version 1.1

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Contents

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBINN301 Promote innovation in a team environment*, 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 and case studies	Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help
Summary	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

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

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	• Interprets and analyses textual information, from a wide range of sources, to identify information relevant to team activities
Writing	• Uses clear language and formats appropriate for the audience to highlight and present specific information
Oral communication	• Actively participates in verbal exchanges of ideas and elicits the views and opinions of team members by listening and questioning • Uses clear language to clarify rules and roles relating to team activities in formal and informal situations
Numeracy	• Interprets numeric information relevant to team activities
Navigate the world of work	• Understands the nature and purpose of own role and how it affects others in the work context
Interact with others	• Uses inclusive techniques to initiate, contribute and promote discussion amongst potentially diverse team members • Recognises the importance of establishing and building effective working relationships • Selects the appropriate form, channel and mode of communication for a specific purpose relevant to own role
Get the work done	• Plans, sequences and prioritises tasks for efficient and effective outcomes • Contributes to continuous improvement of current work practices by applying basic principles of analytical and lateral thinking • Uses problem-solving processes to address less predictable problems, and when appropriate, seeking input from others • Reflects on outcomes and further explores own and the team's role in implementing innovation

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 Maximise innovation in a team	1A	Evaluate and reflect on what the team needs and wants to achieve	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B	Find out about team members	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C	Work together to develop ideas for the team	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1D	Encourage contributions from different people to help build your team	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2 Develop effective ways to work	2A	Establish ground rules for the team	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B	Agree on and communicate responsibilities	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C	Make the best use of your team's skills and abilities	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2D	Plan challenging activities that encourage collaboration	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2E	Establish rewards	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

continued ...

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Topic	Key outcome		Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3 Support and guide your colleagues	3A	Model behaviour that supports innovation	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B	Find and use ideas from outside the team	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3C	Share information, knowledge and experiences	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3D	Challenge and test ideas in a positive and collaborative way	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3E	Explore ideas with team members	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 4 Reflect on how the team is working	4A	Identify opportunities for improvement	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	4B	Gather and use feedback	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	4C	Discuss the challenges of innovation openly	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	4D	Act on ideas for improvement	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	4E	Identify, promote and celebrate success	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1
Maximise innovation in a team

Innovation always starts with an idea. When working in a team, each member should be encouraged to contribute ideas. While it is not always possible for everyone's ideas to be put into practice, it is important that each person feels their contribution is valued.

When team members are encouraged to contribute ideas, this increases the productivity of the team. Team members become motivated to explore better ways to do things and have a greater degree of job satisfaction.

Creating a team environment where innovation and ideas are fostered is the responsibility of all team members, including the leader. Sharing ideas and promoting innovation create a workplace culture of responsibility and respect for others.

In this topic you will learn how to:

1A   Evaluate and reflect on what the team needs and wants to achieve

1B   Find out about team members

1C   Work together to develop ideas for the team

1D   Encourage contributions from different people to help build your team

1A Evaluate and reflect on what the team needs and wants to achieve

It is important to understand the difference between needs and wants. Organisations usually have a budget that determines what can be purchased to help teams perform tasks or achieve goals. When you work in a team, you may have the same duties as one or more other team members or you may each perform different tasks. What makes you a team is that you all have a common goal.

There are things the team needs to achieve this goal. For example, if you work in a company's complaints department managing complaints via telephone and email, your team goal may be to resolve 90 per cent of complaints within two business days. The team can function using its current equipment, but newer and faster equipment would be welcomed. Because the team can function with or without an equipment upgrade, the desire for new equipment would be considered a want.

However, if you can demonstrate that faster computers or better headsets will increase productivity, then the purchase of new equipment could be considered a need. This idea of aligning wants and needs forms the basis of innovation in the workplace.

Achieving team goals – needs compared with wants:

- Desks
- Chairs
- Telephones
- Headsets
- Computers
- Copies of the company's complaints policy

- Spacious desks
- Ergonomic chairs
- New telephones
- Better headsets
- Faster computers
- Input into the complaints policy

Seek a common goal

The goals of your team may be ongoing. Working in a payroll team, for example, you need to ensure people are paid at regular intervals. However, some goals are project-related and may need to be achieved within a certain time frame; for example, a team may need to recruit seasonal staff by a certain date.

Goals are usually set by owners, leaders or managers and it is the responsibility of work teams to achieve these goals. While some people in the team may have a unique role and others have similar roles, each team member is responsible for their own productivity. To achieve this output, each person will find they have different needs and wants. They will also have their own ideas on how to achieve these.

It is therefore important to consider each individual's requirements and how these needs and wants can contribute to the team's success.

Seek a common goal: evaluation and reflection

Evaluation is an impersonal process that involves analysis. This stage requires an investigation into what is possible; for example, to decrease the number of customer inquiries team members need to personally deal with, it is possible to have an automated answering system that provides information about frequently asked questions.

Reflection is a more personal process that involves considering team and individual job roles, strengths and weaknesses, abilities, motivations and personalities. This relates to what is realistic in terms of the needs and wants of individuals and the organisation; for example, the organisation may believe it is important for someone to personally answer all calls so the organisation is seen as providing personal service or it may want to obtain caller information such as postcode, age group or gender.

Below are a number of things to consider when seeking goals.

Goal-seeking considerations:

- Know what is required by the organisation, the team's role in it and the roles of individual team members.
- Gather information from each team member about how they see their role, their needs and their wants.
- Take the time to understand all points of view before any judgments are made.

Ideas for improvement

Ideas to improve team productivity may come from customers, stakeholders or management, as well as from team members themselves. It is important to understand that all ideas have potential merit and should be neither dismissed nor taken up without proper investigation.

A stakeholder is anyone who is interested in the work of an organisation or project. They may be directly involved as a paid employee, client or customer, or indirectly involved as a sponsor or member of the local community.

Innovation can be used to:

- improve budgetary performance
- develop new services or products
- implement projects
- investigate ongoing ideas
- improve or change work conditions
- improve outcomes from the work that is done
- create a broader social or community impact beyond the workplace.

Continuous improvement cycle

Innovation and implementation form a continuous process because there are always new challenges to be met. You need a process that allows you to measure the team's performance before and after new ideas are implemented, so you can gauge the effectiveness of the ideas.

One way ideas can be assessed is by using a continuous improvement cycle. A want or a need is identified. As each idea is formed, its merit is evaluated and reflected on. Ideas that have merit are then implemented. After a period of time, they are reviewed to assess productivity. Working in this way helps encourage and motivate teams to a high degree of innovation.

Below are some steps in a continuous improvement cycle for innovation.

The continuous improvement cycle for innovation
Coming up with an idea around a need or want
Evaluating and reflecting on that idea
Implementing changes to accommodate the new idea
Reviewing all of the above
Identifying business and individual wants and needs

Evaluation processes

There are many evaluation tools that can be used to evaluate the merits of an idea. Some evaluation tools are straightforward and designed for short-term use; others are complex and resource heavy. Make sure you are aware of the evaluation processes and tools used in your workplace, so you can help your team reach its goals.

Below are some examples of ideas and appropriate evaluation tools.

Improve budgetary performance

Idea
– Reduce stationery purchases

Evaluation tool
– Analyse financial records and stores requests

Develop a new service or product

Idea
– Develop a 'green' product

Evaluation tool
– Customer feedback

Keep staff motivated, lower staff turnover

Idea
– Improve work conditions

Evaluation tool
– Team brainstorming session

Give back to the community

Idea
– Adopt a charity

Evaluation tool
– Survey local charities

Use customer feedback as an evaluation tool

Working in a way that is pleasant for you and others in your team is important, but unless you have happy customers, you will find it hard to achieve your goals. Customer feedback helps you learn about staff morale, the effectiveness and efficiency of the team and, importantly, customers' perceptions of the team and the organisation.

A team's customers may be external customers, such as shoppers, clients or patients, or they may be internal customers, such as general staff or other teams. Feedback can be provided informally through verbal or written feedback, or formally using evaluation forms, reports or surveys. The information provided should be used to identify issues and to build the effectiveness of the team.

Develop a customer feedback questionnaire

Surveying customers can be a very simple or a highly complex task. It is important to create the survey or questionnaire in a way that enables you to capture relevant data that can be easily analysed, so that the information it provides allows you to address specific issues.

Questions requiring the customer to provide a yes/no response or choose from set responses are known as closed questions. These are useful when you have a targeted query. For example, 'Was your complaint resolved within two business days?' These questions are useful for obtaining feedback on specific issues.

Questions requiring the customer to provide more personal, sentence-based responses are known as open questions. These are useful when you want to generate ideas. For example, 'How could our complaints service be improved?' These questions are useful for obtaining ideas and responses you may not have thought about.

Questionnaires with either closed and/or open questions can generate qualitative data (responses that fall into categories) and/or quantitative data (responses that are in numbers). The types of information gathered depend on what is being asked, so make sure you ask the right questions. Here are some useful aspects of the data to consider.

What kind of data do you want?
• Yes/no answer
• Figures – how much, how many, how often
• Response on an agree/disagree scale (Likert scale)
• Selection of one or more responses from a list
• Personal, sentence-based response

Qualitative and quantitative research

In quantitative research, the researcher asks questions that generate numeric data (figures). An example of a quantitative question is 'How much have you spent on holidays this year?' These answers can then be added together and/or directly compared with others.

In qualitative research, the researcher asks questions that sort respondents into categories and the people answering the questions have greater freedom as to how they can respond. An example of a qualitative question is 'Where do you spend most of your holidays?'

Use evaluation tools

You need to decide on the most relevant evaluation tools for each situation and use those are appropriate to the situation.

Here are some examples of evaluation tools.

Common organisational goal	Idea	Evaluation tool
Improve budgetary performance	Reduce stationery purchases	Analyse financial records and stores requests
Develop a new service or product	Develop a 'green' product	Examine customer feedback to see whether this is important for maintaining loyalty
Keep staff motivated, lower staff turnover	Improve work conditions	Team brainstorming session
Give back to the community	Adopt a charity	Survey local charities

Example: use evaluation tools to work out ways to save resources

Sam's organisation has announced it is going 'green' and instructed all work teams to work out ways to save on resources. Sam and his three teammates decided to hold a brainstorming session to come up with ideas.

Ideas that Sam's team developed:

- Purchase a printer that prints on both sides of the paper, cutting down the amount of paper used.
- Set all computers to go into standby mode if not used for five minutes.
- Have one walk– or ride-to-work day each week, cutting down on carbon emissions from cars.
- Change over to recycled office paper.
- Turn off all lights that are not required.
- Purchase low-energy light globes to replace current ones.
- Have sensors in some rooms so lights turn on and off automatically when there is someone in the room.
- Bring lunches from home to cut down on the amount of packaging bought from the cafeteria.

Example: Sam's team evaluates and reflects on its ideas for innovation

After completing the brainstorming session, Sam's team then evaluated and reflected on these ideas for innovation. While all of these ideas were evaluated as fitting the organisation's new 'green' policy, the reflection stage showed there may be problems in implementing some of these ideas, although others could be implemented with little or no negative impact.

The team's common goal is to become more environmentally friendly.

Idea for aligning needs and wants	Evaluation tool	Evaluation findings: cost, availability of resources, time frames etc.	Reflections
Purchase a printer that prints on both sides of the paper, cutting down the amount of paper used	Price comparison	Cost of new printer: $600 Paper saving over two-year period (50,000 sheets or 100 reams @ $6) = $600 Can be implemented immediately on purchase of new printer	No impact on individual or team roles; team members need to set double-sided print settings on their computers Costs to company: neutral over two-year period
Set all computers to go into standby mode if not used for five minutes	Staff survey	No financial outlay No extra resources/ time involved	No impact on team/ individuals after initial resetting of computers Cost saving to company
Have one walk– or ride-to-work day each week, cutting down on carbon emissions from cars	Staff survey	No financial or resource costs for company Can be implemented immediately	Financial saving (less spent on petrol), providing people already own biking/ walking gear Fitness benefit to team members Not practical for those who travel a long way or need to pick up/drop off kids Sometimes team members need to use cars during the workday
Change over to recycled office paper	Price comparison	Small cost increase No extra resources Can be implemented immediately	No negative impact on company or team

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Idea for aligning needs and wants	Evaluation tool	Evaluation findings: cost, availability of resources, time frames, etc.	Reflections
Turn off all lights that are not required	Staff survey Observation	No cost to company No resources required Can be implemented immediately	No negative impact on company or team Other work groups need to agree for it to work effectively
Purchase low-energy light globes to replace current ones	Price and benefits comparison	Financial cost to company (unknown) for purchase – need to get quote Time needed for research/quotes Can be implemented immediately if purchase approved	Different lighting effect may create other (unknown) problems: needs further analysis
Have sensors in some rooms so lights turn on and off automatically when there is someone in the room	Cost analysis against budget	Financial cost to company (unknown) for purchase and installation – need to get quote Other resources required? Time frame uncertain	No negative impact on company or team
Bring lunches from home to cut down on the amount of packaging bought from the cafeteria	Staff survey	No cost/resource outlay Can be implemented immediately	Possible financial cost to company because fewer people will buy food from the cafeteria Team members enjoy social interaction in the cafeteria; food is well priced People would still bring cans, wrappers etc. from home

Practice task 1

You work for the Warpath Council in the waste collection department. Management wants to reduce the number of general complaints the council receives and your team has been asked to work on complaints regarding household rubbish collection.

The complaints fall into four types:

1. The trucks arrive very early in the morning, waking residents.

2. Bins are not being emptied properly.

3. Bin lids are being broken by rough handling.

4. Bins are being missed (left full).

The common goal is to reduce the number of householder complaints about rubbish collection. Come up with one strategy to reduce each complaint type and fill in **this table** with your evaluations and reflections.

Idea for aligning needs and wants	Evaluation tools	Evaluation findings: cost, availability of resources, time frames, etc.	Reflections

... continued

Practice task

... continued

1B Find out about team members

Innovation means doing things better. This may mean reducing costs, increasing outputs or even having a happier workplace that enables people to do their jobs better. Innovation is important because nothing stays the same; new problems and challenges arise and better ways to handle these need to be found.

A team's capacity to be innovative depends on the overall level of motivation of team members to achieve their goals. A team's success in terms of innovation corresponds to its actions. Many of these actions involve collaboration – within the team and with external stakeholders such as management, customers, suppliers, business partners and sponsors. When people spread ideas, experience and skills around an organisation this is called cross-fertilisation.

What is an innovative team?

Teams constantly change. People are recruited to replace those who have left and the team-building cycle goes on. Even when team members do not change, the situations and challenges facing the team do. Innovation within a team ensures the work of the team is relevant and the skills of the team are sufficient to meet these new workplace challenges.

Successful innovation in any team depends on the nature of the organisational culture. A well-balanced, calming workplace culture and code of behaviour help lower underlying stress levels and create a higher level of workplace satisfaction and healthier work–life balance.

Here are examples of how supportive workplace cultures encourage innovation and how the team benefits from this.

How successful innovation occurs

Successful innovation in a team occurs when:

- all team members are encouraged to have and share ideas
- a safe and non-threatening environment is provided
- all members are prepared to compromise and to respect others' contributions
- the organisational culture supports innovation through mechanisms such as staff feedback forms, open forums, ideas pages in internal newsletters and employee-of-the-month awards.

Benefits of innovative teams

Innovative teams benefit by:

- being more proactive and being able to sense change and develop ways to deal with it
- having close bonds between team members
- feeling the work they are doing is important and valuable
- being commended for their work
- developing and growing, preparing members for promotion and cross-fertilisation.

Skills for successful teamwork

A team is made up of people who have their own areas of expertise, strengths, weaknesses, personalities, working preferences, and work and life issues. In a team environment, it is important to recognise these differences and to take advantage of individual strengths; for example, one person might be great at generating ideas, another good at analysing data and someone else at undertaking research.

Being part of a team helps everyone develop a wider range of skills as team members learn from each other.

Important skills for teamwork include:

- oral communication skills – for giving presentations, demonstrations and training sessions
- written communication skills – for writing reports, putting together submissions and writing letters of appreciation
- interpersonal communication skills – for listening, negotiating and presenting arguments
- problem-solving skills – for identifying core issues, coming up with options and testing solutions.

In order to work well in a team, individuals need to develop good communication skills.

Oral communication is the way we most commonly communicate with individuals and groups. It includes an ability to listen empathetically.

Written communication is essential for sharing complex information or for situations where oral communication is not practical or appropriate.

Good communication skills within a team go hand in hand with effective negotiation, problem-solving and sharing of ideas and information.

They allow the team to readily identify core issues and implement solutions.

The value of an innovative team

A group of people doing the same or similar work tasks does not necessarily make a team. A group of people working together to achieve the same goal does not necessarily make a team. What makes a group of people a team starts with the recognition that through working together, they can obtain a higher level of success than by simply adding their individual efforts.

When group members work on their own, they can demonstrate what they have achieved themselves. Adding all their efforts together, you can demonstrate the total of what they have achieved as a group, and this is adding value and building an innovative team.

Thus an innovative team creates new ways of working, develops new ideas about the kind of work to be done and builds the capacity of each team member to do more.

Example: being innovative is more than working together

When group members work on their own, they can demonstrate what they have achieved themselves. Adding all their efforts together, you can demonstrate the total of what they have achieved as a group.

For example, over one week each member of a customer service team working in isolation produces a certain amount of work. This may be responding to a number of sales inquiries. Multiplying this output by the number of people working individually, in this case four, provides the total number of sales inquiries responded to.

Amita = work output

Juhail = work output

Teresa = work output

Tomasz = work output

Total = four work outputs

But no-one can work in isolation, especially when they are in a team. When group members form an innovative team they can achieve more because they are not simply adding together their individual efforts, but combining them. This productivity is gained through team dynamics, which refers to the ways team members interact with each other and work together to combine their talents, abilities, personalities and interests, so the team becomes one entity containing a number of individuals. No two teams are identical, because no individuals are identical.

Teams can operate dynamically in positive or negative ways. If Amita and Juhail go about their work in different ways, they may disagree if they are asked to work the same way. This would have the effect of lowering each of their work outputs through time taken in arguments about how things should be done and general dissatisfaction with their jobs.

However, if Amita and Juhail work innovatively and respect each other's different ways of working, and also their different personalities, strengths and weaknesses, they can learn from each other and even take over aspects of each other's roles in order to gain more enjoyment and become more productive. This Amita–Juhail dynamic actually leads to a higher combined work output. By adding the other two team members, Teresa and Tomasz, the dynamic is multiplied and there is potential for a highly dynamic team.

In an innovative team, each member contributes in a way that enhances the capability of every other team member, multiplying the possibilities for work output for each member.
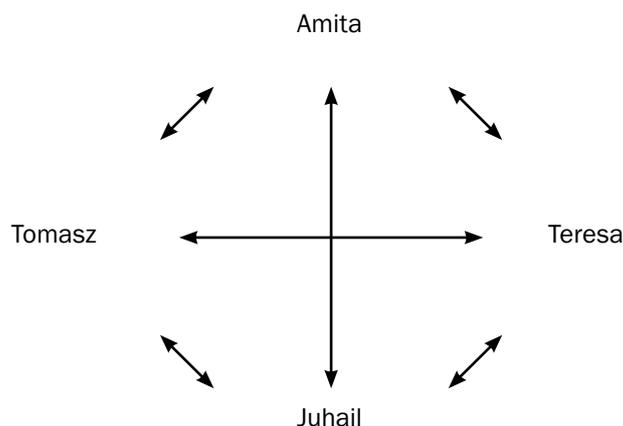
Value individuals

The value of an innovative team is that it is more than the sum of its parts. So whenever someone new comes into a team or someone leaves, or whenever a new project is introduced, the team dynamic changes. At these critical stages, everyone needs to have the opportunity to share information about themselves and their view of the team and the individual roles, as well as the outcomes that will be produced.

It is important the information you share is related to the work environment and not of a personal nature. Information about people's personal lives is not appropriate and can lead to a negative dynamic.

For example, Tomasz works from 9.30 am until 2.30 pm each day, because he is a single parent who has a child with a disability whom he needs to drop off and collect from school. It is important not to focus on Tomasz's family situation when discussing the work of the team; it is sufficient to know the hours he is available for work.

Gather information about team members

Gathering information about team members is often done in team meetings or a formal induction session, but this is not always possible. Sometimes team members work in different locations or start and finish work at different times, making team meetings difficult. Questionnaires, teleconferences, resumes and introductory emails can all be used to collect information about team members.

Team-building exercises can be incorporated into induction programs or team meetings to help build people's confidence and help team members get acquainted. It is important to ensure team exercises are designed so the information gathering is relevant to the work environment.

Here are five areas you could consider when collating information about new team members.

Personal interests

It is good for people to spend most of their work time doing things they like, but through working with others they learn to operate effectively in other areas as well.

Knowledge, experience

Each team member is the product of past learning, skills and experience; they bring their unique perspectives to the work of the team and can share these with others, adding to the total ability of the team to carry out its tasks and achieve common goals.

Work styles

A person's work style refers to such things as what time of the day they work best and how they like to get things done.

Strengths, weaknesses

Finding out about people's strengths and weaknesses helps identify situations where they can be relied on to undertake certain roles or lead/train others.

Life roles

Team members are not only people who work; each person also has a range of other roles in life. All of these life roles should be seen as valuable when building an innovative team.

Establish the right environment

It is important to create the right work environment in order to enable people to feel comfortable and confident about sharing ideas and information about themselves. Each team member is responsible for creating this environment and, like the cogs of a clock, they all need to work together in harmony to be successful in reaching their individual and team goals.

Here are some other team responsibilities.

Additional team member responsibilities
• Engendering a climate of mutual respect
• Being positive about what the team can achieve
• Being willing to listen to others
• Sharing information about themselves with others
• Supporting others in the team
• Imparting knowledge about the organisation and the work of the team

Practice task 2

Identify five of your strengths. These may be related to your key interests, your characteristics or things you do well.

Then identify five weaknesses that could be complemented by one or more of your team members, friends or family. For example, if you are good at coming up with ideas but not good at communicating them on paper, you could partner with someone who has good writing skills.

1. Identify five of your strengths. Which of these will help you work as an effective member of an innovative team?

2. Identify five of your weaknesses. Which of these could be balanced out by others in your team?

3. What methods could you use to develop your skills?

1C Work together to develop ideas for the team

The next stage in innovative teamwork is to develop ideas about how the team will work together. It is important at this stage to assess individual and team capabilities against the goals and the expectations of the team. This assessment may identify that the team is not sufficiently skilled or equipped to meet these performance expectations. Any skills gap needs to be addressed if goals and objectives are to be met.

For innovative teams, it is not enough to simply get the job done. Innovative teams work creatively to perform to a high standard and provide a value-added service.

Determine the potential for innovation in your team

Regardless of whether your role in the team is manager, contractor, team member or even sponsor, you have a responsibility to ensure the team is working innovatively.

To be innovative you need to:

- generate ideas freely
- think creatively about how to capture and use good ideas
- make decisions and define steps to work towards desired outcomes
- set benchmarks and standards for the work you do and what you want to achieve
- motivate the team to work effectively
- ensure each team member's skills and abilities are considered so they can contribute in a way that is meaningful for them.

The elements of innovative teamwork

Below are five areas of innovation and questions for assessing a team's ability to work innovatively in each area.

Communicate openly and effectively

    How easily do people share information about themselves, their roles, their needs and their wants?

    How well do they listen to others when they communicate?

Resolve real and potential conflicts

    How well do team members work together to overcome problems, see others' points of view and account for differences?

    How do they minimise tension and conflict?

Generate ideas

    How are people's ideas responded to in the group situation?

    Can all ideas that are presented be discussed and extended by the group?

    Are there sufficient knowledge and experience in the group to provide input at the ideas stage?

Make decisions

    Can the group reach the decision stage at an appropriate point?

    Are decisions based on compromise, incorporating the best of each person's contributions?

    Are they made in line with common goals and stakeholder expectations?

    Are decisions agreed on, or are they forced on people?

Carry out necessary activities to a high standard

    What is the skill base of the group?

    Are all the skills and capabilities required held by the group or do new members need to be enlisted?

    What training and development are required?

The elements of innovative teamwork

Bring new people into the team

It is great when a team has all the expertise, knowledge and skills it needs in order to work innovatively. Often, though, there are one or more key elements missing. There are several ways to rectify this, but the two main ones are developing the skills of existing team members and recruiting new team members. Recruiting new members needs to be considered in light of organisational and budgetary limitations.

There are many instances when a team may need to recruit a new member and these range from replacing a team member who is absent to adding a team member who brings additional skills, expertise and knowledge.

Changes in the team are unsettling for existing members, so it is essential that management is able to support the work – this may take the form of assigning staff to carry out duties that are unattended while the team is working on a specific project or allocating resources to carry out new work that results from the team's innovation.

Assess new people in the team

Once you have information on the knowledge, skills and expertise of the current team and the capacity of its members to work towards common goals, skills gaps need to be identified and addressed before you can make appropriate suggestions for new team members. While this is ideally done in the early stages of innovation, new team members can be required at any stage; for example, the purchase of new software may require someone with the expertise to use it effectively.

New team members can come from outside the organisation or from another area within the organisation. They may be seconded for a short period or add some work from your team onto their existing workload.

When assessing new team members, you need to:

- identify the skills and knowledge of current team members
- identify the skills and knowledge that would benefit the team
- explain the benefits to the team of acquiring someone to 'fill the gaps'
- suggest the person best able to provide the team with these skills and knowledge.

A costly exercise

Human resources add substantial cost to an organisation, so requests for new team members need to be realistic. A request needs to be supported with information about how the new team member will improve the work of the team, help create successful outcomes, reduce costs or improve the company's image. Supply detailed information as to how they will contribute to the team's goals in ways not already provided by members of the existing team. Be prepared to argue your case, to take part in negotiations and to compromise if your initial request is not granted.

Support and develop new team members

When people enter and leave a team, there is a shift in the team dynamic. A new team member needs to be introduced to the other members and briefed on the work and direction of the team.

If the new team member joins after the team has been working together, attention needs to be given to assist that person to become an effective member in the shortest possible time frame.

Below are a number of strategies for supporting and developing a new team member.

Strategies for developing a new team member
• Have a buddy or mentor work with the new person while they are coming to grips with where the team is going and who is involved.
• Conduct a formal and/or informal induction process.
• Ask the new team member to introduce themselves to the group and present information about their skills, knowledge and experience.

When a new person joins a team, it should be a priority to assist them in becoming an effective member in the shortest possible time frame.

Having a buddy or mentor to work with the new person will assist them in coming to grips with the team's operations.

A formal induction process will help to make them comfortable in the new work environment and ensure that they are introduced to all team members.

New people will often bring a wealth of skills and experience into the team. An opportunity should be provided for them to present information about their skills, knowledge and prior experiences.

Practice task 3

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

Case study

An administration team at BizOps has three months to complete a project to create an online product inventory and there are over 10,000 items in the product range. There are currently three people who have been delegated this task.

Liz is the marketing manager and has been with BizOps for eight years. She is very familiar with the company's products and services, but is set in her ways and doesn't like change.

Mary is keen, but is new to the company. She studied information management as part of her degree and has worked in libraries for several years. She knows very little about BizOps.

Luke, who usually works in customer service, has strong computer skills and created databases in his old job. He has been with the company for two years, but often takes unscheduled days off.

1. Identify each team member's potential strengths and weaknesses in relation to the five elements of innovative teamwork.
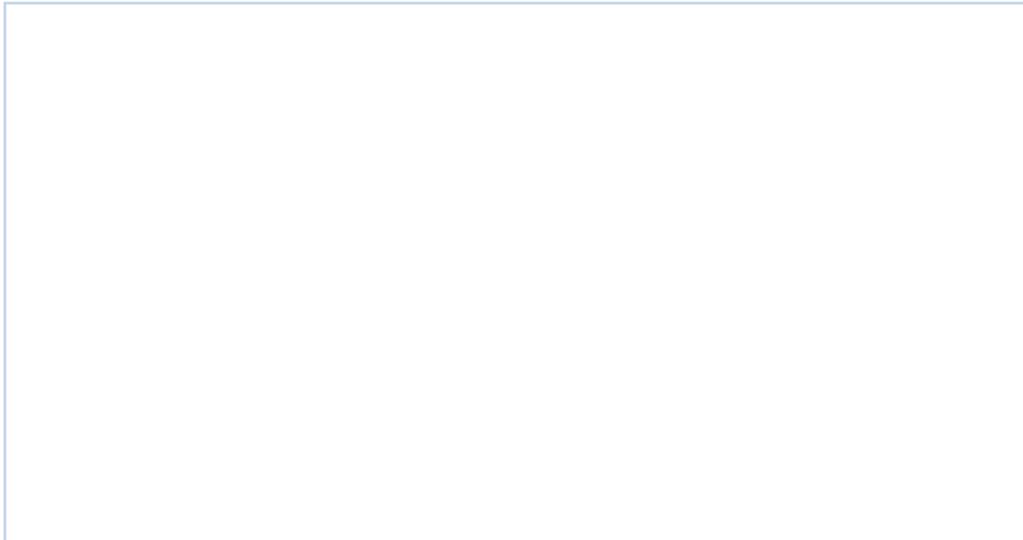
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2. What work may need to be done at the start to ensure these three people work together innovatively for the life of the project?
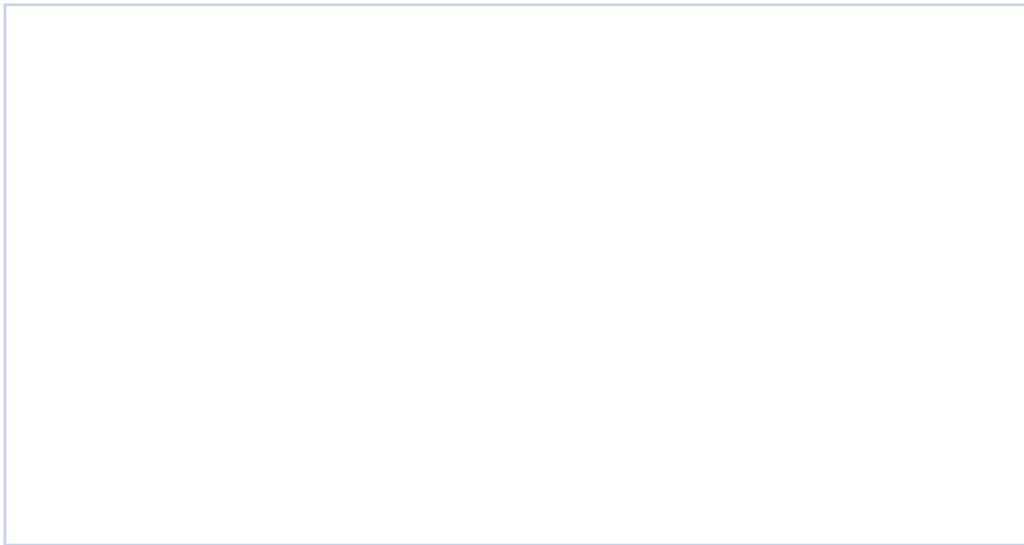
3. What strategies can they use to ensure there is a cross-fertilisation of ideas between the three of them?

1D Encourage contributions from different people to help build your team

Developing the right environment is essential for innovative teamwork. When all team members are contributing fully and interacting freely, the team dynamic is operating at its best and team cohesiveness is alive and well.

An innovative environment

An innovative environment is based on respect for the contributions of others; it engenders trust and builds confidence. This in turn develops the capacity of the team for innovation.

There is often a need to ask questions to spark encouragement in the team; when doing so, use respectful questions that encourage the speaker to part with further information. Open questions that start with 'who', 'when', 'where', 'what' or 'how' are a good place to start.

Example: develop the capacity of the team

The data entry team at Local Response, a charitable organisation, prides itself on its members being respectful of each other and the contributions they all make. The team members know they are all responsible for maintaining an innovative environment where ideas are encouraged. Their motto is: 'No idea is a bad idea.'

The team has developed a mission statement to ensure it maintains its momentum for innovation, no matter who comes into or leaves the team. Its mission statement is: 'To serve our community in the best possible way by ensuring all donations are entered within 24 hours and all sponsors are acknowledged within a week.'

Each morning the team holds a team meeting for 10 minutes and notes its progress towards a goal of $5 million in donations for the year. Team members then discuss what has worked and brainstorm ways to improve their service. Everyone in the team contributes ideas and openly congratulates others on their input.

Once a week they join the other teams at Local Response in order to gain further ideas and input. Ideas are also encouraged from other stakeholders, including donors, recipients and sponsors.

Once a month the team holds a lunch where people discuss ways to improve the service; all interested parties are welcome to attend.

Acknowledge others

It is not enough to invite people to present ideas and make contributions without any follow-up. We all know how disappointing it is to be asked for information or advice, only to find that our input does not seem to have been taken further.

Being acknowledged does not necessarily mean all ideas are implemented; however, the person who has provided the input needs to feel their idea has been given due consideration.

Team members can acknowledge others' contributions by:

- thanking the person
- reflecting on what they have said
- paraphrasing or summarising to show they have been listening
- asking questions to get a deeper understanding of the idea
- providing feedback
- telling the person how their input has been used.

> ## Example: how an organisation acknowledges contributions
>
> Each month the data entry team at Local Response puts out a newsletter acknowledging every idea that has been presented to them. If the person who presented the idea is a team member, they receive an acknowledgment on the spot. If the person or group that presented the idea is external to the organisation, the team also writes a letter thanking that person or group for their input. It then provides updates in subsequent newsletters about new systems or other changes that have been put into place.

Ask questions

There is an art to asking questions in a way that shows respect for others. Questions that require yes or no responses – closed questions – can be confronting and limiting. Respectful, open questions encourage the speaker to share further information. These often start with 'who', 'when', 'where', 'what' or 'how'.

Note that questions beginning with 'why' need to be phrased carefully, otherwise your colleague may feel as though they are being interrogated, rather than encouraged.

Contribute in different ways

Ensuring team members and others feel they can contribute is very important, but not everyone will contribute in the same way. People have different strengths that can be used in different ways.

Individuals who often generate ideas are usually people who are good at this and enjoy being active and vocal in the group and thinking about all the possibilities. Others may excel at seeing various points of view and accounting for differences, and these people often work to minimise tension and conflict.

Below are some different ways to contribute to team innovation.

Motivating and energising the team

These team members are positive and energetic, with an interest in team cohesion; they also provide an element of fun.

Mapping concepts and seeing possibilities

These team members are good at visualising and creating flow charts, mind maps, diagrams and other pictorial representations of ideas.

Playing the devil's advocate

These team members can take an opposing view and ask the hard questions; this ensures all aspects of an idea have been considered before the team decides to act.

Articulating the direction of the team

These team members are good at bringing together ideas and strategies so they make sense; they have good analytical skills and a high level of literacy.

Making links and tapping into networks

These team members are good networkers and come into their own when negotiation is required.

Providing technical input

These team members know the organisation's processes and systems 'inside out' and can advise on how new processes and systems might be incorporated in the future. They can provide historical information about previous successes and failures.

Problem-solving

These team members ensure new ideas are implemented with a minimum of fuss. They meet challenges and overcome hurdles to facilitate the process of change.

Practice task 4

Interview a work colleague, classmate or acquaintance – ideally someone you do not know very well – and find out as much as you can about them regarding their work history, skills and experience. Then ask them to interview you in turn.

Reflect on how you and the other person would complement each other in a team, including the areas where there are overlaps in your experiences and where there are skills gaps.

Summary

1. Innovation begins with identifying common goals and individual and team needs and wants.

2. Ideas for improvement can come from customers, stakeholders and management, as well as from team members themselves.

3. Ideas need to be evaluated and reflected on.

4. Innovative teams develop in a supportive workplace culture where team members respect each other and learn about each other in areas relevant to the work environment.

5. Innovative teams understand and use the skills and expertise of team members and identify skills gaps that need to be addressed.

6. In an innovative environment, people respect and value the contributions of others; this engenders trust, builds confidence and ensures new team members are supported and developed.

7. Innovation is maximised when the contributions of all stakeholders are valued and acknowledged.

Learning checkpoint 1
Maximise innovation in a team

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge and may help you demonstrate your understanding of maximising innovation in a team.

Part A

1. Explain the benefits to you and to your workplace when you evaluate and reflect on what your team's goals are.

2. Describe a time when you had to learn more about your team members to help create team innovation. What kind of information did you seek and why?

3. What is meant by the term 'cross-fertilisation'? Why is this important?

4. Think back to a time when you were part of a team that was coming up with new ideas. Drawing on your experience, explain why it is essential for team members to discuss each other's contributions to the team respectfully.

Part B

Write a report about a team you are, or have been, part of. Choose a work, class, family or social team that worked together to achieve a common goal. Describe how the team created an environment to maximise innovation.

You need to describe the following:

1. The team's goals

2. The team's needs and wants

3. The team members and their areas of skill and expertise

4. The steps taken to fill gaps in the team

Part B

5. How individual team members were respected and acknowledged for their contributions

6. Innovative ways the team identified and achieved its goals by:
   • enabling ideas from all members and stakeholders to be known
   • acknowledging and using team members' individual potential

7. What the team could have done differently to work more innovatively

Topic 2
Develop effective ways to work

In order to work effectively, each team member needs to feel their contributions and their inputs are valued in their workplace. It is important people do not feel they are being taken advantage of or feel they are supporting people who are not sharing the workload. Everyone needs to know what is expected of them, that the demands on their time and energy are reasonable and evenly shared, and that everyone's contribution is recognised fairly and equitably.

In this topic you will learn how to:

2A   Establish ground rules for the team

2B   Agree on and communicate responsibilities

2C   Make the best use of your team's skills and abilities

2D   Plan challenging activities that encourage collaboration

2E   Establish rewards

2A Establish ground rules for the team

Ground rules create a framework for operating standards and procedures for a team. It is essential that any rules for team activities are clear. They should also be designed to be flexible so they can accommodate changes in priorities and changes to the team composition as team members enter or leave the team or their roles change within that team.

Establish ground rules

Ground rules apply to all team members including leaders, not only to certain team members or at certain times. They are designed to place the team in a better position to meet deadlines and work objectives. Ground rules should not be too prescriptive about exactly what is to take place or how the work is to be done, because this is not conducive to innovative practice.

Boundaries

Ground rule covers:

The kind of work, accountabilities and outcomes the team deals with. Boundaries may also cover areas not to be dealt with by the team if they need to be clarified.

Ground rule reflection:

'This team does not process payments to staff, whether these are wages or sundry items.'

Confidentiality

Ground rule covers:

The policies and procedures team members must follow to ensure individual, group, client and other stakeholder privacy and confidentiality are respected.

Ground rule reflection:

'All correspondence related to specific clients will be centrally maintained in a locked cabinet.'

Copyright, moral rights and intellectual property

Ground rule covers:

The processes in place to ensure copyright law is upheld and people's intellectual property is protected.

Ground rule reflection:

'Team members claiming rights to their own original work must enter the title, their name and date in the IP register.'

Communication

Ground rule covers:

How often people need to communicate and what methods are to be used.

Ground rule reflection

'Team members are expected to attend a meeting on the third Thursday of each month.'

Key roles and responsibilities

Ground rule covers:

The general duties and authority/knowledge base of each team member in regard to meeting the team's common or project goals.

Ground rule reflection

'Maria is to respond to all inquiries about the project from within the organisation.'

Relationships

Ground rule covers:

The other teams and individuals that are critical to the work of the group – either inside or outside the organisation – and how the team is to relate to them.

Ground rule reflection:

'The sales team is to supply updated figures to the finance team each month so they can incorporate the figures into the monthly report.'

Time lines

Ground rule covers:

Any critical deadlines that the team must meet.

Ground rule reflection:

'Customer orders must be processed and dispatched within one week of receipt.'

Why innovative teams need ground rules

Working according to the team's ground rules helps us stay focused not only on what the team needs to do, but also on how it is expected to go about its work. Unless we are clear on the basics and all team members know them and operate according to them, there's no clear 'baseline' from which to innovate. Only once we are clear about the basics can we can find better and more interesting ways to ensure these are achieved. Setting ground rules can encourage innovation because team members have a solid basis they can work from; they feel secure enough to be able to think creatively and innovatively.

Example: a team thinks creatively and innovatively

Team A needs to get its client records up to date. The team does not have a good filing system and there are disorganised piles of papers everywhere. Team members know they need to spend some time setting ground rules before they spend time organising their client files, because without a foundation to work from, they have been going around in circles getting nowhere in their attempts to become more organised. Once they are clear on the team's ground rules, innovation will help them come up with creative and better ways to do their work.

Ownership of ground rules

Ground rules are a collective responsibility and are owned by the team as a whole. It is important that all team members have the opportunity to indicate any areas critical to their work and relationships.

From the previous example, Team A consists of six team members. Each person has their roles and responsibilities and could come up with a set of ground rules to help them achieve these. However, without collaboration, the team members could find themselves working against each other; for example, Harvey might decide he needs Sharon's figures by the 15th of the month, while Sharon might set herself the task of having these up to date at the end of the month.

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The team is better off if the ground rules are developed collaboratively by team members and other stakeholders.

Example: develop ground rules collaboratively

Team A decides to have an all-team meeting to develop group ownership of ground rules (and hence ensure the ground rules will assist the team's overall operations). Each person is asked to consider their role before they come to the meeting and outline what they require from others in order to perform their role. During the meeting, team members conduct a brainstorming session to come up with the areas that ground rules need to be set for. They also identify other key people in the organisation whose work affects theirs and each person is allocated a number of staff to discuss the relevant areas with.

After two weeks the team has a follow-up meeting to create the ground rules, ensuring all the information they have obtained is included. The ground rules are typed up and placed in the team's shared file so they can be easily accessed by everyone.

Set ground rules collaboratively

Below are some tips to set ground rules in a collaborative way.

Tips for collaborating on ground rules
• Ascertain others' needs by checking in regularly with team-mates and others whose work is related to yours.
• Organise team meetings at a time when everyone can attend.
• Clarify individual roles and responsibilities.
• Record key elements of conversations.
• Record and date all decisions reached.
• Develop ground rules (also dated) and ensure they are easy to access.
• Review the ground rules at regular intervals, when team members change or the team's priorities shift.

Practice task 5

Imagine you are organising an event at work, such as a social event or a seminar.

1. How will you establish who is going to be involved in the organising?

2. What can you do to ensure collaborative setting of ground rules about the group's work?

3. Explain how to ensure this process of setting ground rules provides a collaborative environment where each person has the opportunity to state their needs and be part of the process.

2B | Agree on and communicate responsibilities

Once ground rules are in place, team members have a solid basis they can work from and therefore feel secure enough to think creatively and innovatively. They find it much easier to communicate and agree on individual and team responsibilities. The teamwork aspect of innovation is reinforced and team members see themselves as connected to each other by the rules.

When things change (for example, if the team members and/or its objectives change), the ground rules may need to be revisited. If this happens, the framework of ground rules may need to be reviewed before more creative activities can occur and innovation is born.

Innovation needs to be encouraged at all levels: organisation, team and individual. If individuals fail to take responsibility for their roles, collaboration on projects and the achievement of common goals will be difficult, to say the least.

Communicate responsibilities

Team responsibilities are different from work-role responsibilities. When someone is appointed to their role, they are advised about the role and all associated responsibilities. The expectations of a role are generally communicated in the position description and while there may be some freedom in how a person carries out their role, they need to have a broad understanding of the role's expectations when they start work. Depending on the amount of time a person is in a role, they may be able to initiate some changes to these responsibilities. Throughout the process of explaining or negotiating roles and responsibilities, it is important that clear communication is used to ensure the person understands their role, their responsibilities and associated expectations.

Team responsibilities are those responsibilities that do not fit precisely into anyone's job role, but which need to be assumed for the team's work to be done. Examples of team responsibilities are putting paper into the photocopier, taking minutes at meetings and greeting clients at the door of the office.

Agree on team responsibilities

People prefer to work in a productive environment and a well-organised team. Sometimes teams do not perform to expectations or team members do not cooperate effectively with one another, usually due to a variety of reasons. When allocating or sharing responsibilities, it is important to be transparent, inclusive, fair and equitable.

Being transparent means ensuring everyone is aware of discussions and activities at all times, whether or not they are directly involved. Failure to be transparent can lead to confusion and misunderstanding.

Being inclusive means including all team members in the process and ensuring each person is actively involved in any discussion or activity, especially those that directly involve them. Failure to be inclusive can lead to suspicion and even sabotage of the team's work.

Being fair and equitable means applying the same criteria to our dealings with everyone. In a team, everyone has an equal place, regardless of their work role.

Below are some conditions that need to be established in order for team members to cooperate.

If ground rules are not set, team members cannot know where they fit into the team or what is expected of them.

Ground rules

Individual ownership

Team members need to feel they are in control of their own role and they can contribute to the team.

If team members are unable to collaborate, either due to a lack of time or because this is discouraged, they cannot appreciate each other's roles or effectively support each other.

Collaboration

Agreement

An environment of mutual respect and willingness to compromise is needed if agreement is to be reached within the team.

Steps to arriving at consensus on team responsibilities

Below are a number of processes that should be followed when considering the team's responsibilities.

Deciding team responsibilities
• Agree on a time frame for discussion and conclusion, and write this down.
• Identify areas of agreement and disagreement.
• Allow each person equal time to put forward their point of view or ideas, and listen to each person before proceeding to the next step.
• Take care to avoid assuming links between work roles, personalities and the ideas different people present.
• Think outside the square: avoid allocating team responsibilities purely on the basis of their similarity to work roles.
• Explore each person's ideas and discuss their pros and cons as a team.
• Reach a compromise solution, ensuring all team members have the same opportunity to fully express their opinions.
• Ask each person individually if they agree to and support the group decision.

Collaborative teamwork

Team collaboration needs to happen as smoothly as possible so the team can reach its goals and workplace objectives.

Here are some tips for collaborative teamwork.

Tips for collaborative teamwork
Actively listen to everyone's views.
Encourage each team member to offer their ideas. Give people enough time to formulate their ideas.
Ensure you have agreement before moving on. Avoid asking for a vote, as this will create tensions and promote black-and-white thinking.
Do not try to reach agreement too quickly or compromise too early in the process. Rushing to agree without sufficient thought or consideration may lead to problems later.

Practice task 6

Reflect on your current or previous workplace, or one you are familiar with, and answer the following questions.

1. What methods are used in this workplace for reaching consensus on responsibilities?

2. Name three aspects of team collaboration that are used in this process.

3. What are the results of your reflection? Identify any problem areas you have found.

2C Make the best use of your team's skills and abilities

Before allocating roles to team members, it is important to determine the skills and strengths of each person. Skills are learnt; strengths tie in with people's personalities, abilities and interests. If you have a team in which everyone has similar strengths, team members can be encouraged to develop new skills for the purpose of a team project or new members can be invited to join the team.

You can develop new skills to help you perform in areas beyond your strengths by:

* participating in formal training opportunities
* doing on-the-job training
* enlisting a coach or mentor.

Play to team members' strengths

There are many strengths in a team of people and these need to be tapped into when developing work roles for a team. The next time you are at work or in a work environment, take a look around at the various team members undertaking a range of tasks and responsibilities. What do you think their strengths are? What functions do they perform in their team?

Here is a list of group functions and brief descriptions of what they bring to the group.

Coordinator	
Gets things started and keeps things on track	

Inspirer	
Motivates others to contribute	

Creator	
Comes up with new and innovative ideas	

Reflector	
Consolidates themes and ideas, feeds back to others	

Organiser	
Puts ideas into a logical or easy-to-use form	

Enabler	
Makes ideas practical, finds ways to make concepts work	

Harmoniser	
Makes sure everyone is happy and is having their needs met, defuses arguments	

Questioner	
Asks the hard questions, checks the legitimacy of statements	

Completer

Decides when enough has been done and brings things to a conclusion

Leader

Maintains an overview, does not get actively involved in discussions but ensures a satisfactory outcome is obtained

Example: the benefits of having a team

Sharon's role in her team includes keeping track of the number of customers who phone each day and the purpose of their calls: new inquiries, follow-ups and complaints. As the receptionist, Sharon doesn't handle the calls, but passes them onto the relevant sales and support team member. These calls have always been recorded in a book, then transferred to a spreadsheet for Harvey to prepare a monthly report. This seems to Sharon like too much handling of the same information and she wants to find a more efficient way to get the figures into Harvey's report.

Sharon is an inspirer who loves motivating others. In a team meeting, she presents her problem and asks her team-mates for discussion. She encourages everyone to take part and listens carefully to what they have to say. Andy, an enabler, is a member of the sales and support staff and points out that they put these figures on file when they record the inquiry or complaint, and so Harvey could easily extract the figures from their files.

This relieves Sharon of the responsibility of maintaining the figures at all, giving her more time to work on ways to deal with the growing pile of unfiled papers on her desk – or to consider ways to inspire the team to do this for her.

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Share tasks and activities innovatively

It is not always practical or easy to divide tasks up according to strengths. This often depends on the team's make-up and the number of people in each team. In any case, innovation is always required in order to allocate and share tasks and activities.

A team can work together to share tasks innovatively by:

- rotating tasks around the team
- calling in outside people for a special purpose
- having team members share roles
- dividing unpopular tasks into smaller chunks so each team member has only a small share

Practice task 7

Identify some specific tasks in your current, recent or perhaps future work role. Be as detailed as you can. What steps could you take in a team environment to:

- carry out these tasks more effectively
- share them with others, including negotiating and collaborating with team members?
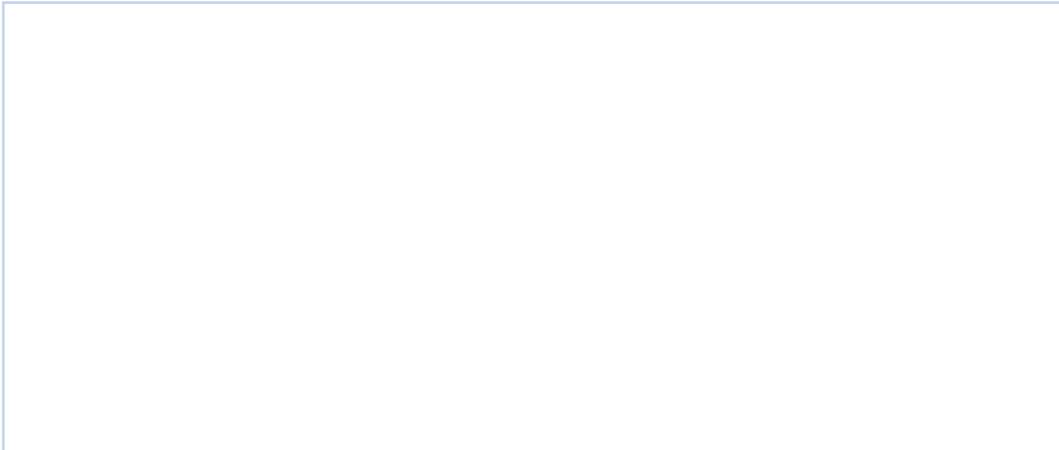
2D Plan challenging activities that encourage collaboration

When we are being innovative, we are being proactive. We are taking positive steps towards achieving more at work and doing our work better. Three aspects of this proactive work are thinking, challenging and collaborating.

Thinking

Thinking is an internal process, as you look inward to make sense of things and formulate ideas. Critical thinking is reflecting on one or more possible solutions to a problem and evaluating or comparing them against criteria to judge their validity or likelihood of success.

Challenging

Challenging is not about arguing points with others, but questioning our own thoughts and ideas, and those of others. Challenging activities include debating issues, reality testing theories and ideas, and combining and reformulating ideas into other possibilities.

Collaborating

Collaborating with others helps us understand how they think and gives us new ideas to think about. It also helps others feel involved and that their contributions are valued. This is especially important in teamwork.

Aspects of collaborative work

When we are being innovative, we are being proactive. Three aspects of this proactive work are thinking, challenging and collaborating.

Thinking is an internal process, where we look inward to make sense of things and formulate ideas. Critical thinking is reflecting on one or more possible solutions to a problem and evaluating or comparing them against criteria to judge their validity or likelihood of success.

Challenging and collaborating are external processes, involving interaction with others or challenging one's own thoughts:

- Challenging is not about arguing points with others, but questioning our own thoughts and ideas and those of others.

- Collaborating with others helps us understand how others think and gives us new ideas to think about. It also helps others feel involved and that their contributions are valued.

Think, challenge and collaborate
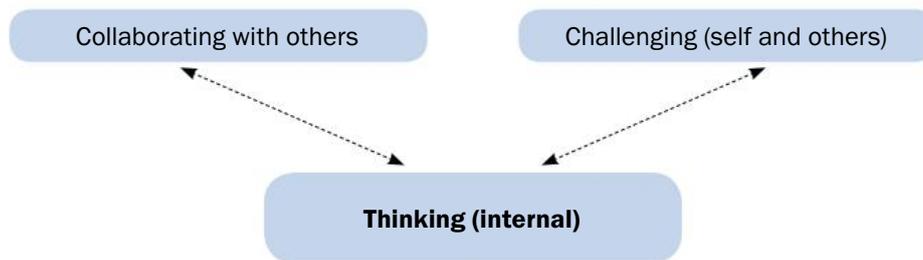
Thinking (internal), challenging (external) and collaborating (external) are important proactive aspects of innovation and time is needed for each. In many workplaces, thinking is not considered a valuable use of time. On the other hand, sometimes we sit in our workplace, bored because we have nothing to do or the work we are doing requires little brain power. We could be making valuable use of this time to think innovatively, challenging ourselves and others in order to foster collaboration.

Thinking exercises

Thinking is not a passive activity, but requires focused energy. It is actually a group of activities: contemplation, examination, reflection, assimilation and organisation. Collaborative thinking activities include brainstorming, free association, critical thinking and challenging.

Brainstorming is the free flow of ideas around a particular subject or topic; no idea is judged on merit at this stage of the collaborative process.

Free association is a type of brainstorming activity in which no subject or topic has been set; this allows for greater diversity of thinking and is useful when projects are not already established.

Critical thinking is reflecting on possible solutions to a problem and evaluating them against criteria to judge their validity. Challenging is about questioning our own and others' ideas.

The Six Thinking Hats exercise is based on Edward de Bono's work on lateral thinking and problem-solving (www.debonogroup.com/six_thinking_hats.php), and is outlined below. In this activity, you (or your team) put on various 'hats' in order to examine a problem.

The White Hat
The White Hat calls for information known or needed: just the facts.
The Yellow Hat
The Yellow Hat symbolises brightness and optimism: under this hat, you explore the positives and look for value and benefit.
The Black Hat
The Black Hat is the devil's advocate: under this hat, you spot the difficulties and dangers – where things might go wrong. The Black Hat is probably the most powerful and useful of the hats but should not be used too often.
The Red Hat
The Red Hat signifies feelings, hunches and intuition: using this hat, you express emotions and share fears, likes, dislikes, loves and hates.
The Green Hat
The Green Hat is about creativity: possibilities, alternatives and new ideas. Using this hat provides an opportunity to express new concepts and new perceptions.
The Blue Hat
The Blue Hat is used to manage the thinking process: it's the control mechanism that ensures the other hats are being used.

Build innovative practices into your workplace

For innovation to happen, it is essential to plan and schedule thinking, challenging and collaborating activities in and around core activities. Negotiation with superiors and encouragement of other team members may be required in order to ensure these activities are seen as important.

Time for building innovative practices into the workplace is not usually written into your timetable or your job description. To make innovation happen, time management is therefore essential. We cannot create more hours in a day, but we can use them more wisely.

Set priorities

Setting priorities is about doing what you are employed to do, but avoiding spending time on inessential activities or those that should or could be done by others. Sometimes we do things ourselves because we feel we have the time, but this takes valuable time away from more innovative work in our own area.

Learn to say 'no' more often

Are you spending a lot of time on activities outside your core role because you want to be seen as obliging? This only leads to more and more work being dumped on you, giving you no time to examine what you are doing and how you could be working more innovatively.

Avoid duplication

Avoid duplication of tasks such as handling paperwork and emails. Try to deal with a piece of paper or email at the time you receive it, and allocate a certain amount of time each day to these tasks, or they can easily take over your life.

Develop shortcuts

Developing shortcuts helps you work smarter; for example, if you find you are retyping the same information over in each email, develop a template that sets this up automatically. Better still, develop a 'frequently asked questions page', put it on the organisation website and alert your customers to the information.

Practice task 8

Think of a day in your working life or a day when you devoted some time to your studies and try to recall the main events that occurred on that day. Then, on a time line or via some other method, identify the activities you were involved in that day. Write a list of ways you could have managed your time that day more efficiently.

2E | Establish rewards

No matter what we do, we are driven to any activity for a reason. In a paid work role, we carry out our duties in a way that is valuable to our employer, who provides us with an income and other benefits. We do not necessarily need to work innovatively in order to get paid, so it is a different kind of reward we are seeking when we do this. Some of these rewards are instant, while others provide longer-term benefits.

There also need to be team rewards and benefits for a team that is working innovatively. These may not always be obvious and team members will be motivated by different rewards.

The personal rewards from working innovatively include:

- a sense of personal satisfaction
- the opportunity to interact with others
- a pleasant work environment
- the opportunity to use different skills and strengths
- greater understanding of the organisation, which may lead to more interesting and challenging work roles, including promotion.

Understand your organisation

The organisation needs to feel rewarded for providing staff with the opportunity for innovation. For this to happen, it is essential for those working in the organisation to work innovatively according to the organisation's vision, mission, values, structure, systems and business focus. Therefore, for you to demonstrate any kind of innovation, you need to understand your organisation's key principles.

In most cases organisations view innovation as a means to attract and maintain staff and often believe encouraging innovative thinking motivates staff to improve their work performance.

An organisation may also focus on innovation in order to make staff feel valued, increase staff retention and ultimately increase staff loyalty.

Your organisation may view innovation as a means of:

- attracting talented staff
- motivating better performance
- making staff feel valued
- increasing staff retention
- promoting staff loyalty.

Work innovatively

In a team that is working innovatively, staff members and teams need to:

- show decision-makers how innovation will help people do their jobs better and help the organisation achieve its goals
- take responsibility for being innovative and using time and other resources wisely
- demonstrate their effectiveness to the organisation and other stakeholders.

Reward team members

People need to be rewarded in ways that are meaningful and useful to them. We do not all feel motivated and rewarded in the same ways. What motivates you will not necessarily motivate others.

A manager of a team must be aware that certain rewards will lose their impact over time if used too much and instead of feeling motivated, the team may come to expect the reward as an automatic return for their efforts. Big, tangible rewards can definitely give a team something to keep their eyes on the whole year long, but don't neglect the smaller rewards, such as saying 'thank you'.

See if you can recognise yourself (and perhaps others in your team) in the following table.

Type of team member	Motivation	Reward sought
The relater	Social interaction	Being liked
The source	Meeting new people and making social links	Wider networks, more contacts or resources
The missionary	Community service	Serving or helping others
The adventurer	Challenge	Overcoming adversity
The leader	Empowering others	Helping others fulfil their potential
The learner	Knowledge	Personal fulfilment
The guru	Wisdom	Being sought after for advice
The craftsperson	Competence	Being respected for high-level skills
The interpreter	Communication	Being seen as socially adept
The citizen	Participation	Belonging to a group
The hedonist	Pleasure	Fun and interesting environment
The pragmatist	Money or other tangibles	Personal or financial freedom

Understand a person's motivation

It may take some time to work out what motivates each team member; however, it is important to develop this knowledge or else your team may fail to work together effectively or produce any meaningful results.

Here are some tips for understanding individual motivations and rewards requirements:

- Encourage an open, non-judgmental environment (team responsibility).
- Facilitate self-understanding and willingness to disclose (individual responsibility).

Example: benefits of rewarding your team

The management at BizOps encourages staff to be community service–oriented and to feel rewarded by serving and helping others. It also places emphasis on fun and likes staff to enjoy their time at work. The workers fulfil these criteria nicely, but paperwork has become a real problem.

Chang Lin, the business operations manager, has decided his team needs help. They agree to call someone in to help with the paperwork, as they need someone who is motivated differently. If they enlist an adventurer, the paperwork will be a challenge to be overcome but they may not create a long-term strategy. If they enlist a craftsperson who is a highly skilled organiser, a solid procedure may be put into place but not alleviate the problem in the short term.

Alternatively, Chang could align his team's goals with the motivations and rewards of other BizOps teams. To do this, he needs to work out how to manage the paperwork while serving the community and keeping the workplace fun and interesting.

The team holds an early-morning brainstorming session and each person brings a plate of breakfast food. As a short-term fix, they come up with a game in which all six team members participate in order to get the paperwork up to date, with a reward at the end of the week. Management is supportive and allows them to turn the staffroom into a party room on Friday afternoon.

Not wanting to let their team-mates down, everyone puts in the required effort and the piles of paperwork reduce among much laughter.

In the longer term, Chang's team realises it needs an ongoing strategy. What methods could he employ to ensure their team motivations and rewards are met?

Practice task 9

Identify a part of your individual or teamwork role in your organisation or one you are familiar with. Keeping in mind your personal motivations and rewards, develop an innovative strategy for ensuring this task is addressed.

1. How does the organisation view innovation?

2. What kinds of rewards do you get from working innovatively?

3. How will you motivate yourself to become more innovative?

Summary

1. Developing ground rules for the team is the basis of innovation.

2. Ground rules are a collective responsibility.

3. It is important to be transparent, inclusive, fair and equitable when allocating team responsibilities.

4. Before allocating roles to team members, it is critical to determine the skills and strengths of each person.

5. Thinking, challenging and collaborating are important proactive aspects of innovation and time is needed for each.

6. For innovation to happen, it is essential to plan and schedule thinking, challenging and collaborating activities in and around core activities.

7. Individuals and teams need to be rewarded in ways that are meaningful and useful to them.

Learning checkpoint 2
Developing effective ways of working

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge and may help you demonstrate your understanding of developing effective ways to work.

Part A

1. Explain the reasons for having rules about how a team operates (ground rules).

2. Reflect on a current or previous team you were in and explain how the communication style used in that team affected team innovation.

3. Explain how tasks and activities could be shared within a team, taking into consideration time for team thinking and collaboration.

4. Describe a time when you were or your team was rewarded for work achievements. What effect did this have on innovation?

Part B

Read the scenario, then complete the tasks that follow.

Scenario

You have been asked to lead a team that has been operating for six months. Productivity and morale are down; staff absenteeism and attrition are up. Projects have been late or over budget. Your goal is to take the team from underperforming to innovative. You have been asked to do this job because of your success with other teams that were struggling to meet goals.

Six strategies for turning the team around are listed in the table below. Use the space provided to explain the objective of each strategy and how it will benefit the team.

Task	Objective/s of task	Benefits to team
Develop ground rules		
Set up rewards		
Identify individual strengths		
Implement innovative activities		
Complete other work tasks		
Allocate team responsibilities		

Part C

Undertake interviews with people you know to determine whether the team they work in is an innovative team. Interview people from two teams and record their answers. Use open questions such as 'How do team members know what is expected of them?' rather than closed questions such as 'Does your team have ground rules?'

1. Find out from each person whether the following have taken place in their teams and if so, how these came about:

    *   Ground rules established?

- Individual strengths identified?

- Team responsibilities allocated?

- Innovative planning activities scheduled?

- Appropriate rewards given?

2. Identify any shortcomings in the teams with respect to how team members organised and agreed on effective ways of working. Write a short paragraph for each team suggesting how it could become more innovative.

Topic 3
Support and guide your colleagues

As a team leader, you want to create an innovative team that works with others in positive ways to explore new possibilities. We will discover that in order to do this, team members need to support each other during activities that are new, challenging or achievement-oriented. Support systems provide a safe environment where people can test their boundaries, develop greater self-awareness and extend their abilities.

In this topic you will learn how to:

3A   Model behaviour that supports innovation

3B   Find and use ideas from outside the team

3C   Share information, knowledge and experiences

3D   Challenge and test ideas in a positive and collaborative way

3E   Explore ideas with team members

3A Model behaviour that supports innovation

Modelling behaviour means behaving in a way that demonstrates particular qualities and then encouraging others to adopt this behaviour. You will be familiar with modelling desirable traits to your staff, such as politeness, punctuality and accountability. However, there are specific types of behaviour that can be used to encourage and support innovation in the workplace.

Styles of behaviour

Workplaces are not static environments. Work teams face different challenges at different stages of their development as a result of the changing demands put on them to meet ongoing or project outputs. You need to be ready to adapt your behaviour style as needed.

Behaviours that are appropriate in different situations in the workplace are shown below. Depending on your personality and work style, you will probably find some of these behaviours more natural and easy to model than other ones.

Supportive

Supportive behaviour is background behaviour that provides empathy and encouragement and offers understanding and concern. This behaviour works well during times of change and when team members are trying new tasks and building new strengths.

Participative

Participative behaviour is collaborative behaviour. It involves activities such as consultation, sharing fears, encouraging team problem-solving activities and asking for and considering suggestions. Participation is best modelled when teams are thinking and behaving innovatively, such as in creative activities when considering new things to do and new ways to do them.

Achievement-oriented

Achievement-oriented behaviour is focused on goals, continuous improvement, quality and best practice. This behaviour is best modelled when teams are working well, consistently and with high-level skills, and when large-scale change is not taking place.

Directive

Directive behaviour is task-related behaviour (sometimes called micro-management). It includes activities such as organising work rosters, setting and advising on standards and benchmarks, and directing others to carry out their work roles. This behaviour is best modelled when staff are learning new tasks and in high-pressure situations such as peak workload periods or when deadlines are tight.

Traits that support innovation

The four behaviour styles discussed above all support innovation. But there are more-specific traits that encourage innovation and you need to model these too. It is important to encourage participation, treat people equally and refrain from judging.

Below are seven traits that foster a climate of team innovation.

Collaborative

Ensuring that a wide range of viewpoints are presented and considered

Equitable

Giving equal consideration to all team members and all ideas

Fair

Not judging any idea or contribution too quickly or without giving sufficient attention to it

Fun

Suggesting interesting ways to accomplish tasks

Hard-working

Demonstrating willingness to put in whatever effort it takes, which helps others see that their efforts will also be valued and rewarded

Reflective

Taking the time to understand all ideas and viewpoints

Responsible

Showing maturity and the ability to acknowledge personal successes and failures

Example: a team completes its paperwork

Team A decides it has a fun and pleasant work environment and provide a community service. The six team members decide to turn solving their paperwork issue into a game. In their breakfast brainstorming session, Devi suggests they each think of a game they like playing. They come up with various games, then brainstorm ideas as to how these games could be incorporated into the paperwork task.

They easily fill the whiteboard with game ideas and then agree on one – a variation of 'celebrity heads'. Four team members will wear headbands with sections of the alphabet on them and the other two will sort through the papers and allocate them to the relevant team member based on the first letter of the client's name. The four staff members collecting the papers will then file them alphabetically in their allocated drawer of the filing cabinet. A prize will be awarded by the other two staff members for the neatest and most accurate drawer at the end of the task.

This game makes the whole exercise good fun and the team members hardly notice they are working hard.

Practice task 10

Reflect on your own behaviour style by thinking about the style that is least like your own. Think about someone you know who has this opposing style.

1. What does this person do when they model this style of behaviour?

2. How do they encourage conversation in others?

3. Are they consultative or do they tell people what to do?

4. What is their behaviour when they delegate tasks?

5. How could you develop your own ability to model this type of behaviour?

3B | Find and use ideas from outside the team

In order to remain competitive and viable, organisations need to keep pace with change and the globalised marketplace. This involves research into best practice and other business models, as well as active engagement with other businesses in order to develop new ideas and to become more innovative.

The need to be innovative is not restricted to commercial enterprises. Bodies such as government agencies, universities and welfare organisations are responsible for supplying high-quality and relevant goods and services as much as corporations and private companies are. Amalgamations and collaborations are occurring more than ever and affect a wide range of organisations, clients and competitors.

Seek new ideas

At all stages of innovation, from the initial want/need stage right through to implementation and review of innovative procedures such as new products or marketing techniques, organisations must extend beyond their physical and enterprise boundaries to make use of external products, services, models, tools, techniques and ideas.

There are several levels of innovation and all staff members are directly or indirectly involved in all of them. So far, the discussion has been about innovation in a team, relating to ways teams can work better and carry out their tasks more effectively. This is an inward-looking or internal approach to innovation.

But each person in a business is also responsible for the viability of the enterprise. This requires an outward-looking or external focus that looks at the user or purchaser of the goods or services supplied by the organisation. It is useful to look externally to see how others have done things and consider this in our own environment.

Factors such as commercial-in-confidence materials and intellectual property need to be considered when we look externally. These are described below.

Commercial-in-confidence

Commercial-in-confidence materials or information are confidential materials or information provided for a specific purpose; they are not to be used for any purpose other than what is set out in the initial document.

Intellectual property

Under law, the creator of a work such as a piece of writing or music, invention, symbol, name, image or design has certain exclusive rights (their intellectual property rights) regarding its use.

Sources of ideas and information

We live in the information age; there is a wide range of sources of information we can tap into. Often the problem is having too much information. It is important that we ensure our sources are reliable and valid, and provide us with the most valuable information.

Below are some examples of the types of information sources you may access.

Australia-wide or overseas

For national or global trends, working with national and international clients or specific regional groups

Colleagues outside the team but within your organisation

For broader business perspectives and better understanding of organisational priorities

Other organisations

For developing industry knowledge of similar organisations, partners or potential partners

Family and friends

For new perspectives and to get ideas flowing

Internet

For idea generation, background knowledge and a wide range of perspectives

Industry journals and magazines

For specific industry, product and service information – up-to-date ideas, tools and techniques, best practice and trends

Newspapers and online news sites

For current topical information that may inform or have relevance to your team's direction

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Manage external ideas

It is advisable to use a variety of external sources when you are gathering information. Once you have done this, you need to share this information with other members of your team. But if everyone shared everything they learnt, this could take a great deal of time and become quite a complex process.

Below are three steps that can be used to keep things simple and efficient when you are gathering and managing information from external sources.

Filtering

Filtering information is an important step in the process of gathering and managing information from external sources. You can filter information by:

- its relevance to the immediate task
- the credentials of the information provider
- its relevance to your industry or business
- the useability of the information.

Organising

The information you present needs to be organised in a way that makes it easy for others to digest and understand.

One way of doing this is to organise your information under headings or topics. This may be done as a team to ensure consistency or, for a greater variety of perspectives, each person might decide which themes or groups of ideas seem most relevant to them.

Feeding back

- Write a report. Separate the document into themes or groups of ideas to assist the reader to make sense of the information. Dot-point summaries are a good way to minimise the amount of reading needed. Written reports can help others absorb key information at a time that suits them; they can also cut down the amount of time spent in face-to-face meetings.
- Give a verbal report. This is a good method to use when it is easy to get together as a group.
- Make a presentation. This is usually done in the form of a data show, slide presentation or transparencies via an overhead projector. This method is usually used where the information needs to be provided more than once or in more formal settings.
- Use the intranet. This method is effective in large organisations with this facility; it may use static information, a blog or another interactive method. This method is great when teams cannot meet regularly or are in different locations

Practice task 11

Consider an idea for innovation in your current workplace or in another setting that would benefit from the input of an external expert; for example, you belong to a sports club that wants to find out about new types of fundraising.

Identify two methods for obtaining information from outside your team that you could use to learn about the topic in question. Choose legitimate and verifiable sources, and explain briefly how they could provide input on your idea for innovation.

3C | Share information, knowledge and experiences

When you are working innovatively, you sometimes want to share other ideas you have developed in the course of your own work or thinking activities. Communicating effectively involves planning and organising, research, goal-setting and problem-solving, but it is fundamentally about sending a message to another person and making sure what you think was sent is what has actually been received.

Knowledge is power

You may worry about sharing ideas; for example, if you are a new team member, you may be unsure of how others will respond. It is important not to let fear limit your ability to share your knowledge and insights, especially if these can increase the team's performance, enhance achievement or even just make work more enjoyable.

Innovation has to start somewhere. You may like to introduce an informal segment to each team meeting when each team member has the opportunity to put forward their ideas without being judged. Or you may introduce an email or other forum for idea-sharing that is less confronting.

Confidentiality and privacy

Some information is sensitive and in some situations you must not disclose identifying information about a person or group of people. Workplaces usually have policies and procedures about privacy, but there are also legal obligations such as those covered by the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). Confidentiality covers verbal and written forms of information, including email. You can read about the Privacy Act on the website of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner at www.privacy.gov.au.

Generally, information that identifies people should not be used when it does not directly benefit them or when their information is not crucial to the matter being communicated. If details of a particular case are for example purposes only, then care must be taken to ensure the information given could not lead to that person being identified; this includes a person's name or initials, date of birth and address. You should also ensure client records such as files or personal documents are not made available for viewing by others who are not directly involved in their case.

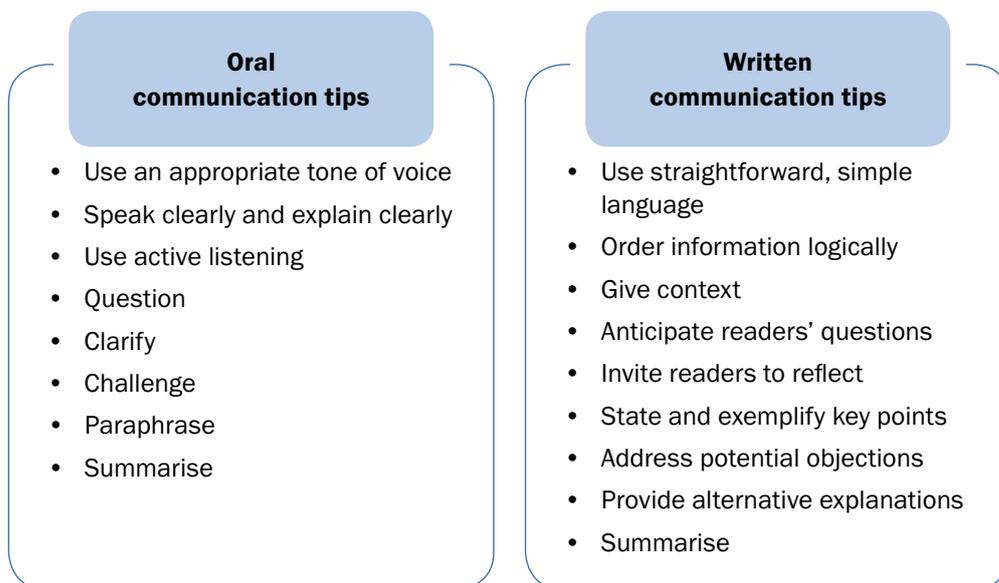## Example: files and personal documents

Team A's client records are highly confidential, so it is important to keep the files secure. When the team members are playing their celebrity heads game, they must do this in a secure place. They ask management if they can use a room that can be locked during the exercise so no-one can accidentally view the client records or hear the client names as they are read out.

Communication skills

When we share information, we need to make sure the people we are sharing it with know why we are giving them this information and what we want them to do with it; for example, provide feedback or offer their views. Indeed, you may need to provide them with a reason to be interested before getting them involved in the interaction. Communication is always a two-way channel and it is essential that the receiver and the giver both understand the key points and can respond appropriately.

You should have something of interest to tell the people you are communicating with and an interesting way to do so. You need to be genuinely interested in others and their responses in order to be able to guide discussions.

This kind of interaction requires interpersonal communication skills. These differ according to whether the communication is oral or written.

Oral communication tips

- Use an appropriate tone of voice
- Speak clearly and explain clearly
- Use active listening
- Question
- Clarify
- Challenge
- Paraphrase
- Summarise

Written communication tips

- Use straightforward, simple language
- Order information logically
- Give context
- Anticipate readers' questions
- Invite readers to reflect
- State and exemplify key points
- Address potential objections
- Provide alternative explanations
- Summarise

Nonverbal communication

We also communicate nonverbally. In fact, in face-to-face conversation up to 70 per cent of our message is communicated this way. If our nonverbal messages conflict with our verbal communication, the person receiving the message is more likely to believe the nonverbal messages.

Nonverbal communication varies between cultures; for example, looking someone in the eye is considered a sign of honesty in some cultures, but a sign of aggression or insubordination in others.

Proximity and touching are aspects of interaction where it is easy to make people feel uncomfortable. Proceed carefully when entering people's personal space (getting physically close to or touching them) or work space (leaning over their desk or using their computer). Asking first – 'May I show you on your computer?' – is a good strategy to avoid giving offence.

Nonverbal communication includes:

- facial expressions – smiles, frowns, furrowed brows

- eye contact – looking people in the eye or looking down or away

- gestures – hand and arm movements, nods, head shakes, shoulder shrugs

- posture – sitting or standing straight, slouching, leaning to one side

- body movements – sharp, smooth, minimal or expansive

- body language – open (hands outstretched) or closed (arms crossed)

- proximity – leaning towards or away from someone, sitting next to someone or facing them across a desk, approaching someone or keeping your distance

- touching – shaking hands, tapping someone on the shoulder, hugging.

Nonverbal information can contribute significantly to a communicated message. If our nonverbal messages conflict with our verbal communication, the person receiving the message is more likely to believe the nonverbal message.

Facial expressions show many aspects of how we currently feel.

Gestures can indicate whether we are comprehending.

Posture can demonstrate the level of interest being shown.

Body language is a sure sign of whether we are open or closed for communication.

Individuals may also become uncomfortable when other people get too close or when touching gestures are used.

Proactive sharing

Whenever you initiate a conversation or present a new idea, you are undertaking a proactive task, rather than responding to a need that has already been identified. This involves a number of steps in which you need to use good communication skills. Sometimes you may initially discuss your ideas with one other person, such as someone who does the same work or someone you work closely with, before sharing them with your whole team or a wider audience. If you do this, you need to ensure this is done in a spirit of collaboration and other team members do not feel excluded from important parts of the process.

Below is some information on what proactive sharing involves.

Proactive sharing:

- Initiating a discussion

- Providing background information such as experiences that led you to initiate the conversation, stating or restating common goals

- Presenting evidence that supports your rationale
- Collaborating with other members of your team by asking for responses, reflections and feedback

Practice task 12

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

Case study

You are working in a team of support personnel in a medium-sized business. Your whole team regularly sends letters to current and potential customers via email. Each week, key information about products and services is updated and you must ensure you are sending out the most up-to-date information.

You have been thinking about a new way of setting out letters using a template available in your organisation. You know this will save you and others in your team a lot of time, because a great deal of work has already been incorporated into the template. You think you could improve even further on this template and want others to provide their ideas and suggestions as well.

Come up with a plan of how you will proactively share this information with others in your team. You may need to undertake some research on this if you are not currently in a work team.

1. How will you initiate the discussion?

2. What kind of background information will you provide?

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3. How will you create an engaging presentation?

4. What will you do to encourage collaboration from others in your team?

3D | Challenge and test ideas in a positive and collaborative way

Challenging and testing ideas are important parts of collaboration. This is not about arguing for the sake of argument, nor is it about winning or losing, or about individuals. It is about ideas. It is about getting reliable and trustworthy knowledge.

Team members develop ownership of a process by being involved and using a range of skills to challenge and test ideas. Challenging and testing ideas also help team members become more confident and competent in the art of collaboration.

Challenge ideas

Have you ever had an idea that has been challenged by a work colleague or friend?

You may have taken this challenge as a negative response to your idea, when in actual fact challenging an idea, whether it is your own or someone else's, is an important part of turning an idea into reality.

Challenging ideas involves one or more of the following.

Soliciting other perspectives	**Taking opposing sides**
Get a 360° perspective on your idea to see if it is sustainable by soliciting a wide range of stakeholder feedback.	This may involve setting up a debate between team members or engaging in a 'believing and doubting' conversation with yourself.
A pros and cons investigation	**A SWOT analysis**
Based on the premise that no idea is all good or all bad, this is a great way to find out what is good and what is bad about it; this can also be used as a way of comparing competing ideas.	This is for identifying the internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors that could work for and against your idea.

There are a number of mechanisms that can be used for challenging ideas.

1. Offering different perspectives involves looking at an idea from 360° to see if it is sustainable from a wide range of stakeholder viewpoints.

2. Taking opposite sides involves either setting up a for-and-against debate between team members or engaging in a believing-and-doubting conversation with yourself.

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3. A pros-and-cons investigation is based on the idea that no idea is all good or all bad.

4. A SWOT analysis is used for identifying the internal strength and weakness factors, as well as the external opportunities and threat factors, that work for and against the achievement of goals and objectives.

Be positive and work together

Being positive relates to the whole team and to the individual team members. People can avoid falling into the trap of letting things become personal by maintaining their focus on the best possible team outcome. In a team, no-one bears more responsibility than anyone else for outcomes. This includes the team leader.

Like families, each team is unique. It is made up of people with different personalities, strengths, knowledge and abilities; the ways its members interact will develop from these. When someone leaves a team or a new person comes in, the way the team works together changes.

Be positive in the team

Within a team, individuals have different ways of behaving and these must be respected; for example, people who develop ideas easily when interacting with others enjoy brainstorming activities, while those who think better on their own may find it hard to come up with ideas in this situation. The team needs to account for different interaction styles in order to ensure everyone is able to participate. When challenging and testing ideas, it is essential that you employ a range of different strategies to provide everyone with an opportunity to participate. For example, use a range of group and one-on-one activities or verbal and written activities. Keep communication lines open to facilitate this process.

Challenging and testing ideas are best done after everyone has had sufficient opportunity to present their ideas, but before decisions are made.

Practice task 13

Consider an idea for innovation, either one you have already thought of or something new. Come up with a list of pros (positive aspects) and cons (negative aspects) of your idea. You can do this on your own or in a group.

3E Explore ideas with team members

Ideas are constantly coming to us, whether we are consciously working innovatively or not. In innovative practice, we are aware of these ideas and ensure are captured so they can be evaluated and reflected on.

A team may come up with new ideas at any time. Developing ways to note and explore these ideas helps a team remain consistently innovative.

These mechanisms include having:

- regular staff meetings or innovation sessions
- suggestion boxes or other avenues to lodge ideas
- special competitions and games that encourage team members to work creatively and innovatively.

Example: how an organisation can assist team members

The Greenside Shire Council by-laws team issues parking permits to local residents. The team is having trouble keeping up with its workload and recently implemented an innovative idea that has streamlined the application processes. The team members want to allocate time for developing other ideas, as now they need to continue to improve.

The team decides to incorporate a brainstorming session into its weekly staff meeting and to provide a suggestion box where people can place ideas as they think of them. Team members set up a framework that guides them to explore, challenge, implement and review their ideas so they can continue to be innovative.

Motivate the team

When motivating and rewarding any team or team member, you need to make sure your strategies enhance innovation. Team members are more likely to become actively involved in creating a climate that fosters innovation when they have a workplace that encourages their ideas and input.

Below are some characteristics of an innovative workplace environment.

Characteristics of a climate that fosters innovation
• Clear expectations and goals
• Positive reinforcement
• Attention that is fairly and equitably distributed
• Satisfaction according to people's individual needs
• A sense of ownership

Practice task 14

You are the team leader of the Greenside Shire Council by-laws team. In order to work innovatively and achieve continuous improvement, you need your team to feel motivated and rewarded.

1. How could you create a climate that fosters innovation for your team?

2. What specific strategies could you use to motivate your team to innovate and also reward them for their efforts?

Summary

1. Modelling appropriate behaviours is vital in supporting innovation.

2. To support innovation, you need to encourage participation, treat people equally and not rush to judge them or their ideas.

3. At all stages of innovation, businesses and organisations must extend beyond their physical and enterprise boundaries to make use of external products, services, models, tools, techniques and ideas.

4. Ideas can come from both inside and outside the team.

5. When gathering and managing information from external sources, we need to filter, organise and feed back.

6. Knowledge and ideas should be communicated proactively and openly to others.

7. Ideas need to be explored and challenged in a collaborative environment.

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Learning checkpoint 3
Support and guide your colleagues

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This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in supporting and guiding your workplace colleagues.

Part A

1. Reflect on your current team or a previous one. Give an example of when a team member's behaviour modelled innovation.

2. Why is it important to a team to seek external stimuli when developing new team activities?

3. Describe three benefits of sharing information and experiences with others in your current team or one you have worked with in the past.

4. Explain a time when an idea you bought to the team was challenged by others. What was the idea and how did the team turn it into a more positive and collaborative idea?

5. What are the benefits to a team of discussing and exploring ideas on a regular basis?

Part B

Identify a team situation you have been in, at work or in another setting, when you successfully developed an idea for something new or a new way to do something. Write a report about your team's success that answers the following questions.

1. What behaviours did team members demonstrate that supported your innovation?

2. What kinds of team ground rules were established?

3. What ideas came from inside the team?

4. What ideas were sought from outside the team and where were they sought?

5. How were ideas communicated within the team?

6. How were the ideas explored, tested and challenged?

7. How did the team arrive at a consensus on team responsibilities?

Topic 4
Reflect on how the team is working

An innovative team is constantly reflecting on and evaluating its processes, practices and interactions. This is part of the continuous improvement cycle and informs future innovation needs, wants and ideas. Through constantly updating its understanding of the team dynamic and how it is working, as well as adding new knowledge and ideas, a team can measure and celebrate progress and change.

In this topic you will learn how to:

4A   Identify opportunities for improvement

4B   Gather and use feedback

4C   Discuss the challenges of innovation openly

4D   Act on ideas for improvement

4E   Celebrate success

4A Identify opportunities for improvement

In order for continuous improvement to occur in a team, members must support each other to generate, share challenge ideas. They need to use effective communication discuss ideas with others inside and outside the team, and they need to take time out to look back on events and processes, and their thoughts and feelings about them.

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Take time to debrief

A debriefing session provides team members with the opportunity to give feedback about a project, including their views of what went well and what did not go well. It also provides an opportunity for team leaders to delve into any issues that have arisen and to learn about the causes of the issues and what effect they had on individuals and the team.

Debriefing is generally a formalised process that takes place as a separate and scheduled activity, whereas feedback is more informal and occurs naturally as part of general collaborative work. Both have a place, but the more formal debriefing process ensures each team member is given equal opportunity and a structure to provide their thoughts and reflections, as well as to air concerns and achieve closure.

Debriefings

Debriefings are usually held at the beginning, middle and end of a project, or at important stages of a long project. They may also be held on a needs basis; for example, if a project is threatened or something has gone wrong.

Debriefing can be verbal or written. Usually there are set questions so the information from the responses can be used in meaningful ways. This structure helps team leaders to measure satisfaction and outcomes over different time periods and to compare team outcomes.

Strategies for a successful debriefing include getting the whole group together for the process, conducting more personalised one-on-one meetings and arranging meetings with external debriefers.

The aims of debriefing are to:

- determine what problems arose and how these might be prevented in future
- identify areas for improvement
- identify and quantify successes, and give recognition to team members for a job well done
- reinforce ideas and reach decisions
- identify team and individual strengths and weaknesses
- inform the planning of further development activities for individuals and the group.

Effective debriefing

Here are some tips for ways to carry out effective debriefing.

Have whole-group meetings

A democratic approach, but some people may not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts in an open forum.

Conduct one-on-one meetings

An approach that allows for greater self-disclosure, but one that can create barriers to communication if it is not managed well.

Use evaluation forms

These can generate useful information, but can also generate too much or too little information, depending on how questions are framed and how team members respond to them.

Arrange meetings with external debriefers

> An objective approach, but it can make the process less friendly and more clinical.

Solicit narrative-style reflections from individuals

> This approach allows for greater creativity and personal preferences, but makes it harder to compare responses.

Reflect on activities

Personal reflections can be very useful for individuals, but they are more effective for the person and more useful to the team if they are guided. Reflections can be based on personal performance, team performance or both.

Reflection activities need to be managed carefully – you want team members to be honest and open about their experiences, but you do not want them to focus on the performance of other team members. Each person must take personal responsibility to ensure the atmosphere remains positive and helpful. Positive statements about the ways others worked or contributed are appropriate. Pointing the finger at someone who did not pull their weight or achieve outcomes is not.

All team members should participate in debriefing and reflection activities, no matter what their work or project role; they should also encourage and support others during the process.

Below are some examples of reflective questions you could ask team members to respond to.

Examples of reflective questions
• What was your experience of the project? – Your thoughts, feelings, reactions, level of control, overall satisfaction
• What did you learn? – About the work, yourself and others in the team or organisation
• How could things be improved next time?
• How can you review, analyse and measure your performance against standards or benchmarks?

Example: reflection provides valuable insight

The Greenside Shire Council by-laws team has been holding regular team meetings for six weeks to come up with ideas for streamlining the way it processes parking-permit applications.

Several ideas have been adopted and the changes implemented. Team members are now engaged in debriefing sessions where they reflect on the experience. In the first part of the session, they will rate their overall learning and satisfaction on a Likert scale.

The Likert scale was invented by organisational psychologist Rensis Likert. It is used to measure how people feel about an experience or product. For example, a hotel may use a Likert scale to find out how guests felt about their stay. The overall score measures how people feel in general and the individual items (called Likert items) measure how they feel about particular aspects, such as hotel check-in or room service.

Once the team members' rating data is collated, it will provide a useful record for the team and others. The results will also form the basis for future innovation in the team.

In the second part of the session, team members reflect on how they feel about the change process and what they have learnt, in a guided one-on-one conversation with the human resources officer. Below are some of their responses.

Learning

'I have learnt a great deal about the organisation and that some people in it have great organisational skills we can tap into.'

Feelings

'I feel much happier at work knowing I can accomplish so much more in a day.'

Environment

'The idea of having music playing in the background is a great one and it has a positive effect on everyone's mood.'

Self-knowledge

'I realised it doesn't matter how much we improve this area, this is not the kind of work I will ever really enjoy. It has been good to see there are other teams and places I can work in at the council.'

Practice task 15

Create a Likert scale to be used in the debriefing process to collect data that will aid further innovative work for the Greenside Shire Council by-laws team. Remember that each of the Likert items (the questions that make up the scale) must relate to the overall theme – how the team members feel about the innovation process. The first item of this scale has been provided as an example.

1 = Disagree 2 = Disagree somewhat 3 = Unsure 4 = Agree somewhat 5 = Agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoyed working with others in my team on this project.					

4B Gather and use feedback

In teamwork, feedback is a mechanism people use to provide information that is of benefit to them. As a result of getting feedback, people perform better, feel better about themselves and are encouraged to try new things. Feedback can be used to point out errors, mistakes, problems and inadequacies.

In innovative teamwork, feedback can help enlighten and highlight the team's movement towards reaching its goals, and often helps identify barriers and roadblocks along the way.

Constructive feedback is an excellent tool for encouraging individuals and the team to continue with tasks and projects, while providing support and improving performance against benchmarks and standards.

The following table provides examples of the various styles of feedback and what you could say when providing feedback to an individual; for example, in a performance review.

Confirming	There are four main kinds of printers – that is correct.
Affirming	There are four main kinds of printers – that is correct. You have learnt your subject well.
Corrective	Your answer is incorrect. The correct answer is there are four main kinds of printers.
Explanatory	Your answer is incorrect because, while there are four main kinds of printers, there are seven kinds in all.
Diagnostic	Your answer is incorrect. You should re-read pages 9 and 10 of the manual to completely understand the process.
Elaborative	Your answer, four, is correct. There are four main kinds of printers: dot matrix, inkjet, laser and thermal.

Where to get feedback

Sometimes feedback is requested by an individual or the team. Feedback can also come from outside the team; from another part of the organisation; from a higher level of management; or from clients, community groups and other stakeholders.

It is important to ensure the person asked to provide the feedback is qualified to do so; for example, there is little point in asking a customer whether they like the fact that you invested in a faster printer, but they can comment on the speed of your service.

Feedback may be given without being asked for, such as when a customer complains about the service they received. In order to ensure this feedback is useful, you may need to ask further questions or find other ways to ensure the person provides the right kind of information.

It is also important to use feedback that engenders a culture of participation and contribution.

The following information provides examples of the various styles of feedback and how you could use them when providing feedback to a team, such as the Greenside Shire Council by-laws team.

Confirming

Our plan for streamlining the applications has been successful.

Affirming

Our plan for streamlining the applications has worked. You should all be proud of yourselves.

Corrective

Our plan for streamlining the applications was a failure.

Explanatory

Our plan for streamlining the applications did not work because we were relying on changes to the mail sorting process, which didn't happen.

Diagnostic

Our plan for streamlining the applications was not a success. We need to revisit the mail sorting process.

Elaborative

Our plan for streamlining the applications has been a success: we have halved the time it takes to process them.

How to gather feedback

There are a number of methods for obtaining feedback.

Observation

This is a remote or real-time observation in which outsiders watch a video or sit in the background to passively observe and make notes on their observations of aspects of a project.

Active observation

Some participants focus on a task and other members of the team observe; at the completion of the observation, the two groups interact as internal/external observers.

Informal guided conversations

Broad topics/questions are used to initiate feedback, but the person providing the feedback is free to respond in whatever ways they like.

Structured conversations

If a person answers a question in a particular way, they are then directed to another question or series of questions (similar to a flow chart).

Surveys

Surveys may elicit quantitative (numeric) or qualitative (categorical) data, or both.

360° feedback

This involves asking people from all levels and/or all stakeholder groups the same questions and analysing their answers.

How to use feedback

Feedback can be used in several ways. It can also be used immediately and/or stored for future use. The immediate uses of feedback include correcting mistakes and improving ways of carrying out tasks.

Short-term uses of feedback include promoting further discussion and debate, challenging ideas and moving a project forward or changing the direction/focus of a program.

Longer-term uses of feedback include setting new goals, benchmarks and standards; designing future programs and projects; and creating new activities.


Example: gathering stakeholder feedback

The Greenside Shire Council by-laws team decides to collect feedback on its innovation project from a range of stakeholders including customers, management and other teams. For people in the organisation, the team holds informal guided conversations, based on the following topics:

- Have you noticed any changes in the way the team is operating?
- Do you have any comments to make on the team's work output?
- Do you feel working with the team is easier or harder since the changes have been made?

Practice task 16

The Greenside Shire Council by-laws team wants to survey its customers – council residents who apply for parking permits. What questions could the team ask them in order to gauge how successful the new strategy has been? Come up with three qualitative (general information) and three quantitative (numerical) questions that would help the team achieve this goal.

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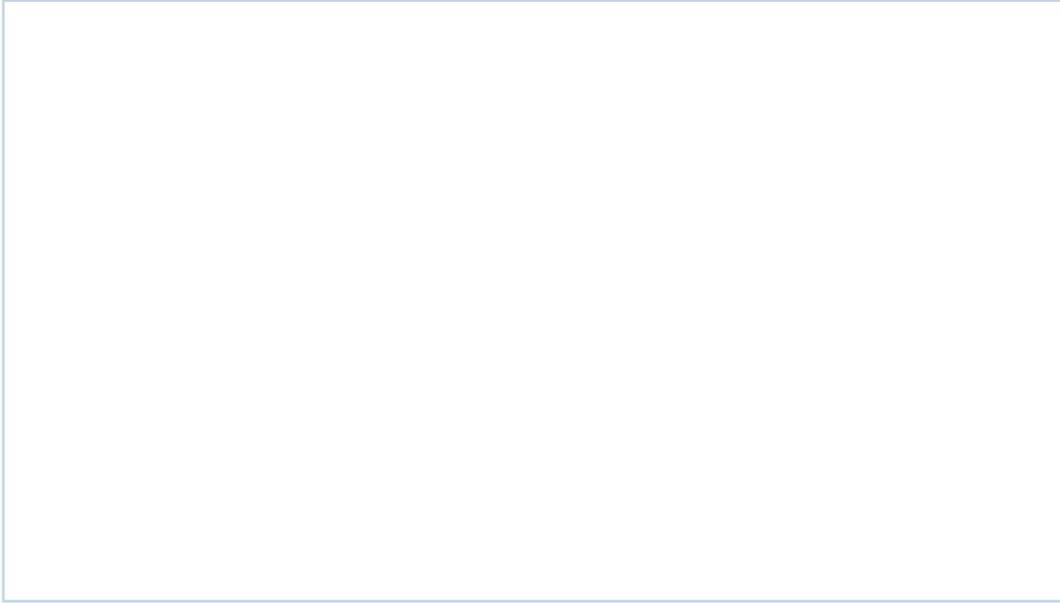
4C | Discuss the challenges of innovation openly

Like any activity that goes beyond the bounds of what is known, innovation involves risk. Not being innovative also involves risk: risk of being bored, of not learning new skills and of not developing in your career.

Part of the innovation process involves identifying, understanding and discussing the risks and challenges involved, and developing ways to responsibly manage these. If this does not occur, these risks may become barriers or even roadblocks to success.

Identify challenges

The challenges of being innovative may relate to resource constraints within the organisation, time pressures and competing demands on personnel, or the culture of the organisation. Carrying out a risk analysis in the beginning stages of a project can be the first step towards recognising potential and actual challenges and their causes.

There are many ways to perform a risk analysis, just as each project is unique.

Analyse risks

1. One way to begin a risk analysis is to look at resources and personnel; for example, you may need to consider what limits and constraints exist on your resources in terms of budget, time, equipment, facilities or staff.

2. For personnel, you may need to assess what expertise is currently available, what personalities are in play, what other priorities they have and how willing they are to embrace change.

3. Both resources and personnel can provide support and/or challenges and threats to innovation. When we look at the challenges and threats, we are looking at what could go wrong.

4. You can see that often one area of challenge impacts on another and a range of challenges may occur simultaneously, consequentially or consecutively.

Example: challenges that arise from innovation

Big Country Real Estate has a large number of properties to sell and needs to get this information out to potential customers. Management has asked the administration team to come up with new ways to advertise its properties in order to attract a wider audience. The team decides to start using a central internet site, but one of the challenges is that no-one on the team knows how to do this. Another challenge is financial – the team does not have a large enough budget to pay someone outside the organisation to set up the necessary links. One of the staff could be sent for training to learn about this, but that would create other challenges: how would that person's work get done while they were not in the office? These challenges are potential risks to the internet project's success.

Use communication to overcome challenges

Ideally, undertaking risk assessments in the early stages of innovation assists the new program to succeed. In identifying and dealing with challenges, open communication is essential. We have looked at various communication strategies in the previous topics.

Use the following as a guide to the most appropriate use of these communication strategies at the various stages of dealing with challenges.

Identification
- Brainstorming
- Questioning

Clarification
- Probing
- Active listening

Troubleshooting and contingency planning
- Exploring options
- Challenging
- Creative thinking

Overcoming obstacles
- Collaborating
- Positive reinforcement

Examining successes/failures in overcoming challenges
- Debriefing
- Obtaining feedback

Practice task 17

Reflect on a situation you have been in that involved meeting and overcoming one or more challenges. This may have been at work or in another setting. Explain the challenge or challenges involved and describe how you made use of, or could have made use of, the appropriate communication strategies at each stage in order to increase the likelihood of a successful outcome.

1. What were the challenges?

2. How did you make good use of these challenges?

3. What communication strategies did you use to help you succeed?

4D Act on ideas for improvement

The likelihood of an innovative idea or project succeeding is increased if a risk analysis has been undertaken and challenges have been overcome. Changes can be implemented and innovations incorporated into future team activities.

However, all change involves a level of discomfort.

The following quotation encapsulates this:

'To change is to live, not to change is to die.'

American playwright Tennessee Williams (1911–1983)

Plan for change

When planning for change, it is essential to implement a structured approach to change – this enables the transition from the existing state to the desired state to be made as easily and as smoothly as possible.

During the preparation for a change phase, decisions need to be made regarding:

- whether the change will be short-term or long-term, temporary or permanent
- whether the change will be introduced quickly and completely in one go or gradually over time with a transition period
- who will be directly involved with the change and who will need to know about it
- whether any training or skills development will be needed
- what other changes or events the change is contingent on
- whether the change needs to be built into formal systems or structures.

Goals, objectives and motivation

As with any activity involving innovation, when planning for change it is important to identify the goals and objectives of the process and to motivate others to embrace the change.

Motivating others requires creating an environment where they can participate, feel a sense of ownership of the process and outcomes, and be appropriately rewarded. This involves active listening and providing meaningful feedback and positive reinforcement.

Embrace change

Motivated people feel less discomfort about changes being made; they are more likely to embrace changes and a whole cycle of continuous improvement when they feel a part of the change process.

Below are two things to be aware of.

Continual improvement	Time frame for change
Change is part of the continuous improvement cycle; it does not herald an endpoint, but is part of an ongoing process in which change leads to new wants and needs; new ideas are developed, evaluated and reflected on; and further changes are implemented and reviewed.	Developing a time frame for change to occur helps ensure its success. Breaking down elements of change into their own time frames can highlight problem areas, avoiding the need to re-examine the whole process. The time frames tell stakeholders what is happening and what to expect as the changes take effect.

Example: change aids innovation

The Big Country Real Estate firm has worked out a plan to have all its properties listed on an internet site. By paying a fee to a central organisation, the firm can avoid the need to allocate time and money to do this work in-house and management has approved the costs involved. The firm now needs to work out a time frame for the change, incorporating elements of the continuous improvement cycle and other planning requirements.

Communicate change

When we communicate about change, different stakeholders require different levels of knowledge and different communication channels. The key issues that need to be communicated are based on what is important for each person or group to know; for example, the Big Country Real Estate administration team needs to tell the accountant how much is required to be paid to the central internet site and at what times, so she can build this into the firm's budget.

Property sellers need to know the way their properties are advertised will change and the relevant details, plus any costs they need to pay in the future. This information may result from the firm's accountant discussing this with management.

As the properties were previously advertised in the local newspaper, that organisation needs to be advised that the firm will no longer be paying for a two-page spread as of a particular edition. The administration team needs new processes and time lines so photographs and advertising text for property listings can be uploaded in a timely fashion.

The best method of communication to advise about changes is often the method usually used for that stakeholder. Any new instructions or directions must be made clear as well.

Communication about change may be carried out by:

- senior staff being briefed at a management meeting
- general staff being informed in staff meetings, the staff newsletter and reminder emails
- board members being sent a letter from the management team
- business partners being informed through phone calls from the operations manager
- clients and customers being sent form letters.

Implement change

During the implementation stage, it is important that you pay attention to the types of resources required to perform the change and any training that may assist team members in adjusting and making the change. There will also be interim measures that need to be put in place while the change is in process.

A change in any organisation affects your co-workers, other departments and stakeholders, so it is paramount that during a workplace change you ensure all team members are willing participants in the change process and feel they own the process and consider it valuable to them and their organisation.

During and after the implementation of the change, it is essential that the organisation puts evaluation and review strategies in place to ensure the change has been made effectively and it supports the team's common goals.

Practice task 18

Reflect on a time in a working environment, present or past, when you or other members of your team were involved in introducing innovation into the workplace.

1. List three questions that needed to be asked first, before the change was introduced. Did this happen? If not, what were the consequences?

2. List a range of activities the team needed to be involved in between the idea stage and the implementation stage.

3. How was the change communicated to team members and stakeholders? Was this communication effective? How would you do it differently if you had the chance?

4E Identify, promote and celebrate success

Success can be measured at each stage of the continuous improvement cycle. The completion of each activity forms part of a successful project. Conversely, success at the end of a change process does not mean people and teams can stop thinking and behaving innovatively, because there will always be something new to explore, and new needs and wants to meet.

Nonetheless, success can be identified in a number of ways: an improvement in the way a team works together, better outcomes, higher-level results or even greater efficiency as evidenced by the better use of resources.

Measure success

An organisation needs to have processes or strategies in place to continuously measure how well aspects of the business operation are doing, and to make adjustments in order to maintain its financial sustainability.

Success in implementing change can be measured as follows.

Measuring success in implementing change
Measuring quantity – comparing work output and/or results before and after changes
Measuring efficiency – comparing error rates against past performance or benchmarks; examining reductions in expenditure, resource use or time taken to complete tasks
Evaluating quality – comparing client or customer satisfaction before and after changes
Evaluating secondary outcomes – comparing staff satisfaction, retention rates, team connectedness and skill sets before and after changes
Measuring innovation – gauging the ability and readiness of staff to engage in the continuous improvement cycle and to embrace change as part of everyday working life

Promote and celebrate success

Announcing an innovative success and promoting the results to stakeholders and the business community send a message to the world that the organisation acknowledges the effort that has gone into this change and congratulates all who participated. Announcements and promotions can occur formally, such as at an awards ceremony, or informally, through a message in a newsletter or at a team meeting.

Promotions and celebrations can take many forms and should be appropriate to the task, personnel involved and outcomes. Celebrations that occur too frequently or do not reflect the appropriateness of the occasion have less impact than well-timed and well-placed events. They can also lead to embarrassment or an overblown sense of importance.

It is usually a good idea to emphasise the activity and its outcomes as much as the individuals who carried it out. If a particular team member has achieved outstanding success, a special award can be appropriate. If outcomes are due to team efforts, it is more appropriate to acknowledge the whole team, rather than individual efforts. When innovation is not successful, non-promotion or partial promotion is preferable to negative attention.

Practice task 19

Read this case study, then explain your findings below.

Case study

The Big Country Real Estate management team notes that after the properties are listed on the central website, inquiries from potential buyers increase by 25 per cent over the following 60 days. Additionally, buyers come from all around the state, when previously they had only come from the local region.

Although it is too early for an exact measurement, properties also seem to be taking less time to sell than they used to. The administration team seems happier in its work and team members have been arranging to meet each other socially after hours, when previously they went their own ways. Several staff members have suggested further ideas for improvement that management is now considering.

1. List the measures of success you have recognised in reading this case study.

2. Describe the methods management could use to promote and celebrate the administration team's success. Explain the reasons for your choice.

Summary

1. Individuals and teams need to give themselves opportunities to debrief and reflect on innovation processes and their outcomes.

2. Feedback is important in order to ensure innovation is working in the best interests of common goals and stakeholder interests.

3. Identifying risks and meeting challenges are important parts of innovative practice.

4. Innovation must be accompanied by change in order to be effective.

5. The change process needs to be planned, managed and reviewed.

6. Success can be measured at each stage of the continuous improvement cycle.

7. Success needs to be acknowledged and celebrated in a manner appropriate to the situation and outcomes.

Learning checkpoint 4
Reflect on how the team is working

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in reflecting on how your team is performing and working towards its goals and objectives.

Part A

1. Explain why it is essential for a team to reflect on opportunities for improvement on a regular basis.

2. Explain a time when you have gathered and used feedback to generate a group or team discussion. What was the feedback? What type of discussion was generated by it?

3. Think back to a time when you tried to bring innovation into your current team or a past one. Describe three challenges you faced when trying to do this and how you overcame those challenges.

Part B

Case study

Read the following letter to all staff from the CEO of a large corporation, then answer the questions that follow.

Letter to all staff: Stephen Kingsley, CEO, AQY Worldwide

Dear staff members,

I am proud to make an announcement about work that has been done in our Dunston office. This work will benefit the entire company for many years to come.

A small group of people, headed by Mary Samuels, has been working on the Community Connect project. This started out as an idea by Shona Cjengla, who sought a more environmentally friendly way to dispose of paper waste. It ended up as a major project that saw our organisation lead a whole town into a major recycling enterprise. The knowledge gained through this project will be adopted by recycling agencies worldwide.

On Friday 25 March at 12 noon, we will all stop work for 15 minutes to celebrate the success of the Community Connect team. Our offices will be linked via video to the Dunstan office, where I will present Mary and her team with an award as a gesture of recognition. After that, Mary, her team and I will attend a lunch with local business and community leaders.

This project has not been without its challenges, including opposition from the wider community related to cost and reluctance from the local council in terms of recycling management. The list goes on. However, getting feedback from individual staff and clients was perhaps the greatest boost to the whole enterprise. After all, if people on the ground floor were not willing and able to cooperate, success would have been unlikely. Shona took a pivotal role in this, taking the time to interview people and get their views and ideas about what was working and what was not. Without this effort, we could not have achieved the success we see today. Through tenacity, employing best practice principles, using the advice of experts and spending many hours in negotiation and working towards consensus, Mary and her team can now be proud of their achievement.

We at AQY Worldwide should also feel proud of our team and our successes. Mary and her team remind us how innovation can bring about change and improvement to an organisation and to a community and its people. AQF Worldwide encourages innovation and welcomes more of it.

1. How did the Community Connect team identify the opportunity for improvement?

2. What feedback did the team gather and what use did it make of this feedback?

3. How did the team face the challenges?

4. What efforts do you think were required to enable the team to meet these challenges?

5. What risks did the team take?

6. Provide feedback on how effectively, in your view, the success of this team was celebrated. How appropriate was it to the occasion? What else could have been done? What could have been done differently?