BSBLDR523

LEAD AND MANAGE EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

BSBLDR523

Lead and manage effective workplace relationships

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1

Aspire also has learning resources available in these areas:
· Foundation skills
· LLN and employability skills (non-competency)
· Community services
· Early Childhood Education and Care
· Allied health

Contact details

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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBLDR523 Lead and manage effective workplace relationships*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

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

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

Foundation skills

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

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Writing	▪ Prepares plans and policies incorporating appropriate vocabulary, grammatical structure and conventions
Self-management	▪ Adapts personal communication style to model behaviours, build trust and positive working relationships, and to support others ▪ Takes responsibility for formulating, organising and implementing plans, processes and strategies that impact the workplace
Initiative and enterprise	▪ Follows organisational policies and procedures regarding diversity and ethical conduct
Teamwork	▪ Plays a lead role in situations requiring effective collaboration, demonstrating high level support and facilitation skills and ability to engage and motivate others ▪ Evaluates outcomes to identify opportunities for improvement
Planning and organising	▪ Systematically gathers and analyses all relevant information and evaluates options to inform decisions about organisational strategies

What do you already know?

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

Topic	Key outcome		Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Establish workplace relationship processes	1A	Identify workplace collaboration processes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B	Develop processes for consultation on work roles	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C	Develop conflict management processes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2: Manage effective workplace relationships	2A	Confirm responsibilities and support the team	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B	Identify and address issues in workplace relationships	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C	Monitor and communicate outcomes of conflict management	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 3: Review management of workplace relationships	3A	Seek feedback on management of workplace relationships	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B	Evaluate feedback and identify improvements to leadership style	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1 | Establish workplace relationship processes

1A   Identify workplace collaboration processes
1B   Develop processes for consultation on work roles
1C   Develop conflict management processes
1D   Develop process to escalate or refer issues

1A Identify workplace collaboration processes

Collaboration encourages team members to work together to discuss ideas and examine new ways of doing things.

It is important for people in leadership or management positions to understand how collaborating brings people together to create or achieve something and to encourage positive relationships in and among teams. Some managers collaborate as a habit when a problem needs to be addressed. Others actively support collaboration by promoting processes that encourage collaboration among staff. They may also model collaboration themselves by listening, acknowledging and rewarding shared ideas.

One type of collaboration used in business brings together people with differing levels of responsibility and skill sets. These may be staff from different departments or from across an organisation with a range of responsibility levels and work roles. The resulting breadth of knowledge, perspectives and experience will vary. The ideas and information that arise during these types of collaborations represent a broad range of views from across an organisation.

Another way to collaborate is a 'siloed' approach, where people discuss ideas with others they are familiar with from their own department or team. In this method, participants have a particular skill or expertise in common, such as marketing or customer service. The views, experiences and actions that result from this type of collaboration are more likely to be shared by those in the group.

Collaboration:
• brings together people with different perspectives and wide-ranging views • identifies new and innovative ways to complete tasks • builds greater understanding of team/department interdependencies • builds team engagement where opinions are valued and respected • allows employees an opportunity to shape how their work is performed.

To develop a collaboration process that improves and enhances workplace relationships, it is important to evaluate the characteristics and needs of the team and their particular circumstances. Consider staff location, technology, skills, experience and resources, as outlined in the following table.

Staff location	Technology requirements
• Some team members may work remotely or in different offices. • Time zones differ across Australia and across the world. • Specific technology such as software and hardware may be required for communicating. • Some projects/tasks benefit from face-to-face collaboration, such as demonstrating and practising a skill.	• Large files may need to be shared. • Videoconferencing may be required. • Document collaboration software may be needed. • High-speed internet may be important. • Equipment may be needed, including hardware (such as headphones and microphones) and software (such as video and presentation capabilities).
Staff skills and experience	**Resources needed**
• Different work roles require different skills and experience. • Each team member will have different skills and experiences to share.	• Space for collaboration may be required depending on the number of people and type of collaboration, such as a presentation to a large group. • The time required for the collaboration may mean that team members need to be released from other duties or their positions back-filled. • Travel, overtime, sourcing specific software and position back-filling require funding and budgeting.

Collaboration methods and tools

To choose the most appropriate collaboration tools consider the objectives of the communication and the number of staff who need to participate.

Explain to staff the benefits of each collaboration tool, including how it will enable effective communication and help build positive relationships.

The following table shows some advantages and disadvantages of the different collaboration methods and tools used in a business setting.

Regular face-to-face meetings

Most often participants will be in the same office or facility.

Advantages:

- Low cost – little travel or overtime required
- Participants are often familiar with each other's work roles
- Effective way to communicate using verbal and non-verbal cues
- Low technology requirement

Disadvantages:

- Scope for broad-ranging perspectives and experience may be limited
- Participants may view meetings as lower priority if scheduled too frequently

One-off, face-to-face events

Often used by senior management or in meetings where people are brought from different locations.

Advantages:

- Allows singular focus on specific topic for that one event/meeting
- Allows face-to-face discussion between parties who may not otherwise meet
- Scope for broad-ranging experience and views
- Opportunity to bring in external facilitator or subject matter experts

Disadvantages:

- Travel and accommodation costs
- Requires decisions to be made in a short time frame
- Relies on follow-up with notes, meeting minutes and actions

Online collaboration

Includes use of videoconferencing applications (apps) such as Microsoft Office 365, Zoom, etc.

Advantages:

- Tracks communication, amendments and comments made by collaborators
- Can work on shared documents in real time
- Not location dependent, i.e. work anywhere, anytime
- Low cost after technology has been purchased and installed

Disadvantages:

- Less personal
- Subject to miscommunication/misinterpretation inherent in written communication
- Can cloud decision making – requires tight structure to ensure decisions are made
- Potential misuse of information sharing
- Team may require training in technology use
- Relies on fast and reliable internet

Informal collaboration

Individuals seek their own collaboration arrangements such as meeting for a coffee or meal.

Advantages:

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

Disadvantages:

- Requires approvals and adherence to policies and procedures to avoid inappropriate, unsanctioned processes or actions
- May lead to unauthorised change

Organisational policies and procedures

An organisation's policies and procedures provide a framework for all work activities, including collaboration.

Organisational policies and procedures define processes and provide frameworks for work. Many policies are underpinned by legislative requirements such as work health and safety (WHS), privacy, anti-discrimination and employment conditions.

Policies and procedures need to provide information for shaping collaboration processes and informing how collaboration activities are conducted. For example, when using videoconferencing as a collaboration tool, remind staff of the organisation's code of conduct and information technology (IT) or email usage policies, to ensure language and behaviour protocols are followed.

The following policies and procedures may impact on collaboration activities:
- code of conduct
- communication policy/procedure
- privacy or confidentiality policy
- sustainability policy
- IT policy/procedure
- anti-discrimination policy
- purchase approval policy/procedure
- travel policy/procedure
- working out-of-hours policy
- WHS policy.

Develop a process document

A process document records the steps or protocols required to implement an action or set of behaviours.

To encourage collaboration among staff, use a process document as a guide for how this might occur. As a manager, it is your role to implement these practices and document processes for easy access by staff.

Workplace documentation must use suitable and appropriate language, terminology and presentation to meet the wide-ranging needs of staff and other departments who may refer to it.

Workplace process documents should:

- be presented clearly in an easy-to-follow format
- contain logical and sequential content
- use language conventions, grammar and terminology appropriate to users
- avoid discriminatory, culturally insensitive or otherwise inappropriate language
- be grammatically correct and free from spelling errors
- be accessible.

Example

Interstate collaboration at Corso Consulting

Corso Consulting is a medium-sized retail development consultancy with offices in all capital cities across Australia. Adelaide retail manager, Jake, recently suggested he meet more regularly with the managers in other cities to discuss and share ideas on ways to better approach and engage with property developers.

Jake has proposed a three-monthly face-to-face meeting to be rotated across all city offices. He suggested that each meeting be a two-day session that includes a visit to the local Corso office and one day of team-building activities such as 'tree surfing' or raft building.

Jake sent his proposal to his manager, David. David suggested that Jake review Corso's policies and procedures before they meet, to determine whether his plan follows the organisation's guidelines.

During his review, Jake noted that his proposal contravened Corso's Sustainability Policy. His proposal for flights and accommodation did not meet with the requirements for reducing the number of flights taken by staff. Instead, David authorised the purchase of software and organised for Jake to liaise with the IT department to have videoconferencing apps uploaded onto each manager's computer. The managers now collaborate weekly online.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

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

a) Collaboration is effective when only the members of a specific department work together to explore new ways to do things   » Yes   » No

b) Successful collaboration draws on wide-ranging skills, views, experiences and perspectives   » Yes   » No

c) A process for collaboration must reference organisational policies and procedures   » Yes   » No

d) Remote workers can collaborate just as effectively as those who are on location   » Yes   » No

e) Informal collaboration is organic and should not be constrained by policies and procedures   » Yes   » No

Question 2

Which of the following statements are accurate in regard to different methods for collaborating? Tick all that apply.

○   Online collaboration can result in miscommunication

○   One-off events bring together people who may not have the opportunity to talk regularly face to face

○   Face-to-face meetings often result in staff implementing unauthorised changes

○   One-off events work well using a subject matter expert or external facilitator

○   Informal collaboration is the cheapest option

1B Develop processes for consultation on work roles

Consultation processes enable staff to contribute to addressing issues related to their work role.

Effective leaders value receiving information from staff as well as conveying it. They encourage others to communicate on matters affecting their work conditions and how their role is defined and performed.

Employees are usually best positioned to recognise issues and factors that affect their capacity to perform their role. They can often provide insights that team leaders or managers may not have.

Frontline managers need to actively encourage their staff to put forward new ideas, make comment, show initiative and raise concerns about work-related issues. The nature of the issues will vary according to the industry, job role, department and working environment.

Some examples of issues related to a work role might be:

- equipment that is worn out, not suited to purpose or dangerous
- too much or not enough work
- dissatisfaction with work hours, rosters, leave, work arrangements, remote working, etc.
- environmental factors such as office space, furniture, temperature or noise levels
- lack of training or skills to perform a task
- work health and safety (WHS) issues such as a lack of housekeeping or unsafe practices
- identifying a different way to perform tasks, e.g. to make them more efficient or safer.

Support consultation

Staff contributions should always be respected and responded to.

The benefits of a consultative team culture are not limited to the additional insights and ideas generated by a group with a shared objective. Encouraging team members to contribute to organisational decision making also leads to greater job satisfaction and a heightened interest in and commitment to their job role. Showing that you value contributions encourages future suggestions and input from others. Foster an atmosphere that is comfortable and non-threatening, in which employees can share ideas, tips, work strategies and information.

Ways to support employee contributions
• Listen to staff, respect their contributions and encourage others to do the same.
• Make proactive suggestions a performance indicator for review in performance appraisals.
• Evaluate and explore the feasibility of employee suggestions.
• Ask follow-up questions to demonstrate that you are interested in their views.
• Publicly acknowledge their contribution, such as in a staff email, newsletter or meeting.

Develop a consultation process

Consultation helps provide a productive, safe and healthy workplace.

A consultation process will be effective if:

- information is shared on WHS matters
- active listening skills are used, such as asking questions and seeking clarification
- there is consistent seeking of input and sharing of ideas
- contribution to decision making is encouraged.

Here is an example of a standard consultation process.

Step 1 – Worker raises a concern or idea

Step 2 – There is a two-way discussion between the manager and the worker

Step 3 – The manager considers the views and concerns of the worker

Step 4 – The manager considers options and makes a decision

Step 5 – The worker receives feedback on the outcome
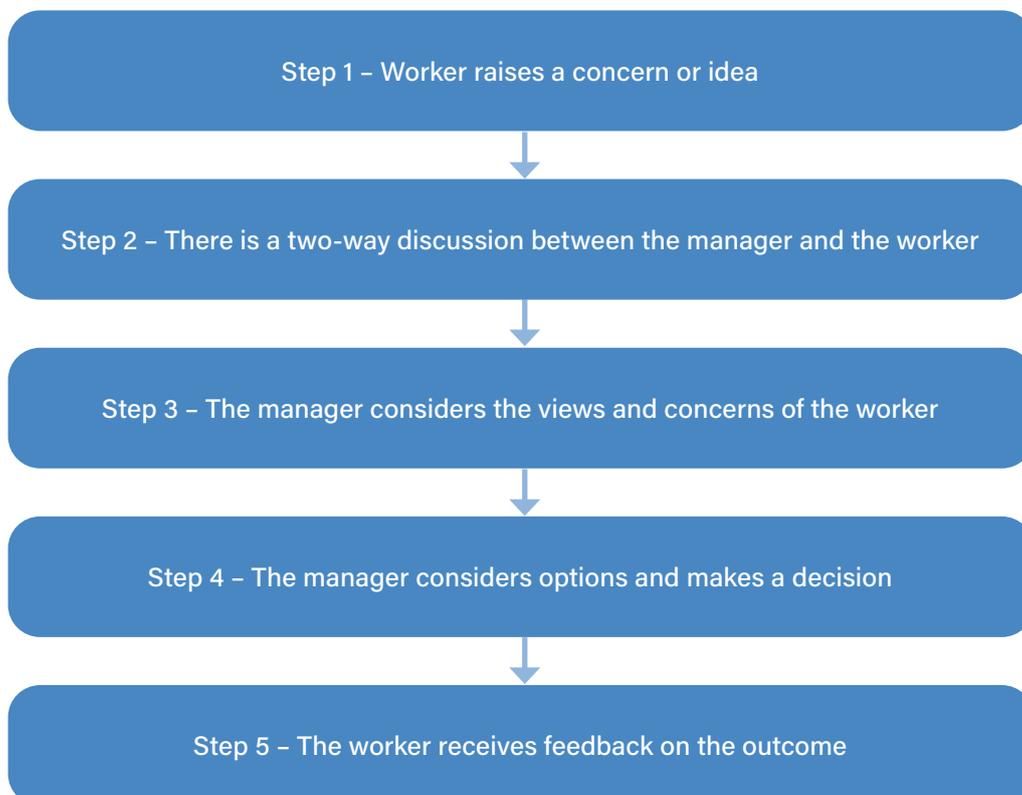
Types of consultation

A consultation process ensures all parties are clear about the means and methods by which consultation will occur.

No two workplaces are the same, and the appropriate consultation methods used in one organisation or team may not suit another. Ensure the type of consultation is relevant to the nature and needs of a group, and give staff a reasonable opportunity to provide input on work-related matters.

Examples of different consultation methods include the following:

Team meetings

Regular team meetings should be scheduled with a standing agenda item for discussing and raising work-related issues. Meetings should be a forum for staff to provide updates on their work tasks. They are a platform for encouraging employees to contribute. As a leader, reward and acknowledge the collaborative and consultative behaviours you are trying to develop in your team.

One-on-one discussions

These range from formal discussions such as performance appraisals to informal, incidental discussions which can occur over lunch or in a casual conversation. Use the one-to-one approach to encourage new or less confident employees to contribute their views in a secure setting.

Written communication

Email or other documents may be used for consultation, such as sending documents for comment. Written communication may be required where staff work remotely, when input needs to be quantified and formally reviewed, or when consulting on a legislative requirement such as WHS.

WHS committees

Consulting with employees on work health and safety (WHS) is a legislative requirement. Most workplaces will have a WHS committee. These meetings allow employees, or their nominated representative, to provide input on how safety is promoted and protected in the workplace. After these meetings, written outcomes, including how hazards and risks are to be managed, must be shared with employees.

> **Example**
>
> ## Consultation in an organisation
>
> Phil is a corporate services manager in an insurance company. He oversees the human resources (HR), information technology (IT), accounting and customer service departments. He has three staff members reporting directly to him. Phil holds regular divisional meetings where he invites his team to provide updates on work in progress and raise issues of interest or concern.
>
> Using this approach, the various departments are kept informed of each other's activities. Each department head then reports to their own staff on what has been raised at each meeting. Phil also uses the meetings to report on the outcomes of the board and management meetings he attends, and to encourage his team members to share their ideas about improving business practices.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Identify three ways a leader can encourage and support their team to raise issues relating to their work role.

Question 2

Which of the following are examples of consultation processes? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Posting an intranet announcement
- ◯ Having an informal discussion over lunch
- ◯ Sharing documents for comment
- ◯ Discussing with team how to fix an IT problem
- ◯ Updating a job description

Question 3

Number each step from 1 to 5 in the order you would follow when consulting with employees.

- ◯ There is a two-way discussion between the manager and worker
- ◯ The worker receives feedback on the outcome
- ◯ A worker raises a concern or idea
- ◯ The manager considers options and makes a decision
- ◯ The manager considers the views and concerns of the worker

1C Develop conflict management processes

The aim of conflict management is to seek an acceptable outcome for all parties.

Many staff performance problems result from strained relationships between individuals. Conflict is part of everyday working life; it can be a dispute between team members or departments, a misunderstanding with a customer, or it may occur between yourself and a colleague or team member.

Problems in relationships can fester if they are not identified early or if people are unsure what actions need to be taken. Inaction can undermine the smooth functioning of the organisation and the quality of staff relationships.

Strategies for conflict management

Interpersonal and communication skills are essential for defusing aggression and resolving conflict.

During a conflict situation, it is only natural that emotions run high. Anger and distress rarely solve problems or lead to objective thinking, and actions taken in the heat of the moment often lead to a situation becoming worse, not better. Use strategies to de-escalate the emotional response so an appropriate resolution can be found.

Here are some conflict management techniques you can use with your team.

Use a deferral technique

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

Discuss misunderstandings

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

Listen actively

└ Let the other party know they are being heard. Listen actively and ask critical questions to explore the situation. Rather than trying to solve the disagreement yourself, ask, 'What do you think needs to be changed?' or 'How can we resolve this?'. While open questions are often effective, avoid asking 'why'. Asking vague questions does not help to identify the source of the problem and 'why' questions often make people defensive.

Be aware of certain behaviours

└ Be aware of the difference between passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour. Assertiveness is a valuable skill to acquire. Through training and awareness, everyone can learn to use assertive techniques in their workplace and everyday life.

Other useful strategies to deal with a conflict situation are to:
- defuse emotions by taking a break from discussions, getting fresh air or focusing on other tasks for a while
- seek all parties' points of view and be willing to compromise and negotiate a resolution
- accept that not everyone will be completely happy with the outcome
- be flexible, cooperative, willing to listen with an open mind and prepared to adapt
- arrange a time for the relevant parties to meet to discuss the situation
- discuss privacy and confidentiality requirements so people feel secure in disclosing personal information
- explain the need for commitment and cooperation between team members to achieve common goals
- provide opportunities for resolution such as brainstorming potential solutions
- explain the organisation's processes if a resolution cannot be achieved
- seek input from relevant impartial observers such as human resources (HR) personnel or another manager.

Dispute resolution process

A minor problem may escalate into a major issue if not tackled promptly.

Manage disputes so they can be resolved as positively and quickly as possible, and so they do not become unmanageable.

Here is an example of steps in a conflict resolution process:

Summarise the problem	1. State the issue, facts, feelings and concerns. Define the problem in terms of organisational or team requirements, expected performance or behaviours, and what is currently being produced by the worker.
Search for mutually acceptable solutions	2. Ask the worker to contribute toward a healthy solution. Encourage the person to explain how they can improve their performance moving forward.
Evaluate the possible solutions	3. Discuss the possible outcomes of each solution. Consider whether they are practical, realistic and will contribute toward helping the situation. Add your feedback using objective language. Avoid agreeing on solutions that are unreasonable or that place unfair expectations on the worker.
Make a decision and agree on actions	4. Encourage ownership of and a shared commitment to the solution. Ask the worker to summarise their role in implementing the solution and to explain the benefits of improving. Summarise the actions, including roles and responsibilities, give encouragement and praise, and reinstate the value of following through on the agreed steps.

Policies, procedures and legislative requirements

Dispute resolution processes form part of an organisation's policies and procedures.

They also provide a framework to use when informal methods are considered inappropriate or have failed.

In some cases, the dispute process will require immediate escalation. This is particularly relevant when the conflict or dispute may impact on legislative requirements, such as discriminatory or bullying behaviour, the privacy of personal information or factors affecting the safety of workers.

If internal resolution of an issue is not possible or fails, the Fair Work Commission may become involved. The Commission is Australia's national workplace relations tribunal and it operates under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth). It has a number of responsibilities including wages and employment conditions, as well as assisting employers and employees to resolve issues and disputes.

You can find out more about the Fair Work Commission here: aspirelr.link/fwc

Refer to your organisation's policies and procedures or speak to relevant personnel, such as a senior manager, HR or people and culture team, union representative or WHS representative.

The following table presents systems, policies and procedures relevant to dispute resolution.

Systems	Policies	Procedures
• Collaboration • Consultation • Mentoring/coaching • Schedules for team meetings	• Anti-discrimination • Cultural awareness • Work health and safety • Training, e.g. improving soft skills	• Job-specific procedures to clarify how tasks are to be performed • Conflict management/ dispute resolution procedures • Team meeting procedures such as an agenda and minutes

Example

Resolve conflict

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

Jed believes the most important thing is to understand the other person's views and perspective. Often this can be done by sitting down with the employee and asking questions, such as requesting they explain the problem in order to find out the reason they are upset.

Getting to the source is vital before anything else can be done. People often talk in generalisations such as 'Everyone ignores me', 'I'm never asked to give a presentation' or 'People don't respect me'. Jed asks for specific examples, such as 'Why do you think people have that opinion of you?'. In this way he guides employees to focus on the issue and not their emotions.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

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

a) Conflict should not be left to fester but acted upon as soon as possible — » Yes   » No

b) Brainstorming possible solutions with both parties will only make conflict worse — » Yes   » No

c) Dispute resolution processes work best with external intervention — » Yes   » No

d) Every organisation should have conflict management policies and procedures — » Yes   » No

e) The Fair Work Commission provides assistance with dispute resolution — » Yes   » No

Question 2

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

○   Tell each party how to resolve their issue

○   Be willing to listen with an open mind and be prepared to adapt

○   Advise each party that failing to agree will result in a formal warning

○   Brainstorm potential solutions with both parties

○   Explain the need for commitment and cooperation when working together

Question 3

Number each step from 1 to 4 in the order you would follow to manage a dispute.

○   Search for mutually acceptable solutions

○   Decide together

○   Summarise the problem

○   Evaluate the possible solutions

1D Develop process to escalate or refer issues

There are benefits to early detection of issues and swift action.

Allowing too much time for a problem to be resolved can lead to it worsening, escalating and perhaps interfering with work performance, deadlines and team harmony. As a manager, you need to monitor the situation.

Ask staff to help resolve issues that affect the team. Work through problems as a group to help make these practices a common part of work life. Regular five-minute sessions can be scheduled in team meetings to discuss current problems or anticipated issues that might impede progress.

An open communications policy is useful for resolving problems. Encourage team members to raise issues in a private setting if they prefer. People should be confident to speak freely with you about problems involving other staff members or sensitive issues that may be affecting their work.

Encourage staff to first problem-solve their own issue in order to build self-sufficiency and free up your time. Staff should be familiar with processes to follow when an issue arises. If they are unable to resolve a conflict or dispute on their own, they can then come to you for advice and support.

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

Referring problems to others

Leaders need to recognise when input from others is required.

A hallmark of effective leadership is understanding when the resolution of problems may require escalation or referral to a manager or other person with relevant skills and experience. Despite your best efforts and problem resolution procedures, there will be occasions when you need an outside opinion or the problem is beyond the scope of your role or skills.

For example, a resolution may require changes to the operations of the organisation or need the intervention of the human resources (HR) team, or you may be too closely involved in the issue and require third-party support.

Specialists can provide support and guidance for you and your staff. They include counselling services, an Employee Assistance program (EAP), the Fair Work Commission website, or a senior manager or external workplace relationship expert.

Understanding your limitations and when to involve others is a key leadership skill. It should not be seen as a failing or an inability to solve a problem, but rather a strength in understanding when external help is required.

Work process for resolving or referring issues

Develop a work process to assist in resolving or referring workplace issues.

The following work process flowchart can help you to evaluate then resolve or refer issues.

Workplace issue is raised
with team leader

Evaluate issue, considering:
- Can it be resolved within scope of responsibility?
- Does resolution require input from other teams/leaders?
- Does policy or legislation require that it be referred?

Issue is resolved within the team

Issue requires referral to
other team/management/
legislative authority
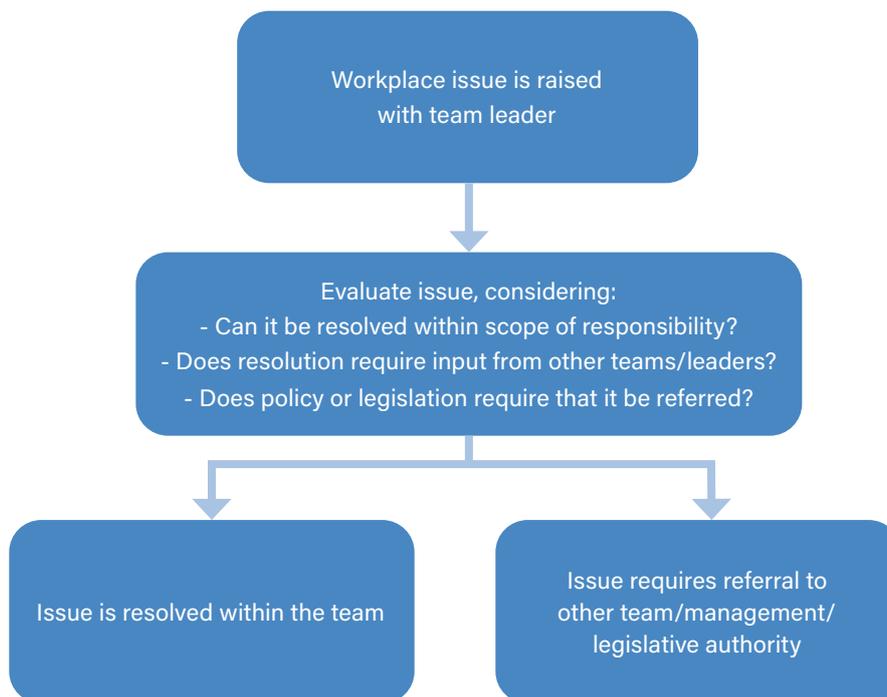
Practice Task 4

Question 1

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

a) As the manager you must resolve all problems that arise in your team ≫ Yes ≫ No

b) Issues of bullying or harassment should be resolved immediately without referral to other parties ≫ Yes ≫ No

c) Effective leaders encourage their team members to seek solutions to problems ≫ Yes ≫ No

d) Talking through a workplace problem with other leaders only makes a decision harder ≫ Yes ≫ No

Question 2

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

◯ Manager resolves issue or refers to others

◯ Manager evaluates options for resolution

◯ Employee raises issue with manager

◯ Manager seeks further information on nature of issue

Summary

- Collaboration helps explore new and innovative ways to perform work tasks and resolve problems.
- The collaborative process often brings together people across an organisation, outside of a traditional organisational structure.
- Staff benefit from collaboration as it allows them to develop a sense of self-worth and helps them shape their workplace. This leads to greater engagement and loyalty.
- Organisational policies and procedures help shape collaborative processes.
- Staff have knowledge about their particular area of expertise and should be consulted in these areas.
- Leaders can build an environment that supports, rewards and protects the sharing of ideas.
- Conflict is an unavoidable part of working life, and it is important that processes are in place to manage and resolve conflict in line with an organisation's policies and procedures.
- Resolving their own workplace issues can empower staff to make decisions.
- Leaders should be aware that resolving issues may require referral to another party. This is particularly relevant where workplace issues may involve legislative breaches, such as work health and safety or bullying.
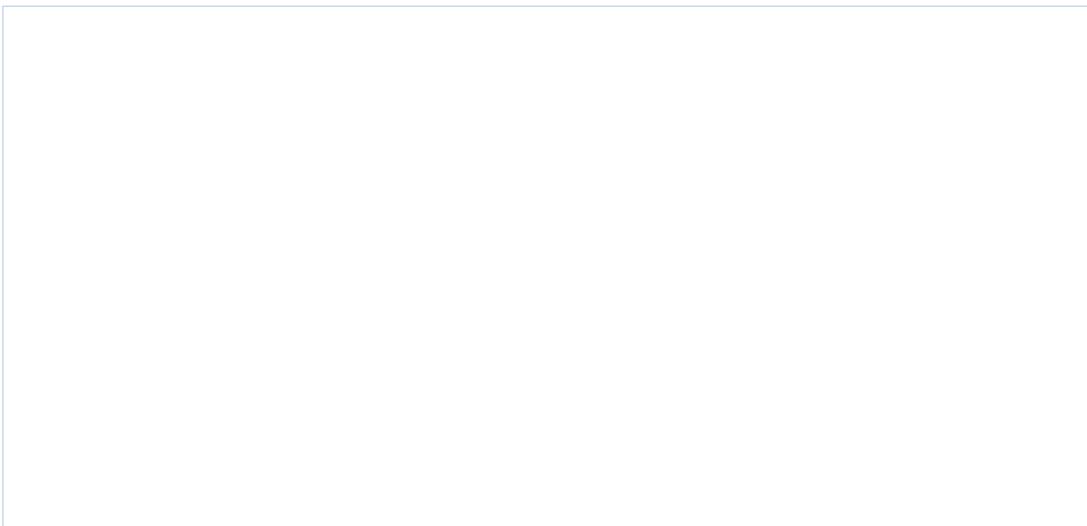
Learning Checkpoint 1
Establish workplace relationship processes

Part A

1. Provide one advantage and one disadvantage for each of the following methods of collaboration.

    - Regular face-to-face meetings
    - Online collaboration tools
    - Informal collaboration

2. Outline a simple process for staff to follow to resolve issues affecting their work roles.

3. Which of the following are examples of consultation? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Regular staff meetings
- ◯ Website updates
- ◯ Staff forums
- ◯ Press conference
- ◯ One-on-one sessions
- ◯ Staff newsletter

4. Draw a line to match the organisational documents with their description.

» Code of conduct	» Outlines rules and methods for staff to communicate and share information over the internet
» Work health and safety procedures	» Provides clarity around expected staff behaviour
» Information technology policy	» Defines how staff should be treated and respected
» Anti-discrimination policy	» Outlines the steps required to stay safe at work

5. Which of the following should be incorporated into a process document? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Use correct spelling and grammar
- ◯ Include acronyms as much as possible
- ◯ Use clear, succinct language
- ◯ Use emojis to make document user-friendly
- ◯ Make content logical and sequential

Part B

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

Case study

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

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

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

1. Which of the following actions should Ethan take? Tick all that apply.

    ○ Meet with both Kyra and Alice to discuss their concerns

    ○ Refer the problem to an expert counsellor

    ○ Advise them they will both be suspended from work if they do not sort it out

    ○ Discuss the issue with the team over lunch

    ○ Kyra advises that Alice has been bullying her. Outline three initial actions that need to occur.

    ○ Seek advice from a supervisor or human resources manager

2. Kyra advises that Alice has been bullying her. Outline three initial actions that need to occur.

Topic 2 | Manage effective workplace relationships

2A Confirm responsibilities and support the team

2B Identify and address issues in workplace relationships

2C Monitor and communicate outcomes of conflict management

2A Confirm responsibilities and support the team

Part of a leader's role is to delegate work tasks and responsibilities to team members.

The delegation process involves:

- identifying when delegation is appropriate
- providing information to staff on the purpose or reason for the change
- determining the best person for the task according to skill level or availability
- supporting and guiding the person to carry out their tasks and responsibilities.

When delegating tasks there are a range of areas to consider:

Recognise when and to whom to delegate	- Match the skills and knowledge of the task to the best person to complete it. - Evaluate the extent and complexity of the task. - Identify whether the task should be delegated or stay with the person it is currently assigned to. - Decide whether your time, or that of other staff, could be better used elsewhere. - Consider which team member would benefit most from the opportunity to expand their responsibilities or skill set. - Think about the safety of staff when adding new tasks or changing procedures. - Review or update job position documents, policies, procedures, etc.
Consider task information required	- Clearly communicate task requirements and expectations such as: - standards to be met and how these will be measured - completion dates or deadlines - progress updates and monitoring. - Provide opportunities to ask questions. - Monitor progress. - Provide constructive feedback on performance and progress. - Motivate staff by: - pointing out their capabilities, successes and value within the organisation - describing the benefits of taking on new tasks.

An effective leader knows that work overload affects their ability to manage relationships and productivity.

When a manager needs to delegate a work task to another member of their team due to increased responsibilities, some feel the need to justify this to their team. Some leaders believe that by doing as much of the task as possible themselves, they will ensure the work is done to their desired standard. This is inefficient, but it also discourages initiative in the team and sends a message that the team lacks the skills needed to perform the task to a satisfactory standard.

Staff develop best when they are given a chance to do things their own way and to learn from their mistakes.

Confirm responsibilities

Staff need clear instructions about delegated tasks. They will want to know if the tasks will be permanently added to their list of responsibilities or whether it is a short-term plan – for example, to back-fill another staff member while they take leave or until a new person is employed, or to complete a special project.

Other information staff may require includes:

- Will there be an adjustment in salary?
- Will there be an adjustment to my job position title?
- How will other team members be impacted?
- How will reporting lines change?
- Will I need training?
- Who will do my existing job if I change roles?
- Will work procedures or updates to organisational documentation be required?

Provide support to complete tasks

The support of management is central to the achievement of work tasks.

The way information on responsibilities is communicated is vital. It may be a combination of:

- a verbal discussion
- written confirmation in an email and/or document
- a meeting with the team and/or the human resources (HR) representative
- a formal announcement to the team or to the whole organisation via email or intranet.

Staff need to feel they have your support and confidence and that you believe in their capacity to complete their tasks. Demonstrate support by providing encouragement, praise and positive feedback. Also make resources available to staff so they can complete their work to a high standard. Resource requirements might include:

Human resources

Access to or input from expert staff, external consultants or other team members may be required.

Physical resources

Physical resources may be helpful, including equipment, technology, space and a safe work environment.

Time-based resources

These may include approval to work overtime, a realistic schedule or deadline to complete tasks, or release from other tasks to pursue a collaborative project.

Financial resources

Funding approval may be needed for travel or accommodation, for training opportunities, or to purchase equipment or catering.

Encourage collaboration

Making collaboration work means facilitating processes that bring people together.

Encouraging collaboration requires activities that go beyond providing access to the 'chain of command' and approvals to allocate resources. As a manager, your role extends to that of a supporter and promoter of the collaborative efforts of your team. Sometimes, a team or an individual does not immediately see the benefits of sharing ideas. Your role is to encourage new initiatives and explain the potential benefits and implications of collaborative processes. This may require you to:

- promote staff collaboration efforts to the rest of the organisation
- respond quickly to requests
- share information to ensure everyone is familiar with the rest of the team's work
- consistently ask for ideas and input from your team.

During a project, work with your team to establish the ground rules and guiding principles for collaboration and at what points collaboration will be needed. This might include scheduling weekly or daily meetings to share progress or issues. As a leader you can facilitate and lead collaboration activities. If you cannot attend all meetings, designate a team leader to share information and encourage collaboration in the team.

Example

Encourage collaboration and provide insight

Robert is the sales team supervisor for a homewares and furnishings team. The store is about to receive its new season homewares and Robert is responsible for ensuring these items are displayed attractively in the window and around the store.

A new team member, Rick, has recently joined the team on a part-time basis. Rick is studying interior design, and Robert has noticed that Rick has a real ability for product display. Although Robert enjoys arranging the store window himself, he feels it would be an excellent opportunity for Rick and something he is likely to do very well.

During a quiet period in the store Robert asks Rick if he would be willing to take on the task of displaying the new merchandise. He explains that this would require Rick to complete the window display after the store closes. It would also need to be done on a particular day and time and using only the new season merchandise.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

List some questions staff may ask about their responsibilities when given a new work task.

Question 2

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

a)	Managers should work hard on a task themselves so they know the job will be done correctly	» Yes	» No
b)	Motivating staff includes explaining why a task is important to the team	» Yes	» No
c)	Providing adequate resources and support is part of the delegation process	» Yes	» No
d)	Any new task must be accompanied by an increase in salary	» Yes	» No
e)	A change in a job role should be formally communicated to the team	» Yes	» No

2B Identify and address issues in workplace relationships

Workplace relationship issues can be turned into opportunities for positive change.

When handled appropriately, issues can lead to improvements – for example, better understanding between colleagues or teams, more efficient and effective work practices, a greater awareness of the issues and improved communication skills.

As well as using the processes you are familiar with to handle workplace issues, also refer to relevant organisational policies and procedures to guide your actions. If work tasks change or new responsibilities are added to a job role, remind staff of the organisational requirements that provide the scaffolding for their work.

Responsibilities of a manager

Managers need to promote and model compliance and ethical behaviour, and acknowledge and address any workplace relationship issues in their team.

Similar social standards that apply in the community also apply in the workplace.

You have an ongoing responsibility to guide, counsel and support your team members through problems that arise. Support your team by offering encouragement and advice. This demonstrates your commitment to building positive relationships and supporting those who report to you.

Managers need to be able to offer the following to their staff:

Guide	Provide direction and instruction on how to resolve difficulties by encouraging staff to problem-solve.
Counsel	Give direction on processes and procedures for actions, such as at a formal or informal meeting.
Support	Offer opportunities and mechanisms that motivate and create an environment where people can work at their best.

Identify workplace relationship issues

Swift identification and analysis of workplace relationship issues are central to effective resolution.

Building a culture where people are actively encouraged to highlight issues and speak openly about their concerns helps ensure that workplace issues are managed routinely and quickly. However, it is not appropriate to react every time there is a sign of friction. Issues can indicate a healthy culture, where people are comfortable expressing concern or dissenting views.

Workplace relationship issues are often triggered by poor job design or tension points in work processes.

- Be alert to potential triggers – has a similar situation arisen before or is it a time of heightened stress or expectation in the team?
- Establish the facts – who is involved in the issue and what is the cause of the conflict?
- Analyse the extent of the issue and its implications.
- Encourage staff to first work through problems themselves and then to seek help.
- Use the following simple problem-solving process to help resolve workplace relationship issues.

Recognise the symptoms of a problem	• Be alert to early warning signs of potential problems • Establish a culture for regularly highlighting and addressing issues
Identify the problem	• Gather the facts • Determine who is involved and who should handle the issue • Talk to the relevant people • Establish the causes
Analyse the problem	• Evaluate the extent of the issue • Determine the potential implications • Consider the interests of those affected by the issue and its outcomes • Ascertain the processes that must be adhered to and any relevant legislative requirements
Define the options for resolution	• Define and evaluate options for resolution in consultation with those at the centre of the problem and with any specialist personnel • Determine the best course of action
Take action	• Develop a plan of action • Implement the solutions using the organisation's processes • Follow up to ensure implementation • Monitor outcomes

Address workplace relationship issues

Once a problem, its participants and the nature of the issue have been identified, examine potential methods for resolution.

As discussed in Topic 1, your organisation should have conflict management strategies and processes in place for managing and addressing workplace conflict.

Where the issue relates to a process or job task, a 'roundtable' discussion may assist to resolve the problem. Regardless of the type of issue, always consider legislative requirements when resolving conflict, such as equal opportunity, fair work arrangements, anti-discrimination and work health and safety (WHS) laws.

Acknowledge the other party

All parties should be clear that they are being, or will be, heard. Often this is all that is needed to defuse the situation.

Show open-mindedness to demonstrate that you will treat the other person's concerns fairly.

Listen actively and ask critical questions to explore the situation.

Rather than trying to solve the disagreement yourself, ask, 'What do you think needs to be changed?' or 'How can we resolve this?'.

Mediate to find common ground

Highlighting common ground and shared goals can be an effective tool for defusing an issue. For example, if staff disagree about how a task is to be performed, or to what standard, remind them that they are aiming to achieve the same outcome.

Represent staff fairly and equally

Most workplaces are comprised of people who represent society's diverse cultures.

Managers must be sensitive to the individual needs and preferences of their staff. Most workplaces are representative of society as a whole and therefore will be comprised of people with differing ethnic and religious backgrounds, sexuality, abilities, preferences and ways of life.

Recognising diversity means respecting human individuality. Demonstrate positive behaviour to your staff by role modelling ethical decision making and fairness at every opportunity. Show by example how these skills, experiences, ideas and attitudes help find new ways of working, solving problems and negotiating. This reinforces a workplace culture of acceptance and respect for all.

Every team member can then enjoy the benefits of a cooperative and harmonious working environment.

> ### Example
>
> ## Avoid making assumptions
>
> It is easy to fall into the common trap of making assumptions about a situation without having a full grasp of the facts. Leaping to conclusions based on circumstantial evidence or generalisations is disrespectful to your team and can lead to dissatisfaction and unwanted outcomes.
>
> If, for example, you assume an older team member made a computer error because 'mature-age people are not good with technology', you would be making an assumption. A better approach is to take the time to seek out the facts, talk with the parties involved and come to an informed decision.
>
> While you may feel that you are open-minded, at times we are all prone to look for easy answers. Always think through an issue thoroughly and search for less obvious conclusions.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

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

a) Workplace relationship issues are a sign of a poor work culture » Yes » No

b) Acknowledging the concerns of all parties only prolongs an issue » Yes » No

c) Anti-discrimination legislation and policies protect the interests of diverse individuals in the workplace » Yes » No

d) Treating all employees equally regardless of race, gender or age is an example of ethical conduct » Yes » No

e) Social sensitivity means to be attuned to the needs and preferences of others » Yes » No

Question 2

Draw a line to match each term about supporting employees to resolve issues to its definition.

>> Support

>> Train staff in effective problem-solving skills and techniques

>> Counsel

>> Motivate staff with praise and encouragement

>> Guide

>> Direct staff to the processes that will be used in conflict management

2C Monitor and communicate outcomes of conflict management

Staff need to be given feedback on the outcomes of actions and decisions made about them.

Always schedule a feedback session with staff after a workplace issue has been resolved. This provides closure and demonstrates that you have taken the issue seriously. It helps to bring a team together and re-establish positive relationships and harmony. If people do not receive feedback after a conflict situation has been resolved, they will be working with a lack of relevant information and can feel isolated from their colleagues.

Communicate outcomes to staff both verbally and in writing. Meetings can be public (with the whole team) or private (with only the staff involved). Provide clear and unambiguous information, as well as an overview of the organisation's expectations about improved performance (if applicable). Also use written communication to set out the facts and actions and to provide a permanent record.

In many cases, you need to follow up with a face-to-face discussion. In the case of a dispute between two team members, give feedback to all parties so the process is fair and open.

Time the communication

Effective managers determine when and how to use feedback to best effect.

If too much time elapses between a conflict occurring and a decision being made on the actions required, staff can feel their issues are not being addressed and thus be less committed to the consultation process. Conversely, immediate feedback may also not convey the sense of consideration and authority required in a conflict situation.

Monitor feedback given

The effects of feedback are not always immediate.

Monitor the welfare and wellbeing of your team members following conflict resolution, particularly if the staff member or team are having their performance monitored.

Part of your role as a leader is to support staff and the relationships in your team. After a conflict has been resolved, monitor people's reactions, their understanding of the issue and how it was handled, then address any issues that may arise. Check in with team members and observe their demeanour and the way they are relating to each other.

Example

Provide and ask for feedback

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

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

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Which of the following are appropriate ways to provide information to staff involved in conflict management? Tick all that apply.

○   During a performance appraisal

○   Verbally as part of another discussion

○   At a weekly team meeting

○   In a performance warning

○   In a thank you letter from senior management

Question 2

Which of the following are benefits of effective communication during a conflict resolution process? Tick all that apply.

○ It shows staff their efforts have been worth it

○ Work practices can be modified and changed

○ Staff can see when their suggestions have failed

○ It discourages staff from raising issues

○ Staff are more likely to contribute to future discussions

Summary

- Effective delegation means understanding what tasks to delegate, to whom and when.
- Communicate the details of a delegated task, including the permanence of the delegation, whether it impacts others, how important the task is, and the organisational policies and procedures related to delegating or extra tasks.
- The opportunities presented by collaboration also require managers to support their team to identify and seek the resources needed.
- Issues in workplace relationships are common and should not always be seen as a negative.
- Encourage staff to voice their concerns and views as this leads to an examination of processes and often better outcomes.
- The ability to provide clear, specific communication to colleagues is a necessary leadership skill.
- The timing of information after conflict resolution is vital for re-establishing and repairing relationships.

Learning Checkpoint 2
Manage effective workplace relationships

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Jasmine is the stock warehouse team leader at SpiceWorld Imports. The company has been urgently waiting on a number of deliveries from overseas suppliers that have been delayed in transit due to industrial action.

Jasmine and her team leader, Tommy, have just been told that the stock will be arriving tomorrow, and the team have three days to receive, unpack and distribute to their major customers. This is two days less than the usual turnaround time. Company policy means that overtime will not be possible.

1. List three factors Jasmine should consider before delegating the tasks to staff.

2. How can Jasmine support her team to meet the deadline? Tick all that apply.

   ○   Meet with the team to discuss ideas on how to get the job done in the limited time frame

   ○   Make sure staff have the resources they need and consider additional staff

   ○   Remind staff that their jobs are at risk

   ○   Communicate expectations and job requirements clearly

   ○   Provide the opportunity for staff to ask questions

   ○   Suggest to staff that they work unpaid overtime

3. Two days into the unpacking process, Jasmine notices a heated discussion between team members. The rest of the factory staff are watching and looking uncomfortable about what is being said. Suggest three actions Jasmine can take to identify and resolve the issue.

4. Jasmine's team member, Ilona, makes a valuable suggestion that allows the team to meet their deadline. Suggest two ways Jasmine can recognise Ilona's contribution.

5. At the end of the job, Jasmine wants to reward the staff. Which of the following are suitable ways to celebrate? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Divide the staff into religious groups and give each a culturally appropriate gift
- ◯ Single out the staff with disabilities by giving them a special mention
- ◯ Request each staff member place a suggestion for a reward into a box
- ◯ Thank everyone and allow them to leave work an hour early

Topic 3 | Review management of workplace relationships

3A   Seek feedback on management of workplace relationships
3B   Evaluate feedback and identify improvements to leadership style

3A Seek feedback on management of workplace relationships

Review feedback on your performance to help you continually improve as a leader.

Feedback is an important tool for examining your performance and the first step in continuous improvement. The ability to use information to successfully build, manage and address workplace relationships is essential in reviewing your performance in managing workplace relationships.

There are several approaches you can use to capture feedback.

Informal feedback	Informal feedback includes debriefing with team members to discuss what could have been done differently, what did and did not work, and what they would like to see happen next time.
	It also includes discussions with colleagues, peers or those in a professional network or mentoring program.
Observation	Observe the way staff work together as a team to see if there are improvements that could be made in relationships.
Advice from an expert or other personnel with experience	Meet with a supervisor to discuss how you managed an issue, what could be done differently next time, and the support you need to manage future relationship issues.
	Seek advice, such as from a human resources (HR) department, counsellor or work health and safety (WHS) expert. They can help you by discussing management techniques or offering training in different approaches.
Formal feedback	Seek formal feedback through performance appraisals, or via online surveys, 360-degree surveys or staff engagement/satisfaction surveys.
Reflection	Reflect on your actions, performance and workplace relationships. You might record your thoughts in a journal or personal document.

Seek feedback from a range of stakeholders to ensure you receive information from people who have seen you operate from different perspectives. Each person can give you feedback on different specific aspects of your management style. Always thank the person for providing the feedback.

Your own manager may want to know how you plan to use their feedback to improve your processes or actions that you take with staff. This may be required in a report as part of your performance appraisal.

The following table shows the different stakeholders you may seek feedback from:

Team members

Team members will consider your management style from the position of those being managed. Their considerations may include:

- the method in which you manage, e.g. whether you provide close supervision or allow team members to solve problems independently
- your communication style, e.g. whether you communicate openly and freely or prefer a more distant approach
- your cultural and social sensitivity, e.g. whether you interact with people in a manner that reflects their needs and preferences.

Manager/supervisor

Your manager may consider your leadership style from a number of perspectives, such as:

- whether your style aligns with that of the organisation and its policies, procedures and values
- how your style impacts on the achievement of work objectives, productivity and team harmony
- whether your style reflects professional development training or key performance indicators (KPIs).

Peers/colleagues

Your peers may include colleagues, others in your field of work, people from other departments in your organisation and external contacts such as in a professional or industry network. Their feedback may include:

- how they would manage situations similar to what you have faced
- current thinking and best practice.

Customers/clients

Feedback from customers and clients may include:

- your consideration of customer complaints/reviews and how your management style may have affected their perceptions
- opinions expressed in customer satisfaction surveys
- direct discussion as to your performance or that of your team/organisation.

Interpersonal styles

Being aware of different styles of communicating is a highly useful skill for managing workplace relationships.

Interpersonal style is the way you interact with and respond to others. Understanding your style and how it appears to and impacts others is an important step in evaluating your effectiveness as a leader. Your interpersonal style is reflected in the way you guide and direct staff, as well as how you motivate and encourage them to be their best.

Interpersonal skills are increasingly seen as an essential aspect of leadership. 'Soft' skills allow you to relate to and engage with those around you in a manner that reflects your personal preference and style.

Your leadership style will have developed over time but it needs to be reviewed periodically. Relationships change and you need to adapt and modify your style accordingly.

Your leadership style is demonstrated in the way you:

- provide instructions for tasks
- monitor and redirect behaviour
- motivate staff to meet deadlines
- set standards for work
- make your team feel connected to the organisation's objectives.

While understanding your own style is important, it can be argued that understanding the style of others is more important. A good communicator can modify their style to best connect with others. They know what will work in different situations and with different people. They are flexible and can adapt to meet the needs of the group.

The culture of a team requires a personalised approach – for example, the atmosphere in one team may be casual and friendly, while in another the relationships may be more formal. The preferences of individual team members will also be different – for example, some people in your team may value direct language.

An effective leader knows how to read the signs of a relationship and adapt to the personality and values of those they interact with.

> **Example**
>
> ### Seek feedback on performance
>
> Manager Jed says he seeks out feedback on his management style as part of the day-to-day interactions with his team. Every week he schedules one-on-one time with each staff member to see how they are going. He does not use an agenda in these meetings but allows the conversation to go where the person needs it to. Jed encourages each staff member to raise their concerns or highlight issues.
>
> Jed says that staff were a bit surprised at first and reluctant to provide honest feedback. But over time, he has found that people have opened up more as trust has developed. He has also learned to modify his approach to meet the needs of individual team members. Jed has found that one or two of his staff really value plain speaking. He tells them how he feels and finds that they are comfortable to speak plainly in return – including when they do not like how he has managed a situation. With others, Jed has to soften the message and work a bit harder to get them to open up about his performance.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

Which of the following are ways to collect feedback on your management of workplace relationships? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Having a discussion over coffee
- ◯ Requesting feedback via a staff newsletter
- ◯ During a performance appraisal
- ◯ Adding an agenda item at a staff meeting
- ◯ Cold-calling colleagues
- ◯ Circulating a voluntary online questionnaire

Question 2

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

a) Your team should learn to appreciate your interpersonal style — » Yes » No

b) Feedback should only be sought from those directly involved in a conflict — » Yes » No

c) Changes to more positive behaviour can indicate a management style is working — » Yes » No

d) Seeking feedback facilitates continuous improvement — » Yes » No

e) Soft skills are as important to a leader as technical knowledge — » Yes » No

Question 3

Which of the following are examples of interpersonal styles? Tick all that apply.

◯ Using body language to indicate you are listening to someone

◯ Demonstrating excellent spreadsheet skills

◯ Showing empathy towards a colleague who is having difficulty with a task

◯ Modifying communication to meet the cultural needs of another

◯ Speaking loudly in meetings

3B Evaluate feedback and identify improvements to leadership style

Once feedback has been received, it needs to be evaluated to determine how it can inform future actions.

The evaluation process allows you to identify areas for improvement in the way you manage your team.

Use a variety of evaluation methods to help ensure that the conclusions you reach are a valid representation of your management of staff. If you focus on only one evaluation method, such as a discussion with a supervisor, the responses you receive will be influenced by the description you give. And if you rely only on personal reflection, your own perspectives are likely to inform your conclusions.

Any feedback can be subject to personal opinion, so gather information from a range of people to receive a broader perspective.

Reflect on the feedback provided

Reflection is an important step in the evaluative process as it allows you to process and consider the feedback given to you.

It is easy and natural for the immediate response to feedback to be defensive, particularly when it is seen as critical. Allow yourself time to reflect on the comments made, to consider the motivations and perspectives of others, and to objectively evaluate the feedback.

Ask yourself the following questions to determine the value and validity of feedback.

Is the feedback valid?	• Is the provider of feedback qualified to do so, i.e. did they witness events or were they party to the process?
	• What were their motivations for providing feedback?
	• Were they dissatisfied with the outcomes of a conflict situation?
	• What other factors may have impacted their perspective?
Is the feedback specific?	• Does the feedback include specific points, e.g. 'I would have preferred that you took me aside rather than providing feedback in the lunch room' rather than 'I didn't like how you did that'?
	• Does the feedback accurately represent events?
	• Is the feedback related to one example?

Do I value the feedback?	• How did I feel upon first receiving the feedback and how do I feel after some time has passed? • Do I think the feedback is valid? Have there been other instances where I behaved in a similar manner? • Were there any mitigating factors that impacted the feedback in this instance?
Does the feedback contain actions?	• Are there points in the feedback that can be used to inform future actions? • What would I do differently? • What can I do to modify my behaviour/selection of feedback method/ delivery in the future?

Share feedback with others

Sharing feedback provides a previously unconsidered perspective.

Input from an informed, yet impartial, third party is often extremely valuable. It may come from people inside your organisation, such as an experienced colleague or your manager. These are useful contacts because they are more likely to be familiar with your interpersonal style and to have seen you 'in action'.

Networking is another method for gaining insights on your leadership style. Networks are usually made up of people outside your organisation or even from a different industry. Some network members may have similar responsibilities for staff as you do. This allows you to share scenarios with others who may have experienced similar issues and who are working in similar roles and environments. Networks are also a good source of information on research and thought-leading material to help managers stay current with leadership methodologies and trends.

Networking opportunities exist in many forms, including online groups or websites, professional or industry group membership, networking events, or informal networking at conferences and seminars.

Identify areas for improvement

It is important to reflect on and discuss feedback to improve the way you lead and manage relationships.

Suggestions for areas for improvement and related examples are shown in the following table.

Area for improvement	Examples
Use effective communication skills	• Use verbal communication skills to communicate clearly and with confidence. • Use non-verbal communication skills such as body language, posture and facial expressions to reinforce your meaning or message. • Use clear written communication skills. • Modify communication to meet the individual needs of others, such as following up an instruction with an email. • Provide positive as well as negative feedback. • Follow organisational processes for conflict management. • Resolve disputes before they escalate. • Involve staff in consultation activities. • Encourage staff to collaborate and make decisions as a team.
Show empathy	• Consider a situation from another person's point of view. • Show understanding and consideration for the issues a person may be facing. • Be patient, tolerant and positive.
Demonstrate cultural and social awareness	• Respect the social and cultural needs of others. • Observe and understand communication differences, for example: • Use formal or respectful language. • Consider culturally specific non-verbal cues such as direct eye contact. • Be aware that some people do not like direct speech or contradicting the views of supervisors. • Realise that the use of humour may be considered offensive.
Role model positive behaviours	• Treat people with respect and value what they have to say. • Meet deadlines and support others to do so. • Show attention to detail. • Be reliable and dependable. • Be punctual and respect others' time. • Be humble and open to criticism as a leader. • Give credit to others where it is due. • Be trustworthy with other people's private or personal information. • Refer issues to a more senior person when appropriate.

The actions that arise from feedback might include finding a mentor, participating in professional development training or observing the actions of a more experienced colleague.

Example

Address problems in the workplace

Lorraine is a member of her local women-in-business network. Each month, the group meets over coffee to discuss issues facing women in management and business.

Lorraine has been experiencing problems with one of her team members, Eleanor, who has been leaving work early several days per week and often taking personal telephone calls during work time. Lorraine has pulled Eleanor aside a few times to remind her of her working hours and to ask her to keep her personal phone calls for her lunch hour.

At a recent meeting, Lorraine raised this issue with a few of her network members. One member, Janeen, explained that she has worked with women who also had the prime responsibility for looking after ageing parents. Janeen suggested that Lorraine speak to her employee to discuss flexible working hours or other options so that Eleanor can meet her obligations to both her parents and her employer, if this is the situation she is experiencing.

Practice Task 9

Question 1

Which of the following statements relate to evaluating feedback on your leadership style? Tick all that apply.

○ Seek feedback from a range of people who know how you work with others

○ Ask dissatisfied staff for feedback as they will provide an honest appraisal of your leadership skills

○ Allow time to reflect on the comments made and the possible motivations of others

○ Seek input from an informed, impartial third party for valuable insights

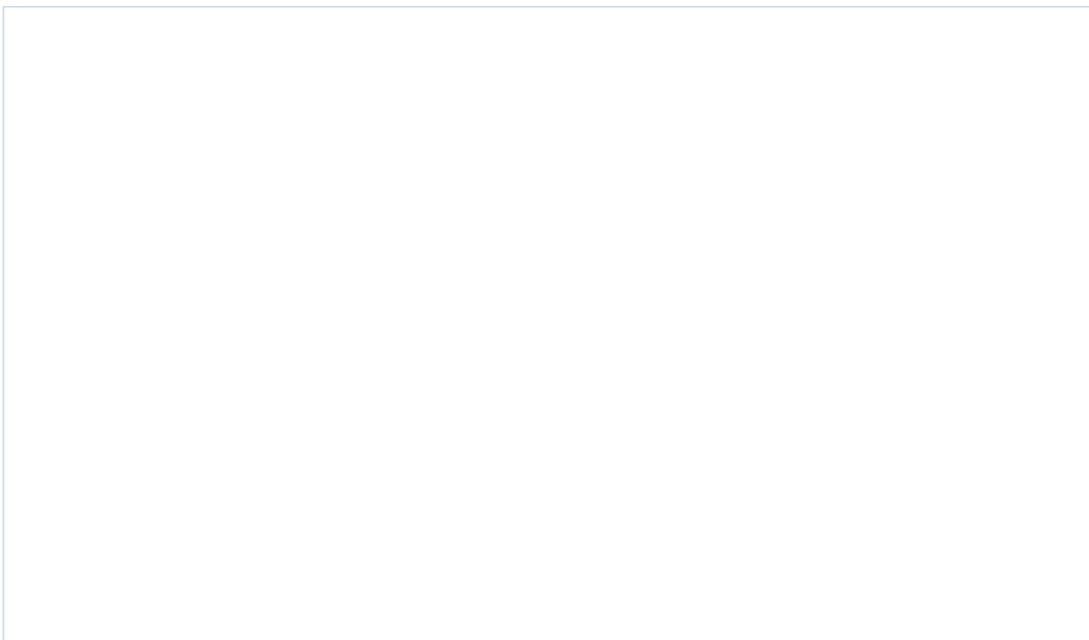○ Reflect on your leadership as a once-a-year task

Question 2

List three examples of how networking with other professionals can help you review feedback on your relationship management.

Question 3

List three ways managing workplace relationships could be improved.

Summary

- Seeking feedback on the management of workplace relationships is consistent with a continuous improvement process.
- Feedback can be sought in a variety of ways, including asking for informal feedback as part of everyday activities, observing staff, determining if relationships have improved, or collecting formal feedback such as through a performance appraisal or 360-degree survey.
- Interpersonal style has a significant impact on all aspects of leadership.
- Understanding your own interpersonal style and how it intersects with others is essential.
- Evaluating feedback can involve a number of processes that seek to synthesise and validate the information received.
- Reflection is an important part of the feedback process as it promotes introspection and objective evaluation.
- Discuss feedback with others to seek perspective and input that you may not have considered yourself.
- Networking allows you to discuss leadership issues with like-minded individuals.
- Changes to practice as a result of feedback may include modifying your style to meet the needs or cultural considerations of others.

Learning Checkpoint 3
Review management of workplace relationships

Part A

1. Draw a line to match each method of feedback to its example.

    » Observation

    » Advice from an expert

    » Informal feedback

    » Formal feedback

    » Reflection

    » Ask peers what they would do in a similar situation

    » Monitor team dynamics and the way people work and share ideas

    » Conduct an online staff survey

    » Keep notes in a journal

    » Refer to a counsellor or to human resources personnel

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

    a) Reflection and discussion with networks are valuable evaluation methods   » Yes   » No

    b) Reflection should happen immediately following feedback   » Yes   » No

    c) Networking allows you to discuss management styles and theory   » Yes   » No

    d) Evaluation of feedback should consider its validity   » Yes   » No

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Denise is the office manager in a large real estate agency. The office has recently had a high level of staff absence and Denise notices that this is impacting her team's performance. She is under pressure from the managing director of the agency to ensure that administrative tasks are not delayed. The absence of staff needed to perform the tasks is making Denise anxious and unsure of the security of her job.

Last week, two of her staff were arguing about who would work on Saturday morning. Denise spoke to them both using a sharp tone and embarrassed them in front of other staff and customers. She feels that her stress is affecting the way she interacts with others and this is further impacting staff absences.

1. List three ways Denise could seek feedback on how she managed the argument between staff members.

2. Which of the following statements are ways Denise can evaluate the feedback she receives? Tick all that apply.

   ○ Consider the positive aspects of the feedback

   ○ Examine the feedback provided by colleagues because they know her best

   ○ Think about the perspective or experience of the people who provided the feedback

   ○ Take note of suggestions for ways to modify her behaviour

   ○ Pay attention to subjective feedback as it is honest and comes from the heart

3. List four things Denise could do to improve her relationships with staff.