BSB 7.0

BSBLDR413

LEAD EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

Aspire Learning Resources

BSBLDR413

Lead effective workplace relationships

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1

Learning Resources

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All websites referred to in this unit were accessed and deemed appropriate at time of publication.

BSBLDR413 Lead effective workplace relationships, Release 1

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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBLDR413 Lead effective workplace relationships*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

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

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

Foundation skills

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

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	▪ Collects, analyses and evaluates textual information from a range of resources to inform improvement strategies
Oral Communication	▪ Selects or adjusts communication style to maintain effectiveness of interaction and build and maintain engagement consistent with organisational requirements
Initiative and enterprise	▪ Identifies and follows legislative and organisational requirements relevant to own role
Teamwork	▪ Selects and uses appropriate conventions and protocols when communicating with diverse stakeholders ▪ Adapts personal communication style to build trust and positive working relationships and to show respect for the opinions, values and particular needs of others ▪ Plays a lead role in situations requiring effective collaboration, demonstrating conflict resolution skills and ability to engage and motivate others
Planning and organising	▪ Plans and implements activities and processes to manage and review work performance ▪ Systematically gathers and analyses all relevant information to formulate and evaluate possible solutions to difficulties

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: Prepare to lead workplace relationships	1A Identify work team objectives	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B Collect and analyse information	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C Share work task information	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1D Develop strategies for work task completion	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2: Lead workplace relationships	2A Facilitate collaboration to complete work tasks	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B Support colleagues experiencing difficulties	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C Manage conflict	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2D Communicate work progress	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 3: Review leadership	3A Seek and analyse feedback on own relationship management performance	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B Evaluate performance and identify areas for improvement	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1 | Prepare to lead workplace relationships

1A Identify work team objectives

1B Collect and analyse information

1C Share work task information

1D Develop strategies for work task completion

1A Identify work team objectives

Managers must be aware of organisational strategies, so they can plan the objectives of their work teams.

As a manager, you first need to make sure you are familiar with your organisation's objectives, so you can clearly explain them to your team members. Effective managers ensure team members fully understand how individual efforts contribute to the team objective, and how that team objective fits into larger organisational strategies.

Identifying work team objectives

Workplace objectives need to be clear, so all employees know how to contribute towards achieving them.

If your objective is vague or unclear, it will be difficult for individuals to see how they can work together to achieve the outcome. Teams who align with objectives accomplish more than teams who do not. Having a clear team objective provides a baseline for individuals to collaborate together and identify how they each can continuously contribute towards the end outcome. A clearly identified team objective also reduces the likelihood of individual team members working towards their own personal goals that may contradict or hinder the team objective. It is important managers ensure each team member confirms understanding of the team objective.

The following table details features of team objectives and why they are critical.

Milestones	Successes can be recognised frequently and consistently. Achieving milestones builds a sense of ownership and accountability over work tasks.
Measurable results	Measurable results let team members know when the goal is achieved. Managers should set goals where results are tangible, realistic and achievable.
Individual roles	Every person in the team can explain the objective and update others on the progress.
Clear guidelines on how to complete objectives	Each individual should be clear on how they contribute to the team objective. A mutual accountability is when one person's success is everyone's success and members never put themselves ahead of the team.

Aligning team objectives to organisational strategy

Objectives need to support an organisation's long-term strategies.

Many employees do not fully understand their organisation's business strategies. Linking the team objective to the organisational strategy is critical for effective relationship management. An effective team needs to feel valued by the rest of the organisation, and see that achieving the team objective closely connects to the organisation's overall success. Being aware of how the team fits in with a larger vision helps maintain motivation if difficulties arise.

Additionally, understanding how the team's objective links with the organisation makes it easier to identify internal and external stakeholders, brings purpose and context to work tasks and helps limit scope.

Using organisational planning and operational documents helps link team objectives to organisational strategies and vision. Make sure team members know where these documents are stored. They may be kept in a hard-copy filing system, on the organisation's intranet or on the computer network.

Information is generally found in an organisation's:
• vision or mission statement • long-term strategies • code of best practice • business plans • risk management strategies • operational budgets • team workplans • annual reports • other operational documents, including reports on continuous improvement and quality assurance processes.

Example

What does misalignment look like?

Company misalignment means that the objectives of a workplan do not meet the organisation's objective and strategies. One symptom of company misalignment is that confusion and rumours flourish. People become confused as to where the organisation is going, what they should do and why. This often leads to gossip, and the sharing of opinions and information that can be distracting or even incorrect. Confusion and rumours are by products of a misaligned organisation.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

From the following list, tick the features of a business strategy that team objectives need to support. Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Measurable results
- ◯ Individual roles
- ◯ Clear guidelines on how to complete objectives
- ◯ Customer feedback
- ◯ Milestones

Question 2

Which of the following documents contain information about a business's strategies? Select yes or no for each one.

a) Risk management plan	» Yes	» No
b) Vision or mission statements	» Yes	» No
c) Sales figures	» Yes	» No
d) Code of practice	» Yes	» No
e) Business plans	» Yes	» No

1B Collect and analyse information

To be an effective manager, you need access to relevant and accurate information from internal and external sources in order to achieve work tasks.

The specific information you need to maximise your team's work performance will vary according to the industry and organisation you work in. The ability to research and critically evaluate information is an important part of a manager's leadership responsibilities.

What information is required and how to collect it

The information a manager needs is determined by what is available, any gaps in knowledge and the reliability of available information.

Understanding why you need particular information is critical to deciding where and how to best collect it. Missing this step can mean you waste time and effort, collecting information that may be irrelevant, unreliable, or missing critical components.

Before seeking out information, clarify the nature of the information you are looking for and decide what you will do with it. Write down your objectives to ensure you are focused on the required results. Be specific about your aims and ultimate goals.

Clear objectives help you decide what kind of information you need to gather and where to look for it. Start with readily available information by collating any existing material and assessing it for relevance. Material that is unreliable, inaccurate or out of date should be discarded (unless it might be of historical interest). You can then identify information gaps and work towards finding out what it is you need to know.

These concepts are illustrated below.

Be specific about aims and goals
The supervisor of a customer service centre has received complaints about call waiting times. In order to improve staff performance, the supervisor needs to find out about systems for monitoring response times. The aim of the supervisor's research is to assess the available options in call-monitoring technology; the ultimate goal is to improve service to customers. Similarly, when the government announces changes to industrial relations policy, the supervisor may need to do further research to determine what the changes are and how they affect the organisation.

Identify information gaps
Your goal may be to ascertain the impact of new WHS regulations. You might find that much of the material relates to draft codes rather than the final endorsed documents. You need to fill your information gap by obtaining copies of the official regulations, together with guidelines issued by reliable authorities.

Identifying internal information sources

Documents produced within the organisation can be reliable sources of important information.

Not all organisational information is documented in files. Key people within the organisation have information based on their own knowledge and experience and can point you towards other relevant information. Knowing who to approach for information helps you to understand work roles and responsibilities and to form relationships with others in the organisation. Be clear about the information you need and what the person can and cannot provide; define your information objectives.

There are a number of ways of obtaining information within your organisation. Some of the main sources are shown below.

Types of information
▪ policies and procedures ▪ planning documents ▪ marketing and customer-related data ▪ archival, filed and historical background data ▪ previous program evaluations ▪ individual and team performance data ▪ customer satisfaction ▪ meeting minutes ▪ reports

Internal information sources	
Paper-based files	You may refer to paper-based files containing correspondence, statistical data and historical material.
Electronic files	Electronic files, such as emails, financial systems and customer databases, are useful sources of information.
Online material	Online material, such as your organisation's intranet, may contain planning and organisational documents, policies and procedures, marketing data, news items, minutes of meetings, personnel records and short reports.
Internal reference libraries	Internal reference libraries or collections of reference manuals can be a valuable source of information. These might also include journals, magazines or catalogues.
Key people	Key people within the organisation will have information based on their own knowledge and experience.

Identifying external information sources

When required, managers may need to find sources of information from outside the business.

As well as accessing internal sources of information, you may also need to look for information from external sources. Some sources of information may not be specifically tailored to your business or industry and can be very general. They can still be useful, but you may need to sift through information to find what is relevant.

Types of information
Managers need to keep themselves informed of external issues and developments that affect decision-making and work performance. Information you may need to source externally includes: ▪ industry-related data and market intelligence ▪ legislative and regulatory changes that impact on organisational policy and procedures ▪ work health and safety requirements ▪ developments in equipment and technology ▪ news items, feature articles and general information relevant to the organisation's operations.

Sources of information
Sources of external information include: ▪ government departments and agencies ▪ industry or professional associations, unions and employer bodies ▪ public libraries ▪ literature available from customers, suppliers, competitors and other organisations ▪ professional subscriptions ▪ your contact network ▪ the internet ▪ professional social media such as LinkedIn groups.

Methods for collecting information

Choosing the correct collection method is vital to acquiring relevant information.

Organisations have many different ways to collect information. You will need to consider time and budget concerns when collecting information. This may include paying for extra staff to complete tasks, or the cost of an online tracking service. You will also need to look at the type of information needed (qualitative or quantitative, primary or secondary) and whether the collection method is suitable.

Some methods of acquiring information are detailed below.

Methods of acquiring information include:
▪ reading reports, articles and other news items ▪ analysing catalogues, price lists and statistics ▪ questionnaires, surveys ▪ interviews ▪ observing and listening ▪ reviewing and sampling new products or services ▪ online tracking using 'bots' – software robots programmed to perform data collection tasks ▪ transactional data tracking ▪ online marketing analytics ▪ social media monitoring ▪ subscription and registration data ▪ in-store traffic monitoring.

The first thing you need to decide is what you hope to accomplish using your data and the type of information you want to collect – this will help you choose the methods of collection.

Advantages and disadvantages of some information collection methods are outlined below.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Quantitative information</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">

Quantitative information is numerical data.
Methods to gather quantitative information collect the 'what' information and use methods such as surveys, questionnaires and databases.

</td><td>Advantages are that they are more economic to implement than qualitative methods, and data can be easily compared.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Disadvantages are that they are limited in their capacity to reveal explanations or the 'why' aspect of information needed.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Qualitative information</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">

Qualitative information is non-numerical data.
Qualitative data is mostly non-numerical and descriptive in nature. Often data captures the 'why' and 'how' of information needs and includes feelings, emotions or subjective perceptions.
Methods include surveys, interviews, observations and focus groups.

</td><td>Advantages include that rich information can be gathered to inform further exploration of topics.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Disadvantages are that they are frequently time consuming and expensive to implement, and findings can generally only be attributed to participants.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Primary information</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">

Primary data is data that is collected by team members themselves, rather than data that has been collected by another party.
It is information obtained directly from the source – customers, community members, stakeholders, students, clients and other businesses.
Methods to gather primary information are experiments, surveys, questionnaires, interviews and observations.

</td><td>Advantages of using primary data include that data is specific to your needs, there is no doubt of authenticity and quality of the data and if required, it may be possible to obtain additional data.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Disadvantages include it is costly and time consuming to collect.</td></tr>
</table>

Secondary information	
• Secondary information is data already collected through primary sources. • It is information obtained by common sources such as governments, researchers, journalists, authors and automated data collection such customer enquiries at online shopping websites. • Methods to gather secondary information include 'bots', radio, books, multi-media, internet-enabled devices and libraries.	Advantages in using secondary information include that it is more economical, time saving, can help make primary data collection more targeted and helps improve understanding of the problem. Disadvantages include that it is seldom an exact fit for your purpose, accuracy is not assured, and it may be outdated.

Example

Listen to customers' concerns

Jarryd is responsible for organising the fitness programs at a local swimming centre. Clients often make comments to him and other staff members about things that could be improved around the centre.

He decides to introduce a suggestion box and wants to make sure clients know he is taking this strategy seriously. He prepares feedback forms, attaches a pen on a string to a bench where clients can write their comments and provides a locked box.

Jarryd empties the box regularly, takes note of the suggestions and displays on a noticeboard both the suggestions and whether or not the suggestions will be acted on, according to the decisions made by the centre management. If ideas are not followed up, he gives reasons for this.

This all helps centre clients know their comments are being taken seriously and Jarryd is making an effort to address them.

Analysing information

Analysing information allows you to determine what information is useful for your work role, and what is irrelevant.

Once you've collected the data it is time to analyse it, and to work out what the data is telling you. The advantages of collecting information are many. However, the benefits cannot be accessed without proper analytic tools and processes. These allow you to work out how best to use the information to inform the achievement of work tasks.

There are many ways to make sense of your data and it really depends on what you want to know. You might need statistics such as averages and maximum values, or you may require patterns like trends and correlations.

Here are five questions that help inform how you can analyse your information.

Can it be grouped?	Are there logical groupings such as themes, days of the week, ages, dates or drivers?
Can it be split?	If at first it is not obvious what the data is saying, perhaps it can be split or cut for more precise information. For example, if you are looking for trends of uptake and there are no obvious insights, you could enquire about returns of products.
Can it be converted to rates?	Rates can show trends that absolute numbers conceal. Rates are ratios between two related quantities in different units, such as rate of completion for enrolled students. (Completion rates are the percentage of students who finish a program they enrolled in.)
Can it be charted?	Information is only useful if it can be relayed effectively. A visual representation might be an ideal way to analyse data. It can also reveal any cracks in the data very quickly.
Is it related?	Given two sets of data, are they related? If so, what is the strength and nature of that relationship? It is important to understand the correlation between two sets of data.

Analysing the validity of the information

Information that is valid means that it comes from a reliable source and can be used to complete tasks within your role.

There are a number of elements you should consider when determining whether information is valid, as shown below.

Source
▪ Check where the information came from, who created it and whether the source is reliable and widely accepted in the industry. ▪ Always check and verify information sources, particularly when dealing with material on the internet. Before using or reproducing any material, you must check whether there are any copyright restrictions and follow any legal procedures for reproducing material.
Currency
Be wary of relying on information that may be out of date. ▪ Check that the information you use matches the time period of any work being undertaken or examined.
Relevance
▪ Check that the information relates directly to your information needs.

Presentation
▪ Look at how the information is presented. If it has a lot of errors or is poorly organised, you need to be careful about relying on its content.
Authenticity
▪ Make judgments about whether the information is accurate and authentic. Has it been prepared by someone with a biased viewpoint on the subject? Is it promotional material? Can the claims be substantiated? ▪ You may want to check with others who are more experienced in the subject as to whether the material you have obtained is credible.
Acceptability
▪ Some organisations have policies regarding what information is acceptable or unacceptable. ▪ Always follow your organisation's policies and procedures when collecting and using information for work purposes.

Technologies that help data analytics

Advancements in technology means useful information can be stored and transferred more easily.

The evolution of 'big data' (everything from digital data to health DNA data) will bring change to the way we run business. Making the most of big data reduces cost, enables faster and better decision-making and can lead to more useful new products and services. The biggest obstacles to adoption of technologies relate to resistance or lack of understanding.

A brief explanation of some technologies and their uses is listed below.

Machine learning	Text trains a machine how to learn, making it possible to quickly and automatically produce models that can analyse bigger, more complex data and deliver faster, more accurate results – even on a very large scale.
Data management	Text data needs to be high quality and well-governed before it can be reliably analysed. With data constantly flowing in and out of an organisation, technologies can establish repeatable processes to build and maintain standards for data quality.

Data mining	Text data mining technology helps you examine large amounts of data to discover patterns in the data. This information can be used for further analysis to help answer complex business questions. Data mining software sifts through data, pinpoints what is relevant, uses that information to assess likely outcomes, and then accelerates the pace of making informed decisions.
Predictive analytics	Text predictive analytics hardware and software deploys predictive scenarios by processing big data. Such data can help companies be prepared for 'what if' situations and help solve problems by analysing and understanding them.

Reviewing the material for information gaps

Even useful information can have gaps; you need to search other sources to fill in these knowledge gaps.

You need to review your material for information gaps. You may need to seek information from a different source to obtain a more balanced viewpoint. You might also need to gather further facts or ask for clarification from someone whose opinion you trust. The way you assemble information can highlight information gaps. For example, if you are collecting information Australia-wide, you could separate your results into state and territory categories. This might highlight an information gap.

Practise thinking critically about any information you receive and how it can be assembled in the most useful way. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Are we sure?
- How do we know we are sure?
- Are we missing perspective?

Your aim should be to effectively evaluate the material, extract the key facts, make sound decisions and keep organised records that enable you to verify your decision and refer back if the need arises.

Example

Improve knowledge of your customers

Data analytics provides insights into your customers, allowing you to tailor customer services to their needs, provide more personalisation and build stronger customer relationships.

Your data can reveal information about your customers' communications preferences, their interests, their concerns and more. Having a central location for this data also ensures that your whole customer service team, as well as your sales and marketing teams, are on the same page.

One valuable type of data is information about customer behaviours. This refers to data about specific actions that a user takes. They might, for instance, click on an ad, make a purchase, comment on a news article or like a social media post.

You might find, through data analytics, that people between the ages of 18 and 35 are the most likely to purchase your product. You might also find that people who are married make up most of your website's audience. By targeting multiple characteristics, you can create more specific content that attracts audiences who are highly likely to convert to sales or increase brand awareness.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Which of the following can be useful internal sources of information?
Select yes or no for each one.

a) Electronic files such as emails	» Yes	» No
b) Paper based statistical data	» Yes	» No
c) Organisational documents stored on the intranet	» Yes	» No
d) Internal reference manuals	» Yes	» No
e) Government legislation	» Yes	» No

Question 2

Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow to effectively gather and analyse information.

- ◯ Analyse the validity of the information.
- ◯ Review the material for information gaps.
- ◯ Understand your information objectives.
- ◯ Identify information sources – external and internal.
- ◯ Apply appropriate methods to collect information.
- ◯ Assemble the information appropriately.

1C Share work task information

The sharing of information and ideas is a key driver of productivity and healthy working relationships.

Effective managers consider what techniques are available and best used for communicating work task information with diverse cultural and social audiences. They recognise that engaged employees feel that relevant information is shared with them and they are included in any discussions that help a business become more productive.

Identifying the purpose, audience and method of communication

Effective communicators identify the purpose of communication, the appropriate audience and how to best communicate with that audience.

The first rule of communication is to identify the audience and its needs. Your audience could include:

- your staff members
- your supervisor or senior management
- colleagues within the organisation
- people in other divisions of the organisation
- existing clients or suppliers,
- potential customers
- the general public
- specific target groups such as a focus group or priority customers.

The most appropriate communication method and content can vary significantly between these groups.

The following provides some points to consider when deciding on the purpose, audience and method of conveying your information.

<table>
<tr><td>Purpose
What do you want your audience to change?</td><td colspan="2">Inform
Persuade
Inspire
Instruct
Calm
Provide clarity
Seek information
Call to action</td></tr>
<tr><td>Audience</td><td colspan="2">Who?
What do they already know?
What language? Cultural environment?
What are their interests? What is on their minds?
Many? One?
What do they have in common? Where do they differ?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Method
Understanding your purpose will help to decide on the method</td><td>Written?
Oral?
Face-to-face?
Digital media?
Computerised?
Signage?
Mixed?</td><td>How fast does the message need to get out?
What is the level of formality?
What are the budget considerations?
How do you best relate to your audience?
How complex is the message?</td></tr>
</table>

Read through these workplace examples. Pay particular attention to the communication methods used in each scenario, as they speak directly to the intended audience and purpose.

Production figures
Audience: senior management, board of directors Purpose: to meet reporting requirements Method: written report including spreadsheets and comments; verbal report at meeting
Company history, products and services, policies, personnel
Audience: new staff Purpose: to induct new staff members Method: face-to-face contact; folio of information; group presentation, online induction

Details of new work requirements
Audience: team members **Purpose:** to inform and train **Method:** memo; emails; group meeting, digital presentation
Warning about workplace safety
Audience: staff members and visitors to premises **Purpose:** to encourage safe workplace practices **Method:** notices; emails; discussion at team meeting, signs
Promotion of product features and prices
Audience: new and existing customers **Purpose:** to generate sales **Method:** brochures; new web page; marketing letters
Performance review
Audience: team members **Purpose:** performance management **Method:** written notes; face-to-face discussion; negotiation; proformas
Customer service charters from other companies
Audience: team members and colleagues **Purpose:** to compare customer service and make improvements **Method:** circulation of material; invitation for comment; group meeting
Customer feedback
Audience: team members and management **Purpose:** to plan for quality improvements **Method:** preparation of summary report; brainstorming session
Budget constraints
Audience: team members **Purpose:** to introduce cost-cutting measures **Method:** consultation; memo; emails

Techniques for conveying communication

Multiple communication techniques may be necessary to get your message across and to allow for discussion and feedback.

Many important messages are missed by assuming everyone reads their email; sometimes a meeting is more appropriate.

Communication involves more than speaking and writing. It includes opportunities for two-way interaction, listening, exchanging ideas, consultation and negotiation, as well as nonverbal communication. In some cases, you may simply want to convey a decision that has been made. In other cases, it is helpful to invite input from team members or others in examining the implications of decisions or involving them in the process to ensure they are committed to the outcomes.

Your choice of communication technique will largely depend on the characteristics of your purpose, audience and audience's needs.

There are advantages and disadvantages with some communication techniques, as shown here.

Verbal – individual **Examples: face-to-face contact; telephone conversation**	
Advantages: ▪ Clear message ▪ Direct and instant ▪ Provides opportunity for interaction	Disadvantages: ▪ Inconsistency of message across similar exchanges ▪ Message may be misunderstood if communication skills are poor ▪ Time consuming
Verbal – group **Examples: meeting; discussion group**	
Advantages: ▪ Sends consistent message ▪ Provides opportunity for questioning and sharing ▪ Provides chance for agreed approach	Disadvantages: ▪ Time consuming ▪ Can be hard to organise ▪ Different personality types can dominate or withdraw
Written – electronic **Examples: emails; intranet posting**	
Advantages: ▪ Quick and efficient ▪ Sends consistent message ▪ Visually effective	Disadvantages: ▪ Cannot be sure message is read ▪ Message may be misinterpreted

Written – open **Examples: display notice; instruction sheet; system documentation; report; minutes; newsletter**	
Advantages: ▪ Sends consistent message ▪ Provides a record ▪ Reaches a wide audience	Disadvantages: ▪ No opportunity for response ▪ Impersonal ▪ Cannot be sure message is read ▪ Production time and costs involved
Written – targeted **Examples: memo; letter**	
Advantages: ▪ Can be carefully worded ▪ Direct ▪ Allows for confidentiality ▪ Clear record	Disadvantages: ▪ Formal and impersonal ▪ Does not encourage discussion
Presentation – face-to-face **Examples: exhibition; public address**	
Advantages: ▪ Visual as well as verbal ▪ Captures interest	Disadvantages: ▪ One-way communication only ▪ Not always correctly interpreted ▪ No clear record ▪ Uncertain whether message is accepted by all parties
Presentation – online facilitated **Example: webinars**	
Advantages: ▪ Saves costs on travel ▪ Ability to record, save and disseminate ▪ Anonymous participation is possible ▪ No limit on number of participants ▪ Visually effective ▪ Can reach remote audience	Disadvantages: ▪ Technical problems ▪ Requires high-speed internet for sender and receiver ▪ Requires technical know-how for sender and receiver ▪ Interaction is limited ▪ Time frame is binding ▪ Participants can be easily distracted

Effective verbal communication

Effective verbal communication requires planning of what needs to be discussed as well as clear expression.

Sometimes you need to pass on information face-to-face, by telephone or in a presentation to a group. As with writing, the golden rule for effective verbal communication is planning. Be clear about what you want to say and why you want to say it. This will help ensure your message effectively conveys the information you want to cover, and you do not waste valuable time getting to the point.

A helpful strategy is to prepare some key points beforehand – particularly when addressing more than one person. Sort out the information you want to present, divide it into logical sections and make it as clear and specific as you can. Be sure of your material and give examples where appropriate. Strive for confidence in your delivery.

Below are some hints you can implement to ensure effective verbal communication.

Hints for effective verbal communication
▪ Relate your message to your audience members, their needs and their point of view. ▪ Customise your message to the listener's normal communication style, listening skills and familiarity with the subject at hand. ▪ If you over-explain or talk down to your audience, they may resent your approach and feel disrespected. ▪ If you speak aggressively or in language people cannot understand they may retreat, ignore you or feel confused. ▪ Your tone of voice is important. It needs to engage those around you and maintain their interest. ▪ Effective speakers learn to recognise their listeners' reactions and adjust their delivery accordingly. ▪ Always give your audience a chance to ask questions.

When training staff or issuing instructions, ensure your message is clearly conveyed and fully understood. Prepare instructional material using plain English, and use short words, sentences and paragraphs with consistent terminology. Make sure all necessary information is provided. Use diagrams or photographs where appropriate.

Many people need more than verbal messages to understand instructions. You can use pictures, symbols and diagrams as well as demonstration and role play to cater to the needs of all your audience members.

You must be certain that employees understand important work instructions. However, they may be reluctant or unable to indicate when they are unsure, particularly if there are language barriers. Seek feedback by questioning and practical demonstrations or testing. Make sure they understand the basics first, before moving on to something more complex.

A misunderstood message or instruction can result in lost productivity and may put someone's safety at risk or adversely affect workplace relationships.

Identifying 'relevant' stakeholders

Stakeholders are groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist. Relevant stakeholders need to be identified when sharing information.

One of the most important considerations managers need to make is accurately identifying relevant stakeholders. Stakeholders can be external or internal to the organisation.

Internal Stakeholders
▪ Employees ▪ Manager ▪ Owners ▪ Shareholders ▪ Board members ▪ Volunteers ▪ Work experience students
External Stakeholders
▪ Suppliers ▪ Society ▪ Government ▪ Creditors ▪ Customers ▪ Trade unions ▪ Professional associations ▪ Competitors ▪ Special interest communities ▪ Media

Questions to identify relevant stakeholders for information sharing
▪ Who has an impact on the team's objectives? ▪ Who is impacted by the team's objectives? ▪ Who needs to stay in the loop? ▪ What role does each stakeholder play in regard to this information? ▪ What level of engagement do they represent? – High interest/high power → fully engage – High power/low interest → keep satisfied – Low power/high interest → keep informed – Low power/low interest → minimum effort

Example

A manager neglects to pass on vital information

A factory manager has received notification that a disused power station adjacent to his workplace contains asbestos. He decides not to inform his staff, thinking that it is unlikely they will go near the area and the news might cause them undue alarm.

Some weeks later, a distress call comes from a passer-by who says that a young man has fallen over inside the power station and is badly injured. Two factory employees go to the scene to help before emergency service personnel arrive. Only later do they learn of the asbestos risk in the building.

The two employees' long-term health is jeopardised and the manager faces legal action over his failure to adequately protect his staff. The trust between employees and management has also been put at risk.

Confidentiality, timing and distribution

Be aware of confidentiality concerns or privacy issues for both internal and external stakeholders when reviewing or handling information.

Some information needs to be viewed as commercially or politically sensitive. The ability to treat certain matters with discretion is one of the traits of a successful manager. You may be entrusted with confidential or highly sensitive information.

There is more information about confidentiality and distribution of information below.

Privacy standards
Refer to your workplace policies and procedures if you are unsure about how to handle particular information, or ask your supervisor. You must comply with all Commonwealth, state or territory privacy legislation that governs the use of personal and client information. To read more about privacy standards, visit the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. www.oaic.gov.au.
Releasing information
You need to make judgments about when to release certain information, taking into account its possible impact on employee morale and productivity, and the potential for leaks to the external marketplace. Timing may also have implications for how you decide to distribute the information.
Open communication
Some managers decide not to share information and ideas with their colleagues, or they may release information on a need-to-know basis. Once considered a shrewd approach, keeping information secret is not consistent with current management thinking, which supports open communication, transparency, accountability and staff development.
Disseminating information
The way you disseminate information depends on the type of information. For example, a change of government policy that does not affect staff members individually may simply require a memo, notice or announcement at a staff meeting. Alternatively, you may need to organise an information or training session to inform team members of a new health and safety requirement.

Considering diverse audiences

It is important to understand diversity so that messages are inclusive, understood, and well received.

To successfully establish and nurture positive workplace relationships, you need to recognise diversity and the special needs of those around you and respond to these by communicating appropriately and sensitively on a day-to-day basis.

Diversity consists of all different factors that make up an individual including age, gender, culture, religion, personality, social status and sexual orientation.

Recognising diversity means respecting human individuality. There is much to be gained by accepting individual differences. You can learn and benefit from each other's skills, experiences, ideas and attitudes, and find new ways of working, solving problems, dealing with others and negotiating. These are valuable skills in any workplace. Diversity in the workplace helps increase the competitiveness and market relevance of your organisation within an increasingly diverse community and global economy.

Therefore, it is crucial to consider how you communicate with diverse audiences. You should demonstrate integrity, respect, empathy and cultural sensitivity in all of your communications.

Effective communication means that a message is both delivered clearly and interpreted correctly by the receiver. Such differences can present considerable challenges for a manager.

Differences for communication receivers include:
▪ age ▪ belief and value systems, including religion and politics ▪ culture, including ethnicity and language ▪ social factors such as personality, lifestyle and sexual orientation ▪ work experience ▪ lived experience ▪ educational background ▪ literacy standard ▪ gender ▪ physical and mental abilities.

Language differences in Australian workplaces

Workplace communication should be adapted so that employees who are not proficient in English can also understand.

In 2016, there were over 300 separately identified languages spoken in Australian homes. More than one-fifth (21 per cent) of Australians spoke a language other than English at home. In certain areas or workforce sectors, the percentage is much higher.

An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey in 2012 found that over 13 million Australians aged 15–74 have poor literacy skills and can be expected to experience difficulty using many of the printed materials they encounter in everyday life. The survey also found that foreign-language immigrants in Australia have lower levels of literacy proficiency than native-born and native-language Australians.

Be aware of the English language comprehension levels of the audience you are communicating with and adjust your method of delivery accordingly. Remember that a person may be able to speak English clearly but not be able to read complex documents or understand terminology. Some people need time to examine the language used or to have someone translate it for them.

Below are some tips for accommodating language differences.

Accommodating language differences
▪ Check that the information you want to convey has been fully understood. ▪ Make sure the recipient has the opportunity to ask questions, express concerns or consult an interpreter if necessary. ▪ If you are preparing a message for several recipients, write a draft and have a typical audience member read it to check that your meaning is clear. ▪ Written messages are sometimes inadequate or inappropriate. You may need to call rather than email a message to someone who does not read English well. ▪ When speaking with someone for whom English is a second language, speak clearly and slowly and do not shout. Remember that strong accents do not necessarily mean poor English skills. ▪ Be careful using slang or idioms. Many everyday expressions do not have a literal meaning and can be confusing to a person unfamiliar with colloquial English. ▪ Avoid abbreviations, even common ones like ASAP, and terms like 'uni' and 'this arvo' unless you are sure the people you are talking to understand.

Cultural and social diversity

Australian workplaces are made up of workers from a wide range of backgrounds. Workplace communication should reflect and embrace this diversity.

Cultural diversity relates to a person's country of birth, their ancestry, their parents' country of birth, what languages they speak, whether they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, their religious affiliation and lived experience. The 2016 Census shows that of the 6,163,667 overseas-born persons, nearly one in five (18 per cent) had arrived since the start of 2012.

Social diversity recognises different life experiences, competences, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual orientation, ability and gender. What some people think of as 'normal' communication may be quite different and even offensive to other cultural and social groups. Here are some examples.

Cultural nuances	▪ How body language is interpreted depends on cultural nuances; for example, shaking your head may mean 'no' to you, but in Turkey it means 'I do not understand'. ▪ In some cultures it is not accepted practice to look someone in the eye when conversing, and people often have different ideas about personal space and how close someone should stand to them during a discussion.

Discomfort	▪ Be alert to the way a person interacts with you and to any signs of discomfort. Take note of any major differences within your workplace or circle of contacts. Understand any cultural sensitivities attached to the subject you are communicating. ▪ Consider the person's feelings and if you accidentally cause offence, be prepared to apologise.
Social groups	▪ Your workplace may include people from a range of social groups, as determined by their socioeconomic background, gender, sexuality, beliefs or way of life. Avoid creating 'us' and 'them' divisions in your organisation by catering for differences in all your communication. ▪ Work to eliminate hostile environments and avenues for any form of harassment.
Show respect	▪ Respect each person as an individual and try not to make assumptions when you communicate with them. ▪ Avoid prejudice and stereotyping – these are always unhelpful, whether they relate to gender, age, race, physical appearance or any other form of diversity.

Disability and special needs

Communicating with people with disabilities in the workplace needs to be guided by the principle of mutual respect.

The term 'disability' refers to conditions that interfere with the usual way of doing things. This can include physical, psychiatric and intellectual disabilities or impairment, whether permanent or temporary.

When communicating in the workplace, you must present information to people with disabilities in an appropriate format. This may include:

- providing assistive technology or electronic communication devices for people who have no speech or speech that is difficult to understand
- peripherals such as switches, joysticks and mice for people who have physical impairments that make it difficult to press keys on devices
- external speakers for those with hearing impairments
- software applications for handwriting alternatives
- mobility aids to ensure inclusive face-to-face access.

In the case of intellectual disability, you may need to cater for a person's ability to comprehend and process information that is presented to them or even to understand the consequences of their own actions.

Below are some tips for communicating with a person with a disability. Above all, speak to a person with a disability as you would speak to anyone else – with respect.

Tips for communicating with a person with a disability
▪ Get to know your team members and those you deal with regularly and ask them about their requirements and preferences. ▪ Speak to a person with a disability as you would speak to anyone else. Speak in an age-appropriate tone and treat adults as adults. ▪ Put the person first, not their disability. For example, use the term 'a person with disability' rather than 'a disabled person'. ▪ avoid negative phrases such as 'suffers from' and 'crippled'. Use the phrase 'people who use a wheelchair' rather than 'wheelchair bound'. ▪ Do not make the person's disability the focus of discussion unless they raise the issue, or it is relevant. ▪ Never assume that a person with a physical disability is intellectually deficient. ▪ Speak to the person you are addressing, not their interpreter, carer or other person. ▪ Be wary of patronising a person by extending sympathy or assuming their disability is a major problem. ▪ Check the confidentiality status of the disability, taking into account the person's privacy rights and any safety concerns. Always check first with the person concerned.

Non-discriminatory language

Workplace communication cannot stigmatise people from a certain background.

Using non-discriminatory and inclusive language in workplace communication means that what you say includes everyone regardless of their gender, status, race or ability. For example, 'parental leave' describes entitlements to both maternity and paternity leave.

Exclusive language leaves people out. This discriminatory language is often subtle; for example, assuming a manager of a business is male rather than female by always addressing letters to 'Sir' when the receiver's gender is unknown.

Here are some tips for avoiding discriminatory language.

Tips for avoiding discriminatory language
▪ Revise wording to avoid gender reference; for example, 'Staff members should sign time sheets' rather than 'The staff member should sign his time sheet'. ▪ Try not to use broad categories. Terms such as 'the blind' and 'Asians' exclude the possibility of differences within these groups. ▪ Do not place undue emphasis on differences; for example, avoid phrasing like 'male nurse' or 'We recruited four engineers, including one Hungarian'. ▪ Avoid expressions that treat people unevenly, such as 'men and girls' – use 'men and women'. ▪ Never use language that denigrates or stereotypes people. Discriminatory pranks or comments are not acceptable, even in jest.

Example

Communicating information to a diverse 'client' base

The director of an early childhood education and care service has just received information relating to the recent changes in government regulations affecting funding and the childcare subsidy. She needs to communicate these changes to her permanent staff, as well as to the parents and carers of all the children currently enrolled at the centre.

To ensure this information is communicated, received and understood by the culturally and socially diverse target audience, the director sets out to do the following:

- write an email to parents and staff with links to relevant government websites
- produce a notice for the bulletin board for parents and staff walking into the building
- update the centre's social media accounts to ensure that this information is clearly conveyed on each platform
- communicate this information verbally to all staff so that they can relay it to parents and carers at pick-up or drop-off.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Which of the following are requirements when communicating with external and internal stakeholders? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ protecting privacy information of all stakeholders
- ◯ keeping relevant stakeholders informed
- ◯ assuming they get the correct information
- ◯ demonstrating an understanding of the role of the stakeholder
- ◯ letting the stakeholder know how their actions support the workplace objectives

Question 2

Which of the following communication techniques support social and cultural diversity in the workplace? Select yes or no for each one.

a) Using body language that is not threatening or demeaning	» Yes	» No
b) Using visual signs when appropriate for colleagues with less than proficient English skills	» Yes	» No
c) Talking in a measured and clear tone to customers and colleagues who have cognitive disabilities	» Yes	» No
d) Using language that is inclusive of all cultural groups	» Yes	» No
e) Telling offensive jokes to boost workplace morale	» Yes	» No

1D Develop strategies for work task completion

Successful managers develop well-planned strategies to ensure there is effective collaboration between staff.

Effective leaders develop strategies to achieve a team's work objectives through collaboration. This also builds team cohesiveness. Leaders will know and work within legislative and organisational requirements. Building a collaborative culture and identifying influences that hinder the achievement of outcomes will improve work outcomes.

Collaborating with team members

Providing all employees with a chance to collaborate on teamwork strategies can generate effective ideas and practices and enhance engagement.

Collaboration is about maintaining open two-way communication. It is a process whereby employees communicate freely with their employers on matters that impact their job roles. Collaboration provides a forum for employees not only to state their views and opinions, but to have the confidence that their views are taken seriously.

Managers who communicate effectively set aside their managerial perspective while carrying on consultations with their team, thereby encouraging everyone to contribute on the same level.

Below are some of the benefits of effective collaboration.

Benefits of effective collaboration
▪ Managers can make use of a wide range of knowledge and ideas to factor into their decision-making. ▪ Employees have more ownership of (and commitment to) decisions, in the knowledge that their input and contributions are valued. ▪ There is more sustained motivation. ▪ There is less absenteeism. ▪ Lower stress levels are experienced in the workplace. ▪ It may result in improved individual performance. ▪ Collaboration facilitates greater information and resource sharing. ▪ It encourages more feedback-seeking behaviour. ▪ The organisation develops a culture of trust that supports vulnerability, openness and authenticity. ▪ Overall organisational performance is likely to be enhanced. ▪ Employees develop/increase trust in their management. ▪ Job satisfaction and employee motivation are likely to be increased.

Collaborating on work plans

It is important to prepare attendees for collaborative planning sessions, to make sure everyone knows why they and others are attending, and to improve engagement during the session.

Collaborative team planning sessions bring team members together with a clear goal to develop a plan that is understood and owned by all. Preparing attendees will improve engagement. This can be accomplished by:

- ensuring that everyone is aware of exactly why they are attending
- ensuring each person knows the type of contribution they are expected to make
- preparing people by detailing why you have invited external stakeholders.

Collaborative planning sessions should include the following:
▪ a defined goal ▪ an agenda or program outline ▪ a logical structure ▪ a set of ground rules or a behaviour contract governing how the dialogue will be conducted ▪ a facilitator who can control the flow ▪ a designated scribe to take notes and summarise the outcomes ▪ access to expert knowledge when needed ▪ a start and end time.

Developing a work plan to achieve tasks

Having a plan for work tasks that is collaboratively developed helps improve productivity and equality of work.

Managers need to continuously develop work plans in collaboration with team members to ensure the organisation's goals are met. Team plans are also referred to as 'operational plans', 'game plans' or 'work plans'.

Team plans apply to shorter reporting periods or segments, such as a week, month or quarter, which makes it easier to evaluate progress and determine if the team is on track with the organisation's longer-term organisational strategy.

A plan is required for your work team to:	Team work plans include:
▪ set out the required performance levels ▪ explain how these performance levels will be achieved ▪ provide guidance and direction for team members ▪ measure progress towards the desired performance levels.	▪ overall objective and intended outcomes ▪ actions/tasks ▪ alignment to the organisation's strategic priorities ▪ roles/responsibilities – who does what ▪ budget expenditure ▪ time lines and milestones ▪ contingencies ▪ risks and opportunities.

Workplace factors that impact the completion of tasks

All workplaces must evaluate their inner workings and determine if they help or hinder collaborative practices.

Why do workplace failures happen? It can be for a number of reasons.

- **Poor relationships:** Even the best-structured groups can suffer if you have two or more team members who do not get along. You can mitigate this problem by limiting their interaction and designing group standards for meetings and communication. Some people will never get along – this is fine as long as everyone conducts themselves like professionals.
- **A bad team history:** If these people had a negative experience working together in the past, it is best to determine the reason as quickly as possible. Ask the hard questions early on to find out the issue. Repeating history will not yield a positive outcome.

- **Forcing collaboration:** People can resent forced collaboration when they are not given clear evidence as to the benefits. Collaborations that come together naturally are often best because everyone understands what everyone else is bringing to the table.
- **Little transparency or inadequate information sharing:** When you have team members whose work depends on that of other team members, they need to share their progress, concerns, and barriers. In order to stimulate this sharing, you need to develop trust among your members. Transparency goes a long way toward accomplishing trust.
- **Conflicting styles of decision making:** People process information differently. Some people process information quickly and are able to respond with an answer right away. Some people need to process away from the group and think slowly through all the options. Styles of decision making can differ significantly and cause eruptions of frustration.
- **Behind-the-scenes conversations and processes:** Conversations and processes that cut others out undermine the trust and confidence of your team. When you communicate outside the agreed-upon group settings or make decisions outside the group processes, it puts your project at risk.
- **Competition:** Competition is the opposite of collaboration. The spirit of competition requires people to withhold information, work ahead of others when they are capable, and actively try to exploit the weakness in their competitors. Competition within a team meant to be collaborative is inappropriate unless structured very carefully.
- **Poor ownership or engagement among team members:** One main principle of developing a collaborative group is that you develop buy-in from the team. This includes buy-in concerning the process, direction, and expected outcomes. If your team is not engaged, they will not be able to identify problems as they arise and will miss valuable opportunities.
- **Unequal share of workload:** Workload will vary at any given time across any given role. The art is to monitor it regularly and create an environment where team members assist each other during peak times. Create a culture where there is no stigma to ask for help and team members are rewarded for helping each other.

WHS legislation

Workplace collaboration must comply with workplace health and safety legislation.

Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) legislation is designed to protect the health, safety and welfare of all people at work. Keeping up to date with this information is essential. Your organisation has a responsibility to keep you informed of updates and changes that may impact the way you do your work.

Some relevant organisations that are important for WHS legislation information include the following:

- Comcare The Australian Government agency Comcare is the national authority on work health and safety, and workers' compensation. Comcare works in partnership with employees and employers to reduce the human and financial costs of workplace injuries and disease in the Commonwealth jurisdiction. The Comcare scheme provides rehabilitation and workers' compensation and occupational health and safety arrangements for Australian Government employees and for the employees of organisations which self-insure under the scheme.
- Safe Work Australia Safe Work Australia is the national policy body responsible for maintaining the model WHS laws. These 'model laws' are a single set of Work, Health and Safety laws they developed for implementation across Australia.

Safe Work Australia do not enforce or regulate WHS laws or workers compensation schemes. The model WHS laws do not apply in a jurisdiction (such as a state or territory) unless the jurisdiction has separately taken action to implement the model WHS laws as their own. Therefore, it is important to review regulations at a state or territory level as well as a national one.

State and territory regulators and websites are:

- SafeWork NSW: aspirelr.link/safework-nsw
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland: aspirelr.link/worksafe-qld
- WorkSafe Victoria: aspirelr.link/worksafe-vic
- WorkSafe ACT: aspirelr.link/worksafe-act
- SafeWork SA: aspirelr.link/safework-sa
- NT WorkSafe: aspirelr.link/worksafe-nt
- WorkSafe WA: aspirelr.link/worksafe-wa
- WorkSafe Tasmania: aspirelr.link/worksafe-tas

Equal employment opportunity

When collaborating to complete a work task, the organisation must follow equal opportunity laws and standards.

In Australia, national, state and territory laws cover equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination in the workplace. Managers must understand their rights and responsibilities under human rights and anti-discrimination law. Everyone is entitled to have equal opportunity when it comes to access to jobs, benefits and associated services within the workplace. Equal employment opportunity is aimed at ensuring that job recruitment, career progression and dismissals are merit based and are not biased.

Equal employment opportunity legislation is designed to ensure that:
▪ fair practices are in place in every workplace ▪ the best person is recruited and/or promoted when there is a position vacant and skilled staff are retained ▪ workplace management decisions are fair to all employees ▪ training and development needs address customer and employee requirements ▪ the workplace is free of harassment, discrimination and bullying ▪ social and cultural differences between staff are recognised and respected.

It is unlawful to disadvantage employees and job seekers in any way because of their:

- race
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- physical or mental disability
- marital status
- family or carer's responsibilities
- pregnancy
- religion
- political opinion.

Fair work legislation governs employee/employer relationships in Australia. It provides a safety net of minimum entitlements, enables flexible working arrangements and fairness at work and prevents discrimination against employees. The Fair Work Ombudsman utilises The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) and *Fair Work Regulations 2009* (Cth) is the main legislative instrument to enact this work. Recent amendments have included:

- *Protection of vulnerable workers 2017*
- *Corrupting benefits 2017*
- *Family and domestic violence leave 2018.*

Anti-discrimination legislation

An organisation or its employees cannot discriminate against others when working collaboratively to complete work tasks.

Organisations within Australia must comply with a variety of Commonwealth Government Acts and national standards. National anti-discrimination legislation has a number of aspects as is shown below.

Age discrimination	*Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth) This Act protects people from being discriminated against because of their age, and states that regardless of age, everyone has the same right to equality before the law. The Act also allows appropriate benefits to be given to people of a certain age, particularly younger and older people, according to their circumstances. Objectives of the Act also include removing barriers to older people participating in society and changing negative stereotypes about older people. Exemptions include stipulations regarding youth wages, health care and voluntary work.

Disability	*Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) This Act gives a broad definition of disability and prohibits direct or indirect discrimination based on disability. It also prohibits discrimination against people associated with people who have disabilities; these may be friends, relatives, carers and co-workers. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate in the areas of: ▪ employment ▪ education ▪ access to public premises ▪ purchase of house and land ▪ provision of goods, services and facilities ▪ administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs. Exemptions to the Act include when a potential employer would be placed under unjustifiable hardship in order to employ a person with a disability, although the employer is expected to make reasonable adjustments. An example of an unjustifiable hardship might be the cost of renovations to allow for wheelchair access to a second-floor studio owned by a small business.
Racial discrimination	*Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) This Act prohibits racial discrimination and offensive behaviour based on racial hatred. It covers discrimination based on race, colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin. It also protects those who may be discriminated against based on their association with people of a particular ethnicity. The Act applies to everyone in Australia and all organisations. *The Racial Hatred Act 1995* (Cth) amended the Racial Discrimination Act and provides an avenue for people to complain about racist behaviour that offends, insults, humiliates or intimidates others in public. Exceptions to the law include when the behaviour is a matter of public interest (such as a newspaper report on racially based violence) or is part of an academic discussion that is not malicious or spiteful. These exceptions often involve rights to free speech.

Sex discrimination	*Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) This Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone based on their sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy. It sets out laws against sexual harassment as well as dismissal from work based on family duties, including pregnancy. According to the Act, it is unlawful to refuse to provide goods or services, education or employment based on a person's sex. The Act also covers discrimination within awards and enterprise bargaining; insurance and superannuation; Commonwealth laws and programs; and, accommodation. Sexual harassment is included in the Act because it is a form of discrimination to treat a person unfairly because of their sex. An exception to the Act includes when goods or services can only be applied to one sex; for example, female-specific or male-specific health care. Another exception is employing a person to look after a child in the child's home. Sexual discrimination in the training and ordination of priests, ministers of religion or members of a religious order is also not covered under the Act.
Human rights	*Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth) The Australian Human Rights Commission was established in 1986 to deal with breaches of anti-discrimination laws and to promote human rights education. This Act only covers actions or policies of the Commonwealth. The Act promotes human rights for all people and covers most forms of discrimination not already covered in the other Acts, including discrimination on the basis of: ▪ criminal record ▪ marital status ▪ medical record ▪ political opinion ▪ religion ▪ sexual preference ▪ social origin ▪ trade union activity.

Privacy	*Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) If your organisation collects information about customers or clients, its operations come under the auspices of this Act. The Act deems personal information about individuals to be sensitive, such as information about: ▪ criminal record ▪ health ▪ membership of a professional or trade association ▪ membership of a trade union ▪ political affiliation or opinion ▪ racial or ethnic origin ▪ religious affiliation or belief ▪ sexual orientation or practices. This information about a person could be used by others to discriminate against them or to identify them. Your organisation should inform you of your responsibilities regarding your customers' privacy. It should also inform you of its responsibilities with regard to your privacy. It is always advisable to consider any information provided to you about any individual confidential. People generally have a right to see and correct, if necessary, files of personal information kept about them by organisations. Individuals are usually only denied access to files about them if their own or another person's safety is at risk, or if there are other legalities involved.

Organisational policies and procedures

Organisations establish policies and procedures about working collaboratively, so that all employees know what is expected and can work within set requirements.

Organisational policies and procedures cover a wide range of subjects, such as employment conditions, work health and safety, technical processes, code of conduct, privacy and confidentiality, bullying, communication procedures, performance reviews and security arrangements.

Team members must be aware of the organisation's policies and procedures so they can consistently work within the organisation's requirements and help both the team and the organisation operate smoothly, as illustrated below.

Following procedure
A team member may need to: write a letter or a report; prepare a brief business case; help you prepare a contract; apply for sick leave; make travel arrangements; or, request training. Because these tasks must be carried out within the organisation's policies and standards, team members should fully understand the required procedure and the reason for a consistent approach. Teams function more effectively when they are not wasting time redoing work or constantly asking how to do something.
Induction
Managers need to induct new employees into the organisation by clearly explaining organisation policies and procedures, clarifying issues new employees are unsure of and explaining why this information is important. You may give new staff members a folder of relevant material, such as the policies and procedures manual. You should also make sure they are aware of where they can access the information – on the organisation's intranet, in the library or filing system, in their manager's office or on a noticeboard.
New policies
There will be times when you need to bring the team together to explain a new policy or process that has just been introduced. You need to refresh people's memories if you notice team members are following procedures incorrectly, such as filing documents in the wrong electronic file.

Example

A team is reminded of the Work Health and Safety (WHS) policy

As a newly appointed frontline manager, Nick notices that a number of his team members have recently started to complain of tired eyes and sore backs. The team is halfway through a complex project with tight deadlines and Nick realises that unless he does something, their productivity could suffer.

Nick gets the team members together to discuss the situation. He reminds them of the organisation's WHS policy, which includes guidelines for taking regular breaks. He assures them that taking breaks will enhance their productivity levels. He also assures them that management expects them to take such breaks.

The team members agree to do the short physical exercises that are displayed on charts posted around the office. They appreciate that Nick is looking out for them.

'It's easy to forget these things when you're so busy,' commented one of the team members.

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Which of the following are benefits of developing strategies collaboratively?
Select yes or no for each one.

a) There are lower rates of employee absenteeism.	» Yes	» No
b) Overall organisational performance is likely to be enhanced.	» Yes	» No
c) Collaboration increases stress in the workplace.	» Yes	» No
d) Managers can make use of a wider range of knowledge and ideas to factor into their decision-making.	» Yes	» No
e) Employees lose trust in their management.	» Yes	» No

Question 2

Draw a line to match each legislative and organisational requirement to its impact on working collaboratively.

» Induction	» Employees working collaboratively must do so safely.
» Privacy Act	» Those participating in collaborative practices must follow organisational expectations.
» WHS legislation	» When working collaboratively, employees must not give out private information.
» Code of Conduct	» New employees are given a briefing about how collaborative practices are implemented.

Question 3

Which of the following elements would you include in a team work plan? There are three correct answers. Tick those that apply.

- ◯ Organisational and team objectives
- ◯ Roles and responsibilities
- ◯ Types of customer complaints
- ◯ Health and safety policies and procedures
- ◯ WHS and other types of hazards and risks

Summary

- Maintaining effective workplace relationships begins with adopting a systematic way to identify objectives for the work team so that organisational objectives are met.
- An effective team requires access to relevant and accurate information from internal and external sources in order to achieve work tasks. Reflect on what information is needed, who has it, where it is and how it can be collected.
- Managers that lead effective workplace relationships consider using different information-sharing techniques to optimise reaching a diverse range of stakeholder audiences.
- Methods used to convey information after it has been gathered and interpreted depend on the nature, purpose and audience of the information and may include face-to-face, written or verbal methods of communication.
- Multiple communication techniques may be necessary to get your message across and to allow for discussion and feedback and may include presentations, webinars, social media and letters. Your choice of communication technique will largely depend on the characteristics of your purpose, audience and audience's needs.
- Stakeholders are groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist. The needs of relevant stakeholders need to be considered when sharing information.
- Managers will consider confidentiality, timing and diverse audiences when designing and developing communication content and methods to share information.
- Diversity consist of all different factors that make up an individual including age, gender, culture, religion, personality, social status and sexual orientation. It is important to understand diversity so that messages are understood, well received and inclusive.

Learning Checkpoint 1

Prepare to lead workplace relationships

Part A

1. Which of the following are examples of workplace objectives that would form part of an organisation's strategy? Tick all that apply.

   - ◯ The organisation wants to increase employee engagement.
   - ◯ The organisation wants its workforce to be appropriately trained.
   - ◯ Customers feel their needs have been met by the organisation.
   - ◯ A culture of respect and inclusivity is created at the workplace.
   - ◯ All employees get to leave one hour early on Friday afternoon.

2. Which of the following legislative or organisational requirements do you have to follow in your role? Select yes or no for each one.

a) Comply with WHS legislation	» Yes	» No
b) Do not exhibit bullying or discriminative behaviour	» Yes	» No
c) Complete anything your manager asks you to do regardless of the time it takes or conditions you have to work in	» Yes	» No
d) Abide by Code of Conduct expectations	» Yes	» No
e) Sign induction documents indicating you understand your role and expectations	» Yes	» No

3. Draw a line to match each example about communicating with stakeholders to its definition.

» Any person from within the organisation with an interest in the business	» Method of communication
» To seek clarification from another manager about task expectations	» Audience for your communication
» Face-to-face meetings, emails, posters	» Purpose of communication
» Any person from outside the organisation with an interest in the business	» Internal stakeholder
» Managers, team leaders and supervisors	» External stakeholder

4. List three communication strategies that will support cultural and social inclusion.

5. Which of the following are collaborative strategies that help the completion of work tasks? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ All employees should work in separate workstations at all times.
- ◯ Employees work in conditions that are set up for productive social interaction.
- ◯ Employees within teams have clear, achievable goals.
- ◯ Employees follow inclusive language rules for working teams.
- ◯ Managers form collaborative teams that work well together.

Part B

Case study

Read and analyse the following information from BizOps.

Document 1: Business plan objectives

Over the coming year, BizOps will consolidate its position in the market as a lead retailer of sustainable, high-quality products. It will expand its reach and presence across Australia and into parts of Asia.

To do this, BizOps will focus on the following business goals.

- Financial stability:
  - increase revenue by 15 per cent (compared to the previous 12 months) by the end of the financial year
  - maintain annual profit levels of 15 per cent of revenue for all products and services, calculated at the end of each financial year
  - reinvest 75 per cent of profit back into the business at the end of each financial year.
- Market position:
  - maintain the number one rating in the annual national industry customer service awards
  - launch new high-quality exclusive consumer products to meet customer demand ahead of competitors, within budget and by the agreed deadlines
  - increase reach across Australia and into Asia with enhanced online presence and expansion of home shopping TV channels in Australia and parts of Asia.
- The right people:
  - provide induction training at the commencement of employment to train new employees to be knowledgeable, helpful and enthusiastic
  - provide the physical, human and time resources to support an annual professional development program for all BizOps employees
  - ensure BizOps has the capacity and capability across all its operations to accommodate the aggressive marketing strategy over the coming year.

Document 2: Mission statement

BizOps is committed to:

- providing high-quality and innovative products and services to customers
- meeting the changing needs of customers
- offering innovative product solutions
- delivering speedy and personalised service
- employing professional and enthusiastic staff
- providing clean and environmentally friendly products and services
- adopting sustainable work practices
- undertaking continuous improvement processes.

BizOps is known for its enthusiastic and inclusive culture. BizOps seeks to maintain professional and well-supported staff.

1. List two ways a manager can access these documents.

2. Which of the following are possible strategies to workplace matters identified in the documents? Select yes or no for each one.

a) New employees are provided appropriate training.	» Yes	» No
b) Employees comply with sustainability practices.	» Yes	» No
c) BizOps should maintain the status quo and avoid changing operations.	» Yes	» No
d) BizOps should launch high quality products ahead of competitors.	» Yes	» No
e) Employees deliver personalised service.	» Yes	» No

Topic 2 | Lead workplace relationships

2A Facilitate collaboration to complete work tasks

2B Support colleagues experiencing difficulties

2C Manage conflict

2D Communicate work progress

2A Facilitate collaboration to complete work tasks

Successful managers use a variety of techniques to facilitate collaboration within a work team.

An effective manager will recognise that tasks are completed to a higher standard when the skills and experience of all workers are utilised.

Facilitating collaboration

Collaboration is a skill which can be learnt and mastered. As a leader it is your responsibility to develop a climate where collaboration can thrive.

Below is a list of strategies you can use to facilitate collaboration within your work team. As a manager, the skill is in determining which of these strategies will be effective depending on the circumstances. For example, empowering team members can be effective, but it relies on those team members having the skills and ability to handle increased responsibility.

A shared goal
Provide a convincing reason to be part of the team objective. Clear and compelling causes encourage team members to be motivated.
Clear expectations
Regularly clarify everyone's responsibilities and accountabilities.
Flat hierarchy
This keeps competition as well as egos in check. This is especially important in organisations such as government and professions where pay scales are public. Groups that collaborate should be on an even playing field.
Empowered team members
Build a culture of learning and allow for 'failures'. Stay curious. Help your group realise viewpoints outside of its own. Be able to say, 'I don't know'. Allow team leadership roles to vary. Leadership should be based upon the work and the particular need. Leadership will emerge naturally and shift as work evolves. Encourage the development of soft skills. Concentrate on practising and identifying these skills during debates, problem-solving, negotiating and helping others. Focus on strengths.

Cohesion between team members
Work to overcome silos. Regularly look back to see achievements and talk about problems that the team has solved together. Set and celebrate team milestones. Operate on agreed-upon principles. develop a charter. Define and emphasise what it is to trust each other.
Foster innovation
Bring people together to solve problems. More heads are better than one. Encourage diverse perspectives and invite a diverse body of knowledge. Diverse cultural and social backgrounds foster creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. Institute a 'no-bad-ideas' approach to problem-solving.
Be reliable
At all times, keep your word. This is essential in dealings with customers and other stakeholders, as well as with your own staff. Do not make promises or undertake tasks that you are unable to act on. If you do make a promise that you find you are unable to keep, let those affected know and explain why.
Recognise individual effort
Set and celebrate individual milestones. For employees to be motivated to give their best, they need to know their efforts will be recognised and rewarded. Regularly thanking them demonstrates your awareness. You can use verbal affirmations or a handwritten note.
Model the behaviour you want to see
Show your team members your expectations. Model the integrity you want your team to follow, and hold yourself and your team accountable. Take a stand when necessary, and rely on others. Make visible executives actively collaborating. Admit errors and mistakes and do not be afraid to say, 'I don't know'.
Dissolve structural barriers
It is often organisational processes that hinder projects. Take a critical look at processes and identify bottlenecks early on and open up channels of communication with internal and external stakeholders. Identify and work to overcome process inconsistencies.
Invite healthy debate
An effective team encounters conflict. Do not be afraid of discussing the 'elephant in the room' or addressing potential conflicts. Healthy discourse can only benefit your project. Conflicts or disagreements pertaining to task-related discussions can be treated as a normal occurrence and the team members do not harbour any animosity towards one another once the team meeting ends. Conduct can always remain professional and communication respectful. However, too much disagreement is not healthy. Agree on a process to resolve issues constructively.
Open communication
Open communication is when all team members feel empowered to express their thoughts. Employees trust they do matter in the bigger picture and receive information as to why decisions are made.

Giving feedback

Feedback is necessary to reinforce productive behaviours or correct negative work habits.

Effectively giving and receiving feedback within teams builds team cohesion. People who cannot give or seek feedback run the risk of working in an information vacuum, isolating their colleagues and not improving. This includes team members and managers alike.

Here are some characteristics of effective feedback.

Timeliness and clarity	Feedback must be both timely and clear. If too much time elapses between raising an issue and making a decision, people may feel the issues are not being addressed, and become sceptical and less committed to the consultation process. Use the STAR method. Situation – Describe the situation Task – What performance/behaviour is/was expected? Action – How did the performance happen or fall short of expectations? Result – The outcome or impact of the action
Appropriate communication method	Choose an appropriate communication method. Give feedback in person whenever you can. A written message helps you set out all the facts, acts as a permanent record and can follow up face-to-face discussions. Choose an appropriate place – one that is not overly conspicuous. Never give negative feedback in public. Allow time so that you are not rushed.
Feedback to all relevant people	Feedback needs to be given to all the people involved, as well as to other relevant personnel. For example, in the case of a WHS complaint or suggestion, the person involved should be told the outcome. The WHS officer also needs to be informed and the outcome should be documented and filed.
Being courteous	Thank people regularly even for the 'small stuff'. Be specific about what it is you feel thankful for so as to not leave any doubt of what performance is valued.
Fairness and openness	Provide balanced feedback – recognise positive performance as well as negatives. Sandwich the feedback: Commend, Recommend, Commend. Have an open mind. There may be new information that comes to your attention as you discuss the feedback.
Prepared feedback	Prepared feedback will be clear, include examples, and can articulate behavioural changes needed or specific performance that is positive.

Allow for recipient preparation	Confirm with the other person a suitable time and place and identify what you are hoping as an outcome of the meeting.
Follow up	Record the discussion using workplace proformas and provide a draft for reflection.

Considering interpersonal styles when facilitating collaboration within your team

All employees have different personalities, and collaboration should suit and cater to these differences.

There are several models that typecast interpersonal styles. The essential message of personality typecasting is that one person's way of interacting with others is not the ONLY way and is not necessarily better or worse than other ways. People come with a variety of personalities which, when combined haphazardly into work teams, may or may not work well together.

The strengths of all interpersonal styles should be recognised and accepted by all, so that people can work together effectively. Failure to accept that others think differently and work in a variety of ways is a recipe for team malfunction and disorganisation; at worst, it can also compromise the health and wellbeing of team members.

In the section below, we will learn about different types of interpersonal styles. This is not so we can typecast members of our own team, but so we can understand how different people interact with each other, which can help us to appreciate the diversity that exists within our own teams.

Interpersonal styles

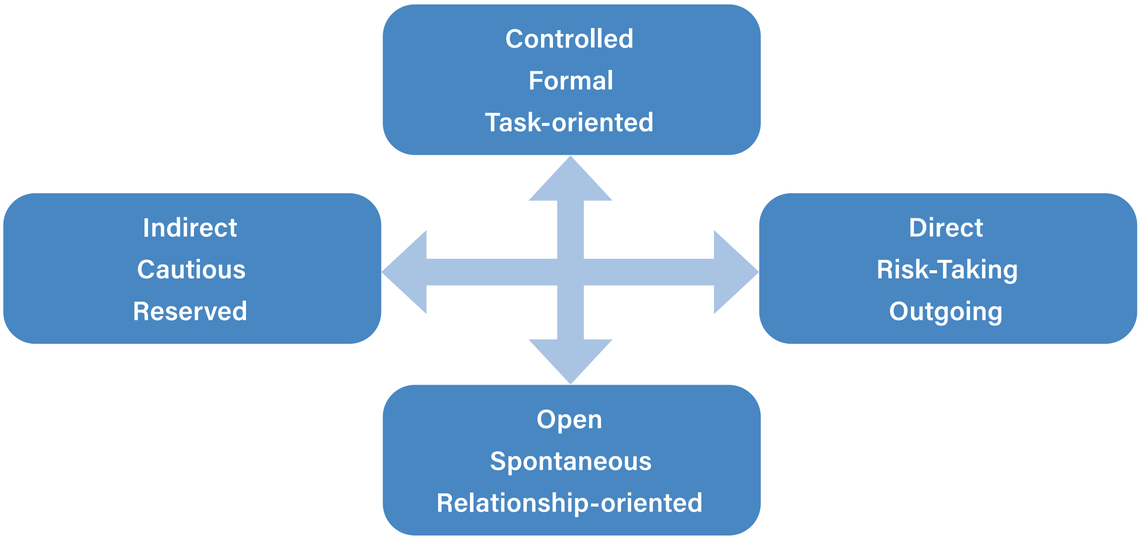
Interpersonal styles explain how people think and respond to different people and situations.

A common group of interpersonal styles include the Director, the Expressive, the Relater, and the Thinker. The styles are first influenced by whether the person is Controlled or Open in their responsiveness; that is:

- how much information they will reveal
- whether or not they will share their feelings and emotions
- how much information they reveal through nonverbal cues.

Secondly, the styles are influenced by how Direct or Indirect a person is. For example:

- how assertive the person is
- whether they ask questions or give orders
- whether they are reserved or risk-taking.



Directors
Directors are controlled in their responsiveness (verbal and nonverbal) and are direct in their approach to people and activities.
Action excites them. Their greatest asset is they out-accomplish anybody. Their greatest failing is they do not like weakness.
Strengths: determination, confidence, candidness, decisiveness, efficient, assertive, bold, firm
To work better with Director-style people:
Agree in advance on specific goals and provide freedom to work within these limits. An unproductive deadlock can occur when there is too much dominance and no allowance for independence and individuality.

Expressive
Expressives are open in their responsiveness and outgoing in their approach with people and activities.
Brainstorming ideas excites them. Their greatest asset is they are fun to be around. Their greatest failing is being unpredictable.
Strengths: enthusiastic, imaginative, spontaneous, persuasive, stimulating, dramatic, fun-loving and embraces change
To work better with Expressive-style people:
Be more open about yourself, feelings, gossip and opinions. Relax time constraints within structure; provide incentives. Provide public recognition for accomplishments (let them win in front of others).

Relaters (or Stabilisers)
Relaters are open in their responsiveness and reserved in their dealings with others and in social situations. Productive enjoyable routines excite them. Their greatest asset is they are easy to be around. Their greatest failing is being too indirect or cautious. Strengths: supportive cooperative, diplomatic, loyal, patient, agreeable, attentive, good listener To work better with Relater-style people: Show concern for them and their families, interests, etc. Slow down and provide details and specifics about how to accomplish objectives. Support efforts and accomplishment with personal attention.
Thinkers (or Analysers)
Thinkers are controlled in their responsiveness and cautious in their dealing with people and tasks. Rationality and logic excites them. Their greatest asset is producing high-quality results. Their greatest failing is over analysing. Strengths: exacting, systematic, logical, serious, thorough, methodical, planning, accurate To work better with Thinker-style people: ▪ Bring them detailed facts and logic in writing. ▪ Be patient while they evaluate and check the accuracy of the data. ▪ Help them to reach conclusions by encouraging them to set deadlines after you have provided time for review.

Developing interpersonal skills

Regardless of your interpersonal style, interpersonal skills can be learnt.

Irrespective of your industry or job title, interpersonal skills are important because they help foster strong working relationships that contribute to team productivity. Good interpersonal skills can also help create an overall positive work environment.

You can develop your interpersonal skills by using the following strategies.

Exercise self-awareness
Be conscious of what you are feeling and why. When you are aware of your feelings you can be cognisant of the messages you convey to others whether verbally or non-verbally.
Learn nonverbal communication
Be conscious of the nonverbal messages you are sending and be aware of others. Some forms of nonverbal communication include: ▪ eye contact ▪ facial expressions ▪ body language ▪ gestures ▪ physical contact.

Show empathy and understanding
This shows you take account of how others think and feel, and recognise their needs. You can improve being empathetic by actively listening and asking questions, treating others as you would like to be treated and trying to put yourself in others' situations.
Engage in active listening
Approach each conversation like you have something to learn — because, in reality, you likely will find yourself doing just that. Reassure people they have been heard.
Be receptive to feedback
Feedback is necessary for professional growth. Recognise that feedback can be positive or negative and is given with intent to correct, evaluate and help you improve. Feedback that is given with judgement is more geared towards criticism.

Communicating with cultural and social sensitivity

Managers need to communicate respectfully with a diverse workforce made up of people who have various backgrounds, genders and sexual identities.

As a manager, you should treat people with integrity, respect and empathy in order to develop collaborative effective relationships within your work team. People who are treated empathetically tend to respond with loyalty and enthusiasm, have high levels of job satisfaction and self-esteem, and display strong commitment to achieving mutual work objectives. On the other hand, if people are treated insensitively, they may become resentful, unmotivated, negative, cynical and self-protective and work to undermine the team's objectives and your leadership.

One of the biggest challenges you can have in respecting others is when you encounter people whose beliefs and lifestyles are very different to your own, including people who do not treat you with respect. How we treat and communicate with others is a reflection of our own values. Reflect on your value beliefs of cultural and social diversity. Are they dynamics to be celebrated rather than simply tolerated? Are you curious and open to learn more about others' way of seeing things and experiencing things?

<table>
<tr><th>Reflect on your values and unconscious biases</th><th>Make attempts to overcome language barriers</th></tr>
<tr><td>

- Think about perceptions before granting favours.
- Undergo unconscious bias training – usually a three-step process whereby you take a pre-test to assess a baseline, complete an unconscious bias training task and take a post-test.
- Get training for global citizenship.
- Learn why culturally literate employees create better work.

</td><td>

- Avoid colloquialism, or explain with humour.
- Obtain assistance if needed.
- Promote 'plain' English documents.
- Stick to the point and use short sentences.

</td></tr>
<tr><th>Address cross cultural misunderstandings</th><th>Improve diversity in your team</th></tr>
<tr><td>

- Identify issues.
- Talk about issues with a willingness to learn.
- Celebrate traditional holidays, festivals and food.
- Pay attention to differences in culture.
- Revisit the code of conduct, customer service charter and other policies.

</td><td>

- Actively seek to include members with diverse cultures and social backgrounds to your team.
- Seek input from others.

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Encouraging others to contribute

Some employees may need strategies in place that motivate them to contribute.

When encouraging others to contribute, you need to be clear about the purpose of the consultation, provide evidence of work practices matching communication policy, and demonstrate a commitment to following up and giving feedback.

Here are a number of ways you can encourage others to contribute to your team's work.

Open communication	Open communication enables all team members to express ideas to one another. Keep communication open with other work teams, departments and sites across the organisation through regular meetings and a commitment to mutual cooperation.
External parties	Consult with external parties such as union representatives, health and safety officers, legal advisers and auditors to seek expert advice and input.
Views of others	Take into account the views of others – including clients, suppliers and contractors – through surveys, questionnaires or meetings.

Suggestion box	Introduce an organisation-wide suggestion box and encourage all employees to contribute.
Key stakeholders	Keep in touch with the local community and key stakeholders through: newsletters; interactive web pages; a comments register that allows people to raise concerns; relevant documents for discussion; meetings or focus groups; public events such as expositions or community days; and working in partnership with community groups through sponsorships and other cooperative projects.

Consultation processes

Consultations are useful when they are held within a systematic process.

Consultation can occur with internal and external stakeholders. Various processes are available for managers. The purpose of consultation is to:

- invite stakeholders to provide advice on their expectations, needs and wants
- invite stakeholders to comment on plans and projects conducted by the organisation.

If an organisation neglects the consultation process, they fail to take advantage of all available knowledge and expertise. They also risk people feeling excluded and disengaged. This could create negativity towards an emerging workplan.

Common consultation processes include:

- open meetings → stakeholders are invited to come to an open meeting
- surveys → stakeholders complete an online or paper survey
- focus groups → a cross-section of stakeholders is invited to attend a meeting or series of meetings intended to focus on a particular issue
- invitation to send a written response → stakeholders are invited to submit comments in writing on a proposal, discussion paper or draft strategy
- informal meetings → managers may mingle with people at an event to hear ideas or learn about emerging technology.

Common forms of consultation

The type of consultation process used will depend on the issues being discussed, the urgency of the situation and the type of audience involved.

Consultation usually takes on two forms:

- consultation on specific developments, projects, ventures
- ongoing consultation to track and monitor stakeholder perceptions within the broader operation environment.

Effective processes will focus on open and honest communication, sharing of views, two-way feedback and accurate recording of the process.

The table below shows some commonly used methods of stakeholder consultation.

Attribute	Survey	Focus groups and individual meetings	Public meetings
Quality/depth of feedback		✓	
Speed of execution	✓		
Level of engagement with stakeholder		✓	
Relationship building		✓	✓
Opportunity for idea-sharing, consensus-building		✓	✓
Ability to show something, e.g. plans, branding		✓	✓
Measurement of attitudes	✓		✓
Cost	✓		✓

Example

A company invites customers to give feedback on its products

The advertising catalogue for clothing chain Rivers Australia states: 'You write, we read'.

'Every piece of feedback we get is emailed to all of the directors of the company as well as the executives and people that are affected by the feedback. For example, all feedback regarding product quality issues is read by our factory manager and all product ideas are read by our range builders and product managers.

'The catalogue explains how customer feedback is treated and gives examples of how feedback has led to improvements in the product range. A selection of comments – both positive and negative – is regularly included in the sales catalogue.'

(Reproduced with permission of Rivers Australia: www.rivers.com.au)

Seeking out external networks

Managers can seek the expertise of people outside the business to improve professional relationship management performance.

Managers should rarely work in isolation. They need to seek out and consider contributions from both internal and external sources in facilitating a collaborative approach to completing work tasks. For example, a production department manager may be unsure about the direction to take with an underperforming employee from a specific cultural background. The manager can identify some practical ways to manage the issue by talking to people in their external network. This may include speaking with a manager from another organisation who deals regularly with a similar situation.

Benefits of using networks and contributions from outside your organisation
• Gain input into issues from the point of view and experience of others • Develop mutually beneficial relationships with other professionals that can boost confidence and support • Greater access to knowledge and information that has proven to be effective in real business situations • Avoid spending money to hire a professional consultant to resolve an issue • Reduce costs and improve the smooth running of the organisation • Gain new suggestions from contractors, consultants and advisers about workplace issues • Increased opportunities to collaborate with others, leading to new skills, knowledge and experience.

Building professional networks

A network is a web of like-minded people who share information and empower each other to be better in their field.

Networking is a key ingredient in building and maintaining interpersonal and professional working relationships. Getting to know new people in your industry is an essential part of working effectively as a professional in the business services sector.

By developing and nurturing a strong network of personal contacts, you can become more effective in your organisation and help your career to progress to the next level.

A quality network of business professionals will usually include these four elements.

Diversity
The more varied the people within your networks in terms of background, skills, experience and interests, the better. Include people from within and outside your organisation.
Quality
Network with people who are highly influential, skilled, knowledgeable and experienced. Spend time developing relationships with people who have more experience than you.
Size
The larger the network the more support you have available to you. Emphasise developing networks outside of your organisation.
Union
Networks with strong ties increase the members' willingness to support each other. Communicate regularly, build mutual trust and respect and concentrate your efforts on the people you may need to call on the most.

Maintaining professional networks

Like any social or personal relationship, business network relationships need ongoing attention in order to develop and grow.

Networking means investing time to get know one another, helping each other when problems arise, exchanging information and sharing experiences. A business relationship is not a one-way street – in other words, they have to be mutually beneficial in order to survive.

While it is important that you receive value from your network relationships, you will also need to provide input to others so your network contacts have a reason to maintain the relationship with you.

As a business relationship grows and matures, you will get to know the people within your connections – their communication style, the amount of time they like to invest in networking, their interests and needs. Over time, as mutual needs and interests are discovered, you will become more competent at meeting these needs. As a result, your communication should become clearer and more specific to the needs of others.

You will find that you begin to do things for each other, without much pre-planning or formal agreement. This is a characteristic of an effective network group.

To maintain quality relationships with your business networks, you will need to regularly invest in the following actions:

- investing of time to get to know one another, time to share information, time to share experiences and even time for a few jokes
- planning events and meetings to engage with new and existing networks
- attendance at networking events, conferences and virtual meetings
- monitoring contact movements and achievements
- proactively maintaining contact with and engaging networks
- promoting the achievements and benefits of your contacts to others
- being consistent with your ethics, respect and integrity
- showing key attributes including teamwork, sharing of information and collaboration.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

Which of the following are characteristics of a collaborative workplace environment? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Work objectives are clearly communicated to a diverse group of employees.
- ◯ Internal people are consulted with, as are externals as part of your network.
- ◯ Employees feel empowered as their opinions are respected.
- ◯ Firm rules are put in place to ensure the manager's opinion is the most important.
- ◯ Interpersonal styles are considered by the manager when communicating with others.

Question 2

List two principles a manager should follow when providing feedback about collaborative practices.

Question 3

Draw a line to match each term regarding consultation processes to its definition.

» Invitation to send a written response	» Stakeholders are invited to come to an open meeting.
» Surveys	» A cross-section of stakeholders is invited to attend a meeting or series of meetings intended to focus on a particular issue.
» Open meetings	» Stakeholders are invited to submit comments in writing on a proposal, discussion paper or draft strategy.
» Focus groups	» Stakeholders complete an online or paper survey.

Question 4

List three ways you can maintain effective relationships with your business networks?

2B Support colleagues experiencing difficulties

Effective managers need to know how to lead colleagues experiencing difficulties when fulfilling work requirements.

Managers need to understand common difficulties employees face in fulfilling work requirements. This enables them to implement effective ways to help members develop skills to address these challenges.

Managing underperformance requires a transparent and fair approach to help team members achieve work objectives, while still maintaining trusting and effective relationships.

Identifying difficulties in fulfilling work requirements

Recognising problems early and building team capacity to solve problems are critical for leaders that want to support their team through difficulties.

To ensure the team functions as a cohesive unit, as leader you will need to ensure that issues, concerns and problems are recognised and addressed early. If you are unable to resolve these issues, you will need to follow an appropriate escalation process and refer the matter on.

Team issues can be identified through constant reporting of work outcomes, such as: productivity; sales; service and quality reports; observation of work tasks and behaviours; and gathering feedback from key people (such as team members and clients) about the work being performed by your team.

You will need to work with your team to identify and analyse any problems hindering productivity and quality and establish a fitting resolution to bring the team back on target.

Work requirements that team members may have difficulties with are:

- quality standards
- deadlines
- budget constrictions
- workload
- working collaboratively
- working with other people including clients, colleagues and managers.

Underlying reasons for work issues

People spend nearly one third of their adult lives at work, and workplace issues are a common challenge for many.

Colleagues having difficulty in fulfilling work requirements may be experiencing a number of challenges.

This table illustrates the common challenges faced by team members and the measures leaders can take to support their team.

Quantity of work	Mental health issues
High workload, poor time management, lost time and preventable accidents will impact quantity of work. The employee could be showing signs of apathy and laziness or does not appear to understand job requirements or directions. → Listen to concerns and set realistic timelines that are mutually agreed upon. Focus on interest in work tasks and how they may improve.	Safe Work Australia reports that work-related mental health conditions are a major concern in Australian workplaces impacting individual employees and costs associated with long periods away from work. Mental health can be adversely affected by high job demand, poor support, low role clarity, remote or isolated work and poor organisational justice. → Early intervention is best. Identify risk factors and provide appropriate support.
Inappropriate interpersonal relations	**Attitudes with hierarchy and bureaucracy**
Unresolved conflict reduces morale. Difficult clients impact morale and performance. Aggressive/passive communication styles, intolerance, destructive humour and inappropriate conduct reduce team cohesion and productivity. → Have an empathetic ear and work through new solutions together.	Struggling with systems and red tape that seem to hinder rather than help is a common workplace challenge. Such systems may reduce motivation and engagement. → to break down barriers by opening up internal networks and allow staff to be more autonomous.
Not in my job description	**Lack of skills**
This challenge may be due to an original job misfit or the job itself may have changed. Employees may be feeling under-utilised or not happy because the job was not what they expected or has morphed into something that is outside their expertise. It may require upskilling, or the employee may not be interested in where the job is going. → Listen, review the job description, and ask for suggestions to resolve the issue.	Workplaces are changing at an unprecedented rate. Technology is changing jobs. Employers may recruit knowing that applicants have skill gaps. Many workplaces do not allow time to learn on the job. → Recognise and allow time for workplace learning. Provide mentoring and coaching opportunities.

Dealing with change	Low motivation – job satisfaction
Performance problems can be due to resistance to change, unwillingness or lack of confidence to update skills, resistance to policy or work method changes. → Help individuals challenge assumptions about what we think should happen and potential individual impact.	Research indicates the majority of employees report low motivation for their work. Lack of motivation transpires into challenges with work productivity and team cohesiveness. This may transpire as negativism, lack of cooperation, hostility, failure to follow instructions and power games. Workers may become disillusioned with the work environment or may fail to understand value of work being undertaken. → Listen and work through ways employees have more control over their work.
High absenteeism	**Performance issues – quality**
Employees may be regularly absent without cause. This may be due to job content and design, inappropriate job fit, management style or personal or workplace issues. → identify the cause behind the absenteeism and explore possible strategies for job re-design and re-establish expectations of attendance.	Employees do not complete work tasks to the required standard. This may be evident in inaccuracies, errors, failure to meet product or service quality, customer dissatisfaction, wastage and inappropriate work methods. This may be because they lack the required skills and capability. → identify training and development opportunities and progress to performance management if the employee fails to develop the necessary skills.
High stress	**Lack of communication**
Some jobs involve a particularly high degree of stress. Jobs with many demands and little control over working conditions are particularly stressful such as emergency services, healthcare workers, teachers and social workers. → Refer to workplace counselling options, listen, and ask 'tell me more'.	Problems navigating different communication styles and not prioritising effective communication at work hinders team efficiency and can impact workers' level of trust with each other and with management. This in turn impacts productivity. → Respond with, 'tell me more'.

Recognising problems early

Managers should try to identify problems early before they have a chance to harm the worker's performance.

Early signs alert you to possible problems and are evident in changes that occur around the workplace. The most effective way of dealing with a work difficulty is to prevent it from occurring. Prevention is always better than cure. Effective managers recognise early warning signs of potential workplace problems, both individual and organisational.

Early warning signs of problems include:
▪ decreasing profits ▪ lack of communication ▪ decreased productivity ▪ increased staff absences ▪ employees separating themselves from each other ▪ employees arguing ▪ employees who are unhappy, late, uncommunicative or unmotivated ▪ obvious hostility between employees ▪ increased complaints from employees, customers or suppliers ▪ flagrant or increased breaches of organisational policy.

Example

Identifying causes of work issues

Geoffrey is an experienced team member in the contact centre. He has recently been arriving late for work and has not been achieving all of his sales targets, which is out of character. Sam is the team leader and has been closely monitoring Geoffrey's attitude and sales performance over the past four weeks. Sam decides to hold a meeting with Geoffrey in order to identify the root causes and determine an appropriate strategy to help him get back on track with his performance.

During the meeting, Sam presents the facts relating to his ongoing decline in sales performance, as well as her observations about his attitude. Geoffrey explains that he has just separated from his long-term partner and is currently sleeping on a friend's couch. He explains that he is finding it difficult concentrating at work and is not coping with the new direction in his life.

Sam offers her sympathy and recommends Geoffrey take some time off as well as participating in some professional counselling through the employee assistance program. She explains that she is 100 per cent behind Geoffrey in supporting him as much as she can within her role as his manager.

Management support

Managers can support employees by enhancing their skills and confidence that will in turn ease the influence of work issues.

There are many ways that you can actively support team members who are experiencing problems in achieving work requirements. The type and level of support will vary depending on the issues at hand, the root causes and the preferences of the team member.

Some of the types of management support are described below.

Facilitate confidence to contribute
Providing avenues for consultation and communication has many benefits. Managers need to maintain consultative strategies that give staff the confidence to make contributions and achieve their full potential. Managers should approach leadership by taking a positive win–win attitude, in which managers and team members all win by establishing processes that satisfy everyone's needs. A win–lose situation occurs when managers establish processes or behave in ways that are only beneficial to themselves while the rest of the team suffers. Team members should be encouraged to show initiative, develop their skills, communicate openly, listen to others' points of view and remain committed to the consultative process.
Acknowledge effort and performance
Give recognition and credit when they are due. Acknowledge the contributions of all team members. This is important if a team member has done something particularly well or has helped the team achieve its goals beyond what was required. Managers who take credit for other people's work or ideas have a devastating impact on morale and discourage workers from contributing. Good leaders put the needs of their team and organisation before their own. Build each team member's self-esteem. Let them know you believe they can do the job. Ensure that people receive positive feedback and a simple 'thank you' for a job well done. Show loyalty to your team members. Just as you expect loyalty from your staff, it is essential to stand by them. This means showing support in times of difficulty and being prepared to defend them in the face of criticism from others. The same principles apply to your dealings with contractors and other key contacts.
Delegate wherever possible
Doing all the work yourself is not only inefficient, it discourages initiative and sends the message to your team members that you do not trust their abilities. You should know how to delegate. People develop best when they are given the chance to do things their own way and to learn from their mistakes. They like to feel in control of their own work and be responsible for their own progress. Giving a team member a task and then constantly checking up on them, taking over or redoing what they have done leaves people thinking they are wasting their time. This micro-management often results from narrow and inflexible ideas about the way things should be done. It disregards the experience, skills and ideas of others. It also impedes the learning process. A good manager knows when close supervision is necessary and when to let go of the reins.

Motivate your staff
One of the best ways of motivating staff is to make the work interesting and worthwhile. Help ensure variety and challenge by rotating tasks, allocating whole projects that people can take responsibility for from inception to conclusion, and making sure they know the relevance and value of their contribution to team objectives. Be alert to over expectation. It is helpful to provide a challenge, but if a person is struggling, they will lose confidence. Do not set people up for failure by setting unachievable goals. Particularly with new staff members, make sure they are feeling in control of what is being asked of them. Offer support, training and guidance, and rotate tasks until the person has the confidence to take on new responsibilities.
Encourage open communication
Invite personal interaction. Face-to-face discussions give employees the confidence to provide updates, ask questions, make suggestions and voice concerns they might not otherwise express. Simply stopping by a worker's desk to see how a project is progressing rather than requesting an update via email can open the way for a productive exchange. But this should be done in a way that does not look like you are checking up on them. Make yourself accessible to your staff.

Working through performance difficulties

Managing poor work performance requires knowledge of legislative and organisational requirements. This will ensure the best possible outcome for all.

No matter the difficulty, methodically working through a performance-based issue with a team member is the most effective way to achieve positive outcomes. Working through your colleagues' performance-based difficulties should be conducted as part of a management support process.

A clear performance management system should be available at your workplace to support managers in dealing with underperforming team members.

Ineffective performance management can dramatically reduce the level of performance in a workplace and employees that perform well can lose motivation and morale if they have to carry the burden of poor-performing colleagues.

Fair Work Australia recommends these easy-to-follow steps to managing underperformance:

1 Identify the problem

- Understand the key drivers of performance or underperformance within the workforce.
- Specifically identify the problem.

2 Assess and analyse the problem

- How serious is the problem?
- How long has the problem existed?
- How wide is the gap between what is expected and what is being delivered?

3 Meet the employee to discuss the problem

- Define the problem.
- Why is it a problem?
- how it impacts the workplace
- Why is there a concern?

4 Jointly devise a solution

- Explore ideas by asking open questions.
- Emphasise common ground.
- Keep the discussion on track.
- Focus on positive possibilities.
- Offer assistance – training, mentoring, or flexible work practices.

5 Monitor performance

- Monitor employee performance.
- Continue to provide feedback.
- Terminate if the performance does not improve.
- Contact Fair Work on 13 13 94.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

Which of the following are difficulties a manager will have to support their workers through? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ An inability to meet minimum quality standards
- ◯ Outside recreational pursuits
- ◯ Difficulty meeting work deadlines
- ◯ Workload management issues
- ◯ Ineffective collaboration with colleagues

Question 2

Which of the following are legislative or organisational requirements a manager must follow when managing poor performance? Select yes or no for each one.

a) Any dismissals must comply with the Fair Work Act.	» Yes	» No
b) A manager has complete freedom to enforce any penalty such as warnings or termination for poor work performance.	» Yes	» No
c) Actions taken by the manager must not contravene the Anti-Discrimination Act.	» Yes	» No
d) A plan of action to improve performance is to be developed by the manager in consultation with the employee.	» Yes	» No
e) Performance is regularly monitored and should be communicated to the employee.	» Yes	» No

2C Manage conflict

Leaders need to be actively involved in identifying interpersonal issues and providing support to their team to overcome any barriers that lead to conflict.

At times, performance issues stem from interpersonal conflicts within the team.

Conflict in teams is inevitable – but that's not the issue! Conflict can be healthy or unhealthy, depending on how it is managed by the leader. Workplace conflict can start from a difference of opinion and evolve into tension, power struggles, unhealthy competition or in serious cases occupational violence, psychological harassment or bullying. Ultimately, unresolved or poorly managed conflict will lead to performance problems.

There is, however, a healthy side of conflict. When workers are supported and issues are able to be resolved effectively and efficiently, it can deliver positive outcomes for individuals, work teams and leaders.

The positives of workplace conflict can include the following:

- higher productivity
- stronger relationships
- improved communication
- the establishment of a culture of confidence and trust
- the resolution of important issues
- identifying better methods of completing a task.

Identifying common methods used to resolve workplace conflict

Conflicts are common, and it is the manager's responsibility to find the most effective way of resolving them.

A leader's role in conflict management is to set a culture of trust and confidence by encouraging the healthy resolution of issues before they reach crisis point. This involves identifying and addressing unhealthy behaviours while the conflict is in its early stages and supporting team members through the process of conflict resolution where required.

Workplace conflict resolutions can be brought about in three different ways, each being an escalation from the last:

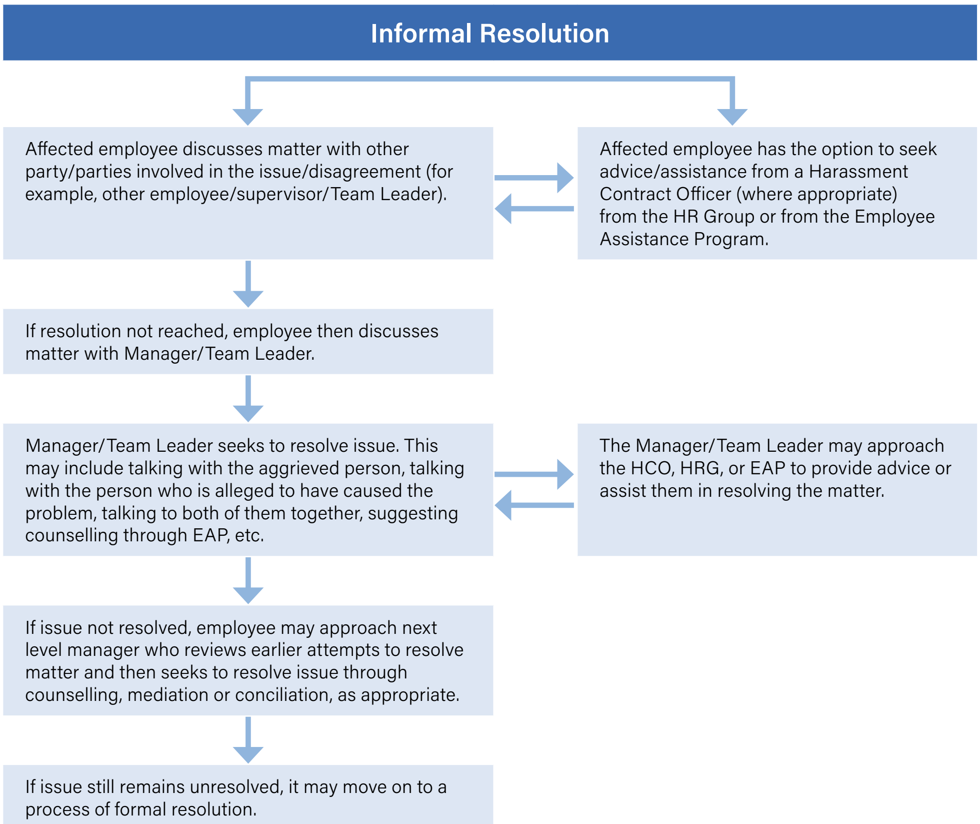
- a negotiated method, where parties concerned use problem-solving skills to sort things out together
- a mediated method, where parties use an independent mediator to help work through to an agreed resolution
- an arbitrated or adjudicated method, where an independent arbitrator or court determines how the dispute will be resolved.

The extent of your responsibility to lead will typically fall into the first two resolution methods. Workplace processes usually outline what to do when conflicts escalate depending on the type of conflict. These may be found in the *Code of conduct, Customer charter, Guidelines for disciplinary procedures*, and *Resolving workplaces issues* flow charts. They will outline who is responsible, when to escalate, provide guidance for ground rules and provide templates to use.

Example

Resolving workplace issues flow chart

Informal conflict resolution processes suggested by the Australian Government Comcare authority.



Features of an effective dispute resolution process

When a conflict occurs it is important to respond professionally and resolve the situation as quickly as possible.

Resolving conflicts is challenging; and a systematic process involving multiple steps can result in good outcomes. The worse thing managers can do is ignore the conflict. Address it as soon as it arises, agree on the process and discuss what happens if either party feels that the discussion is becoming too difficult. Managers can use these simple steps to work through the problem.

Stop the conflict and name the problem
Discuss in detail, answering the following questions: ▪ What is the problem? ▪ Why is this a problem? Is this the root cause? ▪ When and where does it occur? ▪ What is each person's viewpoint? ▪ What has been done to try to resolve the problem? ▪ What has been the impact of the conflict?
Establish a common goal for both parties
▪ All parties should agree on the desired outcome of the conflict. ▪ Find a commonality in both sides as a starting point for a shared outcome. That commonality can be as simple as 'both sides want to end the conflict'.
Collaborate on solutions
▪ Discuss ways to meet the common goal. ▪ Brainstorm until all options seem to be exhausted. ▪ Evaluate each solution. ▪ Discuss barriers to the common goal and ways around those. What can and cannot be changed for these solutions to be effective?
Identify a win–win solution and move ahead
▪ Agree on the best way forward from which all parties can benefit. ▪ Settle on a means of ensuring that this conflict does not arise again. ▪ Agree on responsibilities in the resolution and express aloud what each party has agreed. ▪ Seek parties to acknowledge a win–win situation.
Plan evaluation of the solution
▪ Agree on how and when the success of the chosen resolution will be evaluated. ▪ Agree on a celebration of success.

Building your skills for conflict resolution

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

There are many skills required for conflict resolution that are not immediately obvious. These skills can be learnt and practised.

Nonverbal communication	Look for the nonverbals such as body language, facial expressions, posture, gestures and tone of voice. Be aware of your own body language. How people feel about conflict will be apparent in their body language. They may avoid eye contact, cross their arms, roll their eyes, be defensive, aggressive or non-caring. Keep your body language relaxed and open, breathe deeply and calmly. Respect personal space and be aware of your facial expressions. Avoid making sudden movements and do not stare.
Active listening	Know when to stay quiet. Focus on the words and nonverbals the person is communicating. Ask questions to clarify points that are unclear to you. Let the person explain themselves, in their words. Ask open-ended questions. Allow all parties to express themselves equally.
Empathy	Acknowledge feelings and try to put yourself in the shoes of the other person. Ask questions about their feelings and listen to the reasons they give for being upset. Be patient. Be aware of and respectful of differences.
Patience	Rushing to a solution can make people feel like they are not being heard and they are not part of the solution process. Take time to listen, and allow for silences. People do not like to be wrong and will often hold their stance until they are proven right or wrong.
Objectiveness, impartiality and calm	Staying calm and objective when emotions are high is very difficult. Remain impartial and focus on the problem, not the people involved. You need to remain level-headed in order to think rationally about a solution that is good for all. Vent before or after. Do not take things personally. Prioritise resolution over being right. Know when to apologise and forgive. Remain focused on the conflict at hand rather than past problems.
Positivity	Being positive will ensure the resolution process progresses forward and can be contagious. Share your confidence that there will be a solution. Show a willingness and positive outlook to compromise. Model behaviour you wish to see in all parties.
Open communication	Maintaining communication so that relationships can continue afterwards is critical for relationship management and work objectives. It is important not to feel resentful and accept compromises in an open and positive manner. Remember that the relationship will be ongoing – people will still have to work together, so it is best to communicate openly to encourage a positive resolution.

Fair Work Ombudsman

Some conflicts cannot be managed internally; the Fair Work Ombudsman resolves conflicts about workplace issues relating to wages and conditions.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is an Australian Government agency that helps employers and employees understand their rights and responsibilities under Australian workplace laws. They offer education, online training and assistance to resolve workplace issues. Their website provides free access to templates and best practice guides including *Managing underperformance* and *Effective dispute resolution* to help you lead your team in an effective and compliant manner. The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) and the *Fair Work Regulations 2009* (Cth) are the main legislative instruments this agency works with. The Act requires that all modern awards include a term which sets out a procedure for resolving disputes between employers and employees.

Example

How one manager resolves conflict situations

Jed is a strategy manager at a food manufacturing company. He says conflicts often arise within organisations when employees are frustrated with their employment. This frustration arises particularly when employees feel they are being overlooked for promotion, are unhappy about the type of work they do or are experiencing difficulties with other staff members. Their negative behaviour is a signal that something is wrong. For example, their work may not be progressing, the quality of their work may deteriorate or they may become withdrawn, sulky, emotional or arrogant.

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

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

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

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

Practice Task 7

Question 1

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

- ◯ Being able to block out people talking about conflict when you need to complete work
- ◯ Impartiality when managing conflict between others
- ◯ Being patient when listening to others
- ◯ Terminating the employment of mischievous workers
- ◯ Being empathetic towards others' situations
- ◯ Active listening when communicating with others

Question 2

Which methods should a manager use to resolve conflicts? Select yes or no for each one.

a) Listening to the concerns of all parties	» Yes	» No
b) Only listening to the most trustworthy employee	» Yes	» No
c) Finding a compromise so both parties achieve a healthy resolution that meets their needs	» Yes	» No
d) Ignoring the issues and telling those concerned to focus on their work task	» Yes	» No
e) Following a conflict resolution plan that sets out parameters of what is to take place and how the conflict will be resolved	» Yes	» No

2D Communicate work progress

Managers must communicate progress on work tasks to maintain open communication, trust and confidence with internal and external stakeholders.

Effective communication means providing meaningful information to relevant people in an appropriate way.

Managers need to communicate information about work progress, achievements of the team, emerging issues, and performance improvements and strategies, to name but a few. Managers should seek to communicate clearly about team members' tasks, roles, performance and future plans that are relevant to their job. An effective manager will communicate respectfully, demonstrating an understanding of the interpersonal differences of their employees.

Monitoring performance

To communicate accurate information, a manager will need to devise methods to monitor the performance of employees within the business.

One of the most important parts of managing a team is to monitor its performance. Without this assessment it is impossible to determine the profitability and productivity of the team.

Once the performance is assessed and information has been analysed, areas of underperformance can be rectified, systems can be implemented to provide support and performance can be documented.

Monitoring will usually include analysing the following:

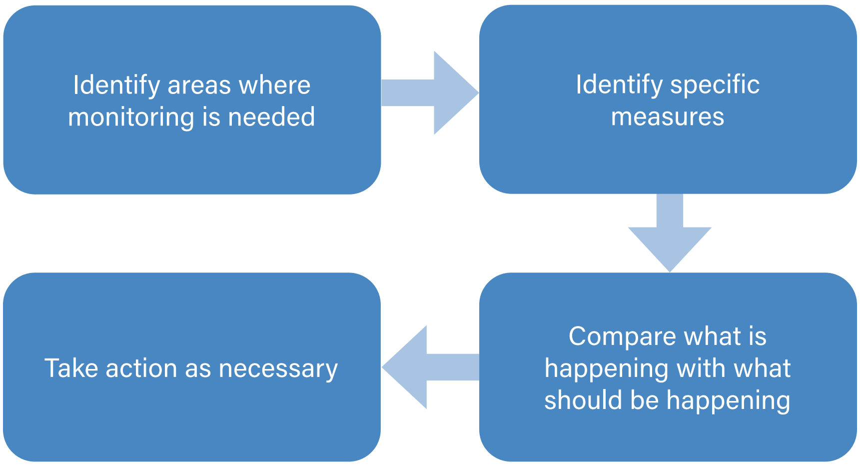
- time – fast responses, on-time delivery to internal and external customers and stakeholders
- accuracy – error-free, delivered as requested
- satisfaction – meets or exceeds internal and external customers and stakeholder satisfaction
- waste – defects, losses of time, resource and money.

The performance monitoring process

Processes should be put in place to monitor performance, which in turn will give an insight into whether operational plans/targets have been achieved.

Four steps are usually completed in the performance monitoring process:

1. Identify areas where monitoring is needed. Concentrate on what is important in terms of objectives and Key Results Areas (KRAs).
2. Identify specific measures. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are the benchmarks and performance measures that must be achieved in a set period of time.
3. Compare what is happening with what should be happening. Once steps one and two have been completed, it should be relatively simple to do a comparison.
4. Take action as necessary. Identify the source of the variation and what needs the most attention. Implement changes immediately.



Collecting information and tracking performance

As a manager of a work team, you need to assess exactly how your team's performance is progressing.

The team work plan should clearly state the objectives and performance measures that need to be achieved for the period. If these requirements are written clearly and are practical, the process of monitoring team performance will be much easier.

Performance targets and objectives that are vague, unrealistic and difficult to measure are often difficult to assess against.

It is important that you communicate to team members what they are achieving, how they are supporting the organisation's goals and what needs to improve. You can do this through observation, gathering data, feedback and reporting of results.

Ways to collect information include:	Ways to track performance:
▪ using automated systems that collect data such as sales, registrations, enrolments or manufacturing process wastage ▪ asking stakeholders to self-report ▪ informal chats, phone calls and emails ▪ standing meetings at chosen intervals ▪ tap into other data-collections such as for compliance	▪ text spreadsheets – Gantt charts ▪ databases ▪ design and peer reviews ▪ percentiles ▪ surveys ▪ project management software

Key performance indicators

Key Performance Indicators provide clear, concise measurements assessing performance. Managers should communicate these clearly to employees.

Within each key result area (KRA), smaller tasks need to be completed according to set performance standards and within agreed timelines. KPIs can be allocated to each KRA to provide a measure of how well employees are performing their tasks.

Using KPIs, the employee knows exactly what is expected of them and the employee's supervisor can monitor their performance against these criteria. For more specific tasks, measurable time frames and outcomes can be established and tracked.

KPIs for a personal assistant could include the following requirements.

Key result areas	Key performance indicators
Prepare correspondence and reports	Correspondence and reports are prepared accurately and thoroughly.
Coordinate meetings	Meetings are scheduled in consultation with other relevant personnel. Agendas and papers are circulated in a timely manner. Accurate minutes are recorded and circulated within three days of each meeting.
Handle enquiries from the media and the general public	Enquiries are handled professionally and politely to ensure that the organisation's objectives are met and relationships with key stakeholders are maintained.

Communicating progress

Managers need to consider the information needs of internal and external stakeholders.

Perception equals reality when it comes to stakeholders, and it is important that messages are consistent, accurate and sensitive. You may need to develop a communications plan to provide a clear roadmap for communicating with internal and external stakeholders.

Communications plans do not need to be long; they should include a plan that outlines the following items:

Progress information	▪ Current situation – actual progress, what is being done, what has been done ▪ Team objective or goal – this is the desired outcome, where the work is progressing to ▪ Planned milestone – dates and performance measures ▪ Comparison of intended milestones to current progress
Who are the audiences	▪ These have been identified when the team objective was developed. ▪ Internal ▪ External
What you want to say	▪ Core messages audiences want to know. Clear, simple, credible and accurate. Different audiences may be privy to different information.
How you will communicate to each audience	▪ Different audiences will require different methods.
When you will communicate	▪ The time lines that are relevant for your work progress – these may be budget periods, school terms, seasons, project milestones, funding reporting periods or on-request and respond-to market opportunities or community need.

Choosing the right communication method

The method of communication will change depending on a number of key factors including the needs of your stakeholders.

As part of the communications plan, managers need to determine which channels to use to communicate information to their stakeholders.

Consider what communication methods you have available, the pros and cons of each, the needs of your stakeholders and the content that must be provided. Some considerations are provided below:

Face-to-face	Meetings
Best for making a personal connection and overcoming resistance to change	Best for communicating more complicated ideas or when you want input from team members
Paper (handouts, bulletin board notices)	**Electronic (email, intranet page)**
Best when details are important, or dates need to be referenced	Works well for those who have frequent access to computers
Digital dashboard	**Video**
Good to share real time data that changes regularly with team members	Best to use to tell a story; appeals to visual and auditory senses Increasingly popular for companies to use short, grassroots-type videos to get messages across
Internal social media	**Counsellor briefings**
Most effective to build a culture of collaboration and rapport among dispersed team members	Important project milestones for stakeholders who will want to ask questions
Bulletins	**Newsletters**
When information needs to go out weekly in a brief format	When you want to reach customers about progress with new products or special promotions
Media release	**Digital media**
Announce significant progress to all stakeholders	Organisations' digital media platforms and forums such as websites and social media with certain group audiences
Professional platforms and networks	**Media**
When communicating technical progress to specific groups	Newspapers and community papers are good to report impact of work progress to broader community

Example

Reporting project progress for multiple partners

Manager Leanne worked at a local municipality and wanted to make sure the whole project team were clear on the progress and status of her complex project 'Leg Up', that looks to improve local youth unemployment rates.

The 'Leg Up' project entailed many moving parts and different levels of partners. The project worked with: three external project partners; employment agencies; a consultancy; a team of youth workers; and two other internal departments: Communications and Media, and Economic Development.

Leanne established a project control group and a communication plan. In the communication plan, she identified what progress was of interest to each project partner and what progress was of interest to all project partners. She then developed and actioned a communication schedule ensuring that all partners received timely and relevant progress information. She utilised the following tips when designing the progress reports:

- Target the audience – customise the report for each project partner.
- Keep it brief – long reports never get read in detail. Stay under one page.
- Format appropriately – maintain a clear structure that is simple and easy to follow.
- Demonstrate performance and progress – include key success from the last period.
- Make it visually attractive – consider fonts, avatars, chart widgets and white space.
- Make it accessible – use a format that can be easily stored and shared.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

Which of the following are useful methods to effectively monitor a team's progress? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Hold regular meetings with stakeholders.
- ◯ Review automatically gathered figures such as sales data or enrolments.
- ◯ Host informal 'check-ins' via phone or email.
- ◯ Ask stakeholders to self-report.
- ◯ Speak to past employers.

Question 2

List three communication methods a manager will use to communicate progress to stakeholders.

Summary

- Managers must consider interpersonal styles to ensure they communicate effectively and are sensitive to cultural and social considerations of team members.
- There are critical characteristics of collaborative work environments and leaders can work strategically to develop those characteristics.
- Managers must support colleagues who are experience difficulties in fulfilling work requirements such as meeting quality standards, deadlines and budgets.
- Developing the skills of your team to improve collaborative behaviour include building confidence to contribute, encouraging team members to take leadership roles, stimulating motivation and maintaining open communication.
- Work through team issues using a step-by-step approach.
  - Identify and define the problem.
  - Analyse the problem.
  - Generate options for resolution.
  - Choose and plan an action.
  - Implement and check in.
- Managing poor work performance requires knowledge of legislative and organisational requirements.
- Effective relationship managers will consider organisational processes and parameters of their own role when considering methods to resolve workplace conflict. Managers have a legislative responsibility to try to resolve conflicts promptly.
- The Fair Work Australia dispute resolution clause provides processes and stages to follow.
- Team performance must be monitored based on the KRAs and KPIs that have been identified in the team work plan.
- Managers need to consider the information needs of internal and external stakeholders. The method of communication, content of progression data, timing and purpose of communication should be documented in a communications plan.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Lead workplace relationships

Part A

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

   - ◯ the provision of accurate and respectful feedback
   - ◯ the use of verbal and nonverbal descriptions of task goals
   - ◯ establishing guidelines for collaborative work that includes respectful communication
   - ◯ instructing workers to stay in their direct work areas to focus on their task
   - ◯ affirming employees when deadlines are met

2. Number each step from 1 to 5 in the order you would follow to resolve a conflict that has resulted in poor worker performance.

   - ◯ While complying with WHS and Fair Work legislation, decide on a solution to be implemented.
   - ◯ Identify the source of the conflict.
   - ◯ Discuss ways to achieve these goals.
   - ◯ Establish shared goals for all parties involved in the conflict.
   - ◯ Agree to review the solution at a later date to determine if it has worked and performance has improved.

3. Draw a line to match each of the communication plan elements to their descriptive term.

» Providing a formal presentation about team performance to the management team at a monthly meeting	» Communicating work progress to team members
» Making observations of team members as they complete their work tasks	» Communicating work progress to team members
» Gathering data about team productivity and performance results	» Communicating work progress to external stakeholders
» Informal email sent throughout the week to team members with a number of productivity statistics	» Communicating work progress to external stakeholders
» Facilitating a daily informal meeting with team members to discuss the team's performance for the week and the goals for the day	» Monitoring progress of team members
» Writing a team performance report that is emailed to the department manager at the end of each week	» Monitoring progress of team members

4. Which of the following are effective processes when consulting internally or with your external network of stakeholders? Tick all that apply.

   - ◯ Maintain contact lists to increase your network.
   - ◯ Make it a top-down process where only you provide the information.
   - ◯ Hold focus groups where you gather relevant information from your internal consultants or external network.
   - ◯ Provide stakeholders the opportunity to send a written response.
   - ◯ Encourage your external network to complete regular surveys.

5. In a collaborative environment, which of the following techniques would you use to develop and implement a work task strategy with your work team? Tick all that apply.

   - ◯ Establish a shared goal to encourage team members to be motivated.
   - ◯ Set clear expectations by regularly clarifying everyone's responsibilities and accountabilities.
   - ◯ Maintain a top-down hierarchy so everyone understands where they stand in relation to each other and other personnel in positions of authority.
   - ◯ Breakdown structural barriers within the organisation and identify processes that hinder projects. Identify bottlenecks early on and work to overcome process inconsistencies.
   - ◯ Allow team leadership roles to vary – leadership should be based upon the work and the need. Leadership will emerge naturally and shift as the work evolves.

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

You are the manager of an office-based paper sales company and have recently had difficulty with one of your employees. They have always been a productive employee, but their performance has declined recently. You know this employee quite well and recognise they have their own interpersonal style. They are very collaborative by nature and thrive when working with others. Due to logistical constraints, you've had to assign them a role where they work alone for their entire work day. During a meeting, this employee confirmed to you they had become disengaged with their job because they did not have the opportunity of working with others. They would like a plan to solve their current difficulties. Your assistant manager hands you a list of four potential solutions.

1. Which of the following solutions should you use to support your colleague to improve their poor work performance? Select yes or no for each one and explain your response.

    a) Establish clear objectives and work with them to develop strategies to achieve them. » Yes » No

    b) Accommodate their personal style by changing their role to enable them to work with others. » Yes » No

    c) Implement a 'check-in' time each day to gauge how engaged they are. » Yes » No

    d) Offer training programs that may boost the engagement level of the employee. » Yes » No

    e) e. Tell the employee they cannot do anything to aid them, and they must find their own motivation to improve performance. » Yes » No

2. After a few months, the changes you implement have not led to an improvement in the employee's performance. You are considering terminating his employment.
   List two organisational requirements and two legislative requirements you must comply with prior to finalising this decision.

Topic 3 | Review leadership

3A Seek and analyse feedback on own relationship management performance

3B Evaluate performance and identify areas for improvement

3A Seek and analyse feedback on own relationship management performance

Effective managers actively seek and analyse feedback on their relationship management with a view to improving work relationship performance.

Self-assessment is helpful in building your performance; however it will rarely provide a true indication of where your real strengths and weaknesses lie when it comes to relationship management. It is important to ensure that you actively seek feedback on your personal relationship management performance from your direct employees, colleagues and clients.

Feedback helps you to understand your current competency levels and improve performance. Without good advice from managers, peers and customers, you may be left in the dark and have no way of identifying your true standing within the organisation. Any problems that are being caused will only get worse as time goes on unless someone brings it to your attention and you agree to fix the issue.

Checking your attitude

Before seeking feedback from your direct employees, clients and colleagues it is important that you check your attitude.

You may need to be prepared to receive some potentially negative feedback and criticism from people about your ability to manage people. By asking for feedback, you may hear things that you were not expecting, or do not want to hear.

It is important that you welcome any feedback with a positive attitude and respond with respect and courtesy – regardless of whether the information is positive or negative. Although you do not need to take on board and agree with every piece of criticism you receive, you do need to show appreciation to the person who is providing you with their honest opinion – as these conversations can be awkward and uncomfortable for many people.

By being clear about what it is that you are hoping to achieve within your job and how the insights of others can be of benefit to you, you can develop a healthy attitude towards receiving feedback.

Formal and informal feedback

Seeking feedback is an essential part of your professional development and can include formal and informal methods.

Formal feedback is usually conducted through activities such as professional development meetings, annual performance appraisal and regular performance reviews.

Informal feedback is carried out through ad-hoc discussions and impromptu complaints and compliments from clients, colleagues, co-workers, supervisors and even family and friends.

Formal strategies to gather feedback

Many organisations choose to use formal strategies that utilise external designed feedback strategies or written documentation.

The 360-degree feedback process is a popular formal strategy to gather feedback. It involves colleagues, direct reports, customers, project partners, board members and managers all giving both positive and negative feedback based on a rating scale. 360-degree reviews focus on skills and contributions managers make. The goal of this feedback process is to provide a balanced view in areas such as leadership, teamwork, interpersonal communication and interaction – skills critical for relationship managers.

The 360-degree feedback process can be an extremely confronting method, especially if the feedback is given anonymously. Feedback may reveal weaknesses in areas not previously considered or positive feedback for an area they did not consider one of their strengths.

Many organisations hire external consultants to administer the surveys and analyse and share the data. In other organisations colleagues provide 360-degree feedback directly to each other without directors filtering as a go-between.

Pros of using 360-degree feedback	Cons of using 360-degree feedback
▪ Learn how others see you, from a variety of sources ▪ Strengthens accountability ▪ Reveals specific career development areas ▪ Creates self-awareness ▪ Identifies skills gaps ▪ Increases transparency within the organisation ▪ More feedback is always better ▪ Useful for remote managers who cannot be involved in employees' daily activities	▪ Creates a negative culture – if feedback is negative ▪ Might not be accurate – based on opinions, from possibly inexperienced raters ▪ Regularly focuses on weaknesses ▪ Sidelines positive feedback ▪ If comprehensive feedback is not provided it can increase distrust in the leader ▪ Time consuming

Staff engagement surveys

Staff engagement surveys are a formal feedback tool used to gather feedback from your direct reports.

Staff engagement surveys are regular surveys on topics such as employee satisfaction, job role, communication, relationships and work environment.

The pros and cons of staff engagement surveys are explained below.

Pros of staff engagement surveys
▪ A clear measure how committed, satisfied, and content employees are ▪ Can be completely customised to the organisation's needs ▪ Questions can be developed that seek feedback on effective relationship management ▪ Can provide insight into true state of employee morale ▪ Can let employees feel heard, which can improve satisfaction ▪ Can even influence employees based on the questions asked – simply asking about effective positive relationships can increase the chances the employee will consciously think about them

Cons of staff engagement surveys
▪ Surveys are time consuming to implement and must be done consistently to derive the most benefit. The survey itself also takes time to do. Employers must strike a balance between asking enough questions and asking too many questions. ▪ They require follow-up. This is something that adds to the workload. If engagement surveys are provided but no action is taken, it can make employees feel they're being ignored. This may even be worse than not asking at all, as it can make employees resentful or feel like the organisation does not care. If employees do not feel their feedback will be taken seriously, they may be less inclined to offer open, honest, complete feedback on future surveys. ▪ Employees are often wary to complete surveys (even anonymously) for fear of reprisal over negative comments. They may fear there is some hidden way that their identity will be known, especially in small workforces. ▪ Employee engagement surveys can often paint a very negative picture if focus is only on negative aspects; ask a wide variety of questions and ask for feedback on things that are going well, too.

Annual review meetings

Annual review meetings are formal feedback processes that enable employees to receive valuable appraisals about their performance from their direct managers.

Organisations hold annual review meetings with all employees. These meetings are reviews of an employee's performance across the previous year and are conducted by a manager from within the organisation. All managers are also reviewed.

These meetings establish a plan of improvement for the year ahead and the employee is free to discuss any issues they need clarified.

Informal methods of seeking feedback

Organisations can also monitor feedback in the course of everyday operations. This is called informal feedback.

Complaints and other types of direct feedback from staff can be used to determine how effectively a manager is maintaining workplace relationships. Employees want to feel good about how they are treated. However, when employees submit formal grievances or seek meetings with Human Resources there are generally more than just surface level issues that need to be addressed.

Effective relationship managers do not just respond to complaints but set out to reduce them by identifying their shortfalls and improving their relationship management skills.

Other informal feedback methods are explained below.

Conversations with your manager	You can ask for feedback from your direct manager as part of everyday work or during a performance discussion.
Conversations with your peers	Managers can talk to their peers about relationship management issues throughout the workday. Managers often observe other supervisors and managers interacting with other employees, managing issues with customers and dealing with logistical issues. Management peers can form accurate and detailed opinions about how you work and are a useful source of feedback. You can access this feedback via informal conversations about large scale issues or minor ones.

Areas of focus

The quality of the feedback that you receive will often depend on the quality of the questions that you ask.

When seeking feedback, prepare some specific questions that help the person provide the feedback that you are looking for. This will help you ascertain where you are in terms of your key competencies in the area of relationship management.

Here are some examples of questions that can help prompt your direct employees and peers when seeking their feedback:

Feedback-prompting questions
▪ What do you think my strengths and weaknesses are when it comes to relationship management? ▪ What differentiates me from other managers? ▪ Are there opportunities where I can improve as a relationship manager? ▪ What people management qualities do I have that are working, and what skills need the most work? ▪ How well do you think I communicate with people? How can this be improved? ▪ Do I spend enough time building relationships with people? ▪ Do people consider me approachable? How do I know? ▪ How do I manage difficult people and conflict situations? How could I respond better?

Analysing feedback

Once feedback is gathered, a manager must analyse it to determine whether it is valid for improving ability to manage work relationships.

Successful organisations have become adept at gathering feedback about the performance of their leaders. Most are capable of using a mix of formal and informal methods to gather feedback and assemble lots of useful information. One challenging aspect is deciding whether or not the feedback is useful and determining how it could be applied. It must be sorted and analysed so it can be used to improve work performance. Below are some key points to follow when analysing feedback.

Focus on trends
Trends are commonalities that appear in feedback. For example; do most relationship management issues happen during a particular time of day or do they relate to a specific task? These trends can be used to alter operations as needed.
Categorise feedback
You want to compare feedback and group it accordingly, such as: dealing with conflict; providing encouragement and praise; employee engagement; and communication and consultation.
Assess the feedback
Resist the temptation to dismiss the feedback immediately; instead evaluate what is being said. Try to understand what the other person is telling you, assess their position and decide whether there is any agenda or bias attached to the feedback. Consider what you need to take on board and what is irrelevant to your position as manager. You do not have to agree with every piece of feedback you receive, but assess everything on its merits to determine its validity and whether it can help you to improve your key competencies.
Follow up
At times, feedback can be vague or confusing and needs to be clarified to determine if it is valid. To determine the validity of feedback, follow up and ask a peer or consult the person giving you feedback to gain more understanding. Ask open-ended questions to gain more insight and detail, including how they are thinking and feeling about your relationship management skills.
Plan how you will implement the feedback
The purpose of analysing feedback is to produce a plan of action to improve relationship management performance. This plan should be documented and based on clear goals and strategies, with a set time frame for completion of an action strategy.

Practice Task 9

Question 1

Which of the following are methods of seeking feedback on relationship management? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ From managers in annual review meetings
- ◯ Informal customer conversations
- ◯ From your colleagues in a 360-degree feedback session
- ◯ Seeking informal feedback in 'water cooler' moments from colleagues
- ◯ Self-analysis

Question 2

List three points to follow when analysing feedback about relationship management.

3B Evaluate performance and identify areas for improvement

Self-assessment helps to build your level of self-awareness and identify what you can improve upon in the areas that matter the most.

Self-assessment is about asking yourself questions that are relevant to your personal work competency standards.

Self-assessment is not about being critical of your character or putting yourself down. It is about taking an objective look at how you are performing and looking at ways of extending your relationship management performance.

Evaluating performance

Evaluating your performance requires you to self-assess and decide on the value and significance of feedback received.

Feedback and self-assessment are the keys to seeing and correcting your blind spots. Have you ever impersonated someone, only to hear that person say, 'I don't do that!', while everyone else laughs and agrees with you? We are often surprised to hear how others perceive us. How we see ourselves and how we value feedback influences our ability to improve on our professional competencies.

Things that influence how we see and value feedback
• We interpret things about ourselves differently than others do. • Other forces may be at play – a restructure may have a focus on reducing your team, for example. • We judge ourselves by our intentions while we judge others by their actions. • Try to understand the intent of the feedback. Negative intent tends more towards criticism and may have ulterior motives, but negative feedback does not mean negative intent. • Previous negative experience with feedback triggers anxiety and stress. • We are often frustrated with unclear or unhelpful feedback. • The relationship with the person giving you feedback influences the way we interpret their opinion. You may dismiss your best friend's feedback because you may think they are biased or that they do not understand your work anyway.

Growth and fixed mindset

Adapt a growth mindset so you respond positively to different situations and people.

Doctor Carol Dweck, Ph.D., is one of the world's leading researchers in the field of motivation and is a Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. Her years of research have focused on why people succeed and how to foster success. She believes people have either one of two mindsets: 'Fixed' or 'Growth'.

In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success – without effort. This type of mindset is limiting and will not help a person learn and progress.

In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work and that brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a thirst for personal development.

People with a growth mindset are also constantly self-assessing, asking for feedback and monitoring what is going on, but their internal monologue is not about judging themselves and others in this way. Virtually all successful people have a growth mindset.

Putting on your growth mindset

People with a growth mindset are sensitive to positive and negative feedback and are aware of its implications for learning and constructive action.

A person with a growth mindset will ask the following questions when they receive feedback or experience an event that requires self-assessment:

- What can I learn from this?
- How can I improve my own skills?
- How can I manage the person or situation better next time?

Below are some principles to follow when evaluating performance.

Principles to follow when evaluating performance
▪ Look for feedback that is specific and clear with identifiable behaviour you can focus on. Overall evaluation is important, but focusing on what areas are outliers is also significant. ▪ Consolidating all feedback from multiple sources will more likely give you a fair picture of your performance than if you just listen to one perspective. ▪ Be prepared to act on the conclusions of evaluative processes. ▪ Ensure evaluative processes are rigorous and as accurate as possible. Evaluations need to provide employees with as much as evidence as possible, otherwise their impact may be diluted. ▪ Forming evaluations requires extensive monitoring of relationships across time.

Improving work relationships

Feedback is only useful if you are willing to apply it – improving requires you to act on the feedback.

Feedback received through formal mechanisms such as performance reviews, 360-degree reviews and key performance indicators are recommended for the best chance of improving overall organisational and individual performance.

When self-assessing and reviewing feedback consider the below areas of relationship management that you may need to improve.

Areas of relationship management that you may need to improve upon include:
▪ engaging with workers ▪ conflict management ▪ communication, collaboration and consultation ▪ giving feedback on performance ▪ managing poor performance and behaviours ▪ dealing with stressful situations involving people ▪ managing people on a micro and/or macro level ▪ managing people from diverse cultures ▪ providing praise and recognition ▪ coaching, mentoring and other forms of support.

Improvement plans

A performance development plan is a formal document that outlines everything you need to know and do to improve your professional competencies.

Once you identify the specific areas that you need to improve, set out your goals, then write an action plan to document the process you will follow to achieve these goals. Many workplaces have a personal development plan to help document your professional development needs.

A number of workplaces also incorporate their work and development plans into their performance appraisal system. Employees typically update their plan each month or year as part of their formal reviews, depending on their organisational policies and procedures.

A performance development plan will include the following elements:

Goals	The targets explaining what you hope to achieve – these should be written as SMART goal statements: ▪ Specific behaviour you want to achieve ▪ Measurable – what is the 'learning outcome'? This could be observable behaviour, or impact and standard of performance. Set milestones to help you track your progress. ▪ Attainable – realistic. Understand your baseline and be kind to yourself. ▪ Relevant – related to your role and team objective ▪ Time – achievable time frame
Focus areas	The gaps needing improvement such as specific skills, knowledge and attitudes
Actions to improve your competencies	The learning opportunities that you will participate in to improve in the focus areas, such as online learning, secondments, coaching, mentoring, personal study or enrolling in a formal leadership course.
Timeframes	Deadlines for when each goal or action needs to be completed by

Example

Evaluate feedback and improve professional competencies

Mary recently received an email from Paula, one of her direct reports, about the way in which she handled a situation involving another team member named Tom. Tom had made some serious mistakes with an important job task. The email from Paula stated that Mary's actions were unprofessional and caused the team member to become extremely upset.

Mary was immediately concerned about the email and decided to talk to Patricia, another manager in the office, to seek advice on how to respond to the situation. Patricia was able to discuss some options for addressing the feedback with Paula as well as with Tom. Mary acknowledged to Patricia that the way she treated Tom was abrupt and that she needed to hold an individual meeting with Mary and then separately with Tom to discuss the issues and apologise for her approach.

Mary agreed to develop an action plan to help her improve her ability to maintain her emotions and provide feedback in a more constructive and professional manner. The plan included completing a short management course on emotional intelligence which was to be completed within one month.

Practice Task 10

Question 1

Should the following principles be used when evaluating personal performance in leading workplace relationships? Select yes or no for each one.

a) Workplace relationships should be closely monitored over an extensive time period. » Yes » No

b) Evaluations about management relationship matters should be based on feedback that is valid and consistent. » Yes » No

c) Evaluations about management relationship matters should be based solely on reports and statistics. » Yes » No

d) Evaluations about management relationship skills should be based on self-assessment of one's personal performance and competencies. » Yes » No

e) The right attitude for evaluating feedback is to have a fixed mindset. » Yes » No

Question 2

Which of the following are methods to improve work relationships? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Improve your product and service knowledge.
- ◯ Seek coaching, mentoring and self-paced study to improve your relationship management skills.
- ◯ Reflect on the team's performance results and be prepared to change your plan.
- ◯ Develop a personal development plan to improve your leading of work relationships.
- ◯ Offer more rewards and recognition to get more staff on board with your management style.

Summary

- Managers must implement methods to actively seek and analyse feedback on their relationship management skills and look to improve work relationship performance.
- 360-degree feedback and staff engagement surveys are two examples of formal performance reviews useful for evaluating with your manager.
- Informal approaches such as ad hoc discussions, monitoring complaints and actively seeking feedback from peers and direct reports can be effective strategies.
- Multiple sources of feedback provide a more balanced view of your performance.
- Analyse feedback by focussing on trends, categorising the feedback, assessing the feedback, following up and planning how to implement the feedback.
- Self-assessments are useful ways of identifying areas for improvement.
- Apply a growth mindset to respond appropriately to positive and negative feedback.
- Feedback enables you to improve but only if you use it. Ways to act on your feedback and work towards improving your performance include developing a personal development plan. This may include goals and strategies for improving your relationship management skills.

Learning Checkpoint 3
Review leadership

Part A

1. Draw a line to match each method of seeking feedback about relationship management to its definition.

» A wide range of colleagues, managers and other stakeholders provide feedback based on a rating scale.	» Monitoring complaints
» Employees are invited to complete a survey about workplace relationship management.	» Annual Review Meetings
» Yearly meetings are held between an employee and manager that provide a chance to analyse workplace relationships.	» 360-degree feedback
» Criticisms of relationship management are reviewed.	» Staff engagement surveys

2. List five questions you can ask peers and direct reports to gather feedback about your relationship management skills.

3. Which of the following statements about analysing relationship management feedback are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a) Categorise the feedback to determine the broad areas where you need to improve.	» Yes	» No
b) Follow up should be used when a manager needs to clarify feedback.	» Yes	» No
c) It is important to dismiss feedback if it comes from a person who has low credibility.	» Yes	» No
d) When analysing feedback, plans can be developed to identify how you intend to implement improvements.	» Yes	» No
e) Identifying trends with the feedback is a key analytical task.	» Yes	» No

4. Which of the following protocols should be followed when evaluating personal performance about workplace relationships? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Seek to gather as much relevant information as possible to evaluate performance.
- ◯ All aspects of the ability to lead workplace relationships should be evaluated.
- ◯ An effective manager needs to act on evaluations that identify areas for improvement.
- ◯ Once an evaluation is made, there is no need for further review or action.
- ◯ Evaluations should be made about specific aspects of relationship management performance.

Part B

Case study

Jose is a manager at a sporting goods warehouse. His roles include coordinating staff, distributing daily tasks and managing relationships between staff and the owners of the company. Recently, there have been disputes involving Jose and the employees, and the owners have come to you to complain about the operations within the business. Jose decided to use two forms of feedback to find the cause of the problem; a face-to-face meeting with all employees and owners, and a formal staff engagement survey.

After analysing the results; Jose identified the following trends from the data.

- Many employees do not feel they are clear on what their task roles are. They are informed via 'word of mouth' from other employees.
- An owner and some employees felt Jose had favoured particular employees, and refused to discipline those who he is friends with outside of work.
- Discriminatory language was very common and left some employees feeling isolated.
- Staff felt they lacked the support they required to complete their jobs.

1. Which methods should Jose use to improve his work completion and relationships skills? Select yes or no for each one.

a) Focus on sales figures as this is the main goal of the business	» Yes	» No
b) Organise extra social events for staff so they can improve the relationships within the workforce	» Yes	» No
c) Implement a Code of Conduct with social inclusion policies to prevent discriminatory language from management as well as staff	» Yes	» No
d) Enrol in a formal management course that focuses on improving workplace relationship management skills	» Yes	» No
e) Follow up with staff about feedback areas such as lacking support and knowledge of their job roles	» Yes	» No