BSBXCM501

LEAD COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

BSBXCM501

Lead communication in the workplace

Release 3

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1

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

Contact details

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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBXCM501 Lead communication in the workplace*, Release 3. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

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

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

Foundation skills

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

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Writing	• Utilises sophisticated writing skills to summarise information from various sources and distinguish significant information from minor references
Navigate the world of work	• Seeks to improve organisational policies and procedures to better meet organisational goals
Get the work done	• Evaluates effectiveness of communication channels, systems and processes to inform decisions and implement improvements • Uses digital technology to find, record or communicate basic information

What do you already know?

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

Topic	Key outcome		Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Establish communication protocols	1A	Analyse information needs to develop communication protocols	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B	Adapt communication protocols	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C	Prepare materials to support or implement communication protocols	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2: Coordinate effective communication	2A	Direct and motivate others to communicate	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B	Explain complex information to positively influence others	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C	Identify and address communication challenges	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 3: Present and negotiate persuasively	3A	Present information persuasively	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B	Evaluate different perspectives	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3C	Negotiate and implement agreed outcomes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 4: Review communication practices	4A Provide mentoring to others to achieve communication goals	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	4B Obtain feedback to manage communication outcomes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	4C Identify and implement improvements to communication processes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1 | Establish communication protocols

1A   Analyse information needs to develop communication protocols

1B   Adapt communication protocols

1C   Prepare resources to support or implement communication protocols

1A Analyse information needs to develop communication protocols

The information needs in a workplace are likely to be vast and will vary depending on organisation types and sizes and their internal and external needs. Identifying and analysing these information needs is the first step towards developing a communication protocol that will meet organisational needs and goals.

Information comes from external sources, such as customers, suppliers, consultants, other businesses, government departments, competitors and industry associations. Internal sources include colleagues, supervisors and managers, other teams and departments, other branches and members of boards and committees.

In order to analyse the internal and external information needs relevant to the workplace, you will first need to identify the types of information that are relevant to your workplace. Examples of these are outline in the following table:

Policies/ procedures	- Organisational policies and procedures cover a wide range of subjects such as employment conditions, work health and safety (WHS), technical processes, 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 to operate smoothly. - Frontline managers need to induct new employees into the organisation by clearly explaining the organisation's policies and procedures, clarifying issues new employees are unsure of and explaining why this information is important. You may give a new staff member a folder of relevant material, such as the policies and procedures manual, organisational forms and information, or show the employee how to access the information via the organisation's intranet or library.

Planning/ operational	- An understanding of the organisation's goals and its social and ethical standards are essential for teams to function collaboratively. This information is generally found in an organisation's vision or mission statement, code of best practice, business or strategic plans, risk management strategies, operational budgets, team plans, annual reports, or other operational documents including the outcomes of continuous improvement and quality assurance processes. - A code of conduct describes the conduct expected of all employees and outlines the rules or responsibilities that an organisation will observe when dealing with all stakeholders. - Ethics or values statements describe the broad behavioural expectations of employees, rather than specific rules that must be enforced. - Organisational standards describe the way in which specific business operations must be conducted and direct what is deemed acceptable behaviour when performing specific work responsibilities. Specific organisational standards may be developed to cover customer service, human resource issues, quality assurance, dress and corporate presentation, or meeting legislative issues. - Frontline managers need to make sure team members know where these documents are stored.
Marketing	- Most organisations have a range of marketing and customer-related information that includes product and pricing catalogues, customer service charters, refund and exchange policies, market surveys, customer feedback data, advertising campaigns and promotional material such as brochures, product datasheets and special offers. - This information helps marketing, sales and customer service staff carry out their duties in accordance with company policy and marketing strategies, and improve their performance and achieve sales goals. All employees should be aware of these documents, even if they are not in a marketing or customer-focused role. Marketing and customer-related data helps all employees understand the organisation's products or services, respond to inquiries and work in line with broader organisational goals. - Keeping customers satisfied remains a key initiative for most organisations. This is reflected in the development of customer service charters, which describe the desired behaviours that employees should follow when dealing with both internal and external customers.
Sales records	Sales records include sales forecasts and records of targets achieved. Sales forecasts help organisations prepare short- and long-term plans. Records are kept of all results in relation to sales targets. These may be updated through a database, spreadsheet or Microsoft Word file. Invoices record the sales transactions that an organisation makes. Invoices may be from suppliers or to debtors.

Performance plans	- A major source of information that can help improve work performance is the documentation that accompanies quality assurance processes, skills audits and team and individual performance reviews. - Sharing operational outcomes with your work colleagues and making sure they know how to access performance data on a regular basis helps them monitor their progress and see how their activities affect the bigger picture. - Sharing this information encourages staff to identify and make suggestions about how to improve both individual and team performances. - Celebrating the completion of a project, acknowledging good performance and passing on third-party reports are all methods of sharing performance data with your team. Poor performance or feedback may provide you with an opportunity to discuss issues with the team or individual on ways to improve work performance.
Financial data	Organisations store many types of financial documents. They include sales figures, tax information, accounting spreadsheets, invoices, payroll information, superannuation information, insurance records and lists of debtors. This information is regularly updated in accordance with standard practice.
Stock/ production	Information about production targets helps organisations plan for the production of goods. Sales staff also use production targets to estimate the amount of stock available to customers over a given period. Information on production targets should be regularly updated and distributed throughout the organisation. This is often accessible via the organisation's website or intranet.

Consider organisational and legislative requirements

There are organisational and legislative requirements that will identify some of the needs required within your workplace. The following information describes these:

Policies

Policies set out specific guidelines or rules that tell staff how to work according to the organisation's objectives.

Procedures

Procedures put the organisation's policies into practice by setting out the way work is done, step by step. They are used to control work processes, allocate responsibilities for each task and ensure that requirements are met. Procedures include:

- standard operating procedures
- safety data sheets (SDSs)
- organisational activities undertaken to meet performance outcomes
- a set of accepted actions approved by the organisation.

Relevant legislative requirements

Teams must work within relevant legislation, codes, national standards and work health and safety (WHS) rules. Managers should note that many laws and standards are complex and are amended regularly.

National legislation exists on many issues, while states and territories also have their own laws. Your organisation should provide you with details of legislation and guidelines that are relevant to procedures.

Work health and safety	• Employers have a duty to provide a safe work environment for their employees. A breach of the relevant Act may result in prosecution and substantial fines. Where a breach results in the death of or injury to a worker, the employer may also have to pay compensation to the worker or their legal representative. This is legislated at both the federal and state level.
Equal employment opportunity	• In Australia, federal, state and territory laws cover equal employment opportunity in the workplace. Organisations are required by these laws to create a workplace free from discrimination and harassment. As a manager, you should understand your rights and responsibilities under human rights and anti-discrimination law. By putting effective procedures in place you can improve productivity and increase efficiency. • Employing people facing barriers to employment is often overlooked by employers and can be a useful way to diversify the skill set within an organisation. Funding and incentives are available for organisations supporting people with a disability, Indigenous Australians, the long-term unemployed and mature-aged people.
Anti-discrimination	• Managers and team leaders must prevent and eliminate discrimination in the workplace, whether based on grounds of race, colour, gender, sexual preference, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin.

Sexual harassment	▪ Sexual harassment is broadly defined as an unwelcome sexual advance or unwelcome request for sexual favours, or any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, principally in circumstances where the perpetrator would have anticipated that the victim or victims would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. This includes discriminating against people based on their sexual preference.
	▪ Laws regarding sexual harassment fall under the relevant equal opportunity and discrimination legislation in your state or territory.
	▪ The prohibition against sexual harassment applies to management and their employees. You should ensure that staff are aware of the provisions of the relevant Act and have a clear policy against sexual harassment. Employees should understand that engaging in sexual harassment may be grounds for dismissal, or if they are subject to sexual harassment, they have access to an effective complaints handling procedure.
Environmental	▪ All Australian organisations can play a part in environmental management, but whether environmental laws affect your particular organisation directly will depend on your business activities.
	▪ Federal, state and local governments jointly administer the environmental protection laws in Australia through bilateral agreements. As a manager, you should understand which laws, licences and permits apply to you.

Identifying and analysing information needs

Identifying information needs should be a principal goal. Many assumptions are made about the information needed. Never assume anything and always check with the appropriate people.

By determining the organisational or department goals, you will be able to identify the information required.

Below are some typical questions that should be asked when analysing information needs.

Questions to ask to analyse information needs
What is the information requirement?
Who requires the information?
What communication method is required?
How time-sensitive is the information need?
What organisational or departmental goals does this information contribute to?
Who else might need information in this area?
How regularly is does information need to be communicated?
What response is required by the information?

Example

Identifying and analysing information needs

James is the customer service manager at an online retail store. His manager has asked him to identify the information needs of their customers so they can consider how best to target and streamline their communications to customers. James makes the following list of customer information needs and how they are currently met.

Customer information need	How need is met
Product description and photos	Website
Stock availability	Customer service
Price	Website
Promotions or sales offers	Website, email, social media
Product reviews	Website, social media
Delivery costs and timeframes	Website
Returns policy and processing	Website, customer service

James and his manager look over the table and discuss how stock availability is the only need not met by the website. They discuss how many calls or emails they receive about stock levels and the inefficiencies of dealing with these queries and how many customers they might have lost because that information was not available on the website. This activity has created a clear action to explore how stock levels can be added to the website in order to more quickly satisfy an information need.

Developing a communication protocol

A communication process is the set of steps you take in order to achieve communication goals.

A communication protocol is a set of expected practices in communication for your organisation. These processes and protocols should cover all forms of communication used by your organisation, including phone, face-to-face, meetings, email, texting and social media. They should be guided by your organisation's communication strategies to ensure consistency of message and process.

A communication protocol outlines the types of information to be communicated in an organisation and the person or people responsible for the message, as well as the audience, frequency and communication methods.

After you have identified the types of information that are relevant to your workplace and analysed the internal and external information needs, you will need to identify the information owner and the frequency required. You will then need to align these with the audience and communication methods to develop a framework for your organisation's communication protocols that meets its needs and goals.

Communication processes and protocols should address some of these issues below.

Internal communication

There should be a clear process for communication within your organisational hierarchy. Generally, staff would communicate directly with their line managers or supervisors; however, in some situations they may need to communicate with a person who deals with a specific task or issue. For example, there may be a person delegated to complete intake assessments or to manage mandatory reporting requirements.

Talking to the media

It is important for an organisation to be clear and consistent about communicating with the media. To facilitate this, most organisations delegate one person (often the CEO or communication manager) to communicate with the media through press releases or interviews. Staff need to understand the organisation's protocols regarding media involvement.

Using social media

Social media can be a useful way to communicate with stakeholders; however, there need to be clear protocols on how social media is used by the organisation. This includes who will update social media, and who will monitor it to ensure any responses are addressed immediately.

Organisational protocols and etiquette for communication

A starting point for developing communication processes and protocols is to ensure that you have a clear knowledge and understanding of any current protocols that exist within the organisation. This could guide your development of any new protocols, but may also reduce the amount of work you need to do. Existing protocols may simply need updating or may already meet the communication needs of the organisation.

'Communication etiquette' refers to the unwritten rules and expectations of an organisation regarding communication. Etiquette is likely to be in line with the organisation's values and could include expectations of communication that is respectful, culturally appropriate and timely and follows approved channels of communication.

Identify organisational needs and goals

Your organisation will have needs and specific goals and outcomes that should be reflected in its communication protocols. Often these needs and goals are outlined and documented in business and strategic plans. These plans should include communication needs and goals with all relevant stakeholders.

Strategic plan

A strategic plan is an organisation's documented outline of its goals or direction and how it will achieve them. It may include the organisation's vision and values, organisational goals, actions required to achieve these goals and the priorities of the organisation. It should include communication objectives such as promoting the organisation or providing information.

Business plan

A business plan is an organisation's business goals or objectives. It identifies the organisation's target market and outlines financial aims or issues. As the community services sector becomes more competitive, business plans indicating funding opportunities, partnership goals and financial management are increasingly important. The plan should include the role of communication strategies to meet these objectives.

Identify owner of the message

The message owner will vary depending on the type of information being communicated. Policies and processes are normally owned by the HR and senior management teams, financial information may be owned by the finance team, general email communications, meetings and calls are likely to be owned by every employee. It is important to specify if information may only be communicated by certain people or teams, as this establishes a clear protocol for everyone to follow.

Identify your audience and purpose

Effective communication means conveying information appropriately using a variety of communication methods. How you convey information after it has been gathered and interpreted depends on its nature and purpose and who it is for. The communication method and content selected can vary significantly between different groups of people.

Be clear about your purpose in communicating the information and consider the way in which the message will be received by your audience. When you communicate ideas and information that supports the achievement of work responsibilities to team members, consider any specific social, cultural or other needs that may require certain approaches, and adjust your chosen communication methods as appropriate.

Your audience could include:
- work colleagues   - your supervisor   - senior management   - colleagues within the organisation   - people in another division of your organisation   - existing clients or suppliers   - potential customers   - the general public   - specific target groups.

Identify frequency of information

When you analyse the information needs relevant to your workplace, you will also identify how often specific information needs to be communicated. A typical workplace has weekly or monthly reports, daily sales updates, weekly meetings and numerous phone calls and emails each day. Identifying the frequency of the information will help you choose the best communication method.

Choose a communication method

Your choice of communication method will largely depend on your purpose, as well as your audience and their needs. More than one communication method may be necessary to get your message across and allow for discussion and feedback.

Communication involves more than speaking and writing. It should include opportunities for two-way interaction, listening, exchanging ideas, consultation and negotiation, as well as non-verbal communication. It is helpful to invite input from work colleagues when examining the implications of decisions. Involving them in the process will ensure they are committed to the outcomes. There are advantages and disadvantages in using various communication methods.

Verbal – individual	Examples: face-to-face contact, telephone conversations
	▪ 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: meetings, discussion groups
	▪ Advantages: sends consistent message; provides opportunity for questioning and sharing; provides chance for agreed approach
	▪ Disadvantages: time-consuming; cumbersome; different personality types can dominate or withdraw
Written – electronic	Examples: emails, intranet postings
	▪ Advantages: quick and efficient; sends consistent message; is visually effective
	▪ Disadvantages: cannot be sure message is read; message may be misinterpreted
Written – open	Examples: display notices; instruction sheets; system documentation; reports, minutes or newsletters
	▪ Advantages: sends consistent messages; 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: memos, letters
	▪ Advantages: can be carefully worded; is direct; allows for confidentiality; is a clear record
	▪ Disadvantages: too formal and impersonal; does not encourage discussions

Presentation	Examples: exhibitions, 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

Creating a communication protocol structure

Now that you've collated all the information needs and components of a communication protocol, you can present them in a table to capture all the requirements for your communication protocol framework. An example of this is shown below.

Information	Owner	Audience	Purpose	Frequency	Method
Production figures	Production manager and team	Senior management, board of directors	To meet reporting requirements	Weekly	Written report with spreadsheets and comments; a verbal report at a meeting
Information about company history, values, products and services, policies, personnel	Human resources manager and team	New staff	To induct new staff members	As required and to be updated monthly or as changes occur	Face-to-face contact, folio of information, group presentations
Information about company history, values, products and services	Sales and marketing managers and teams	New and existing customers	To inform customers	As required	Website Social media
Details of new work requirements	Managers or team leaders	Team members	To inform and train	As required	Memo, email, group meeting
Warning about workplace safety	Human resources manager and team	Staff members and visitors to the premises	To encourage safe workplace practices	As required	Notices, emails, discussion at a team meeting

Information	Owner	Audience	Purpose	Frequency	Method
Promotion of product features and prices	Sales and marketing managers and teams	New and existing customers	To generate sales	Weekly	Brochures, new webpage, marketing emails, social media
Performance review	Human resources manager and team, all managers	Team members	Performance management	Quarterly (varies by organisation)	Written notes, face-to-face discussions, negotiation
Customer feedback	Customer service manager, sales manager and teams	Team members and management	To plan for quality improvements	Weekly	Preparation of summary report, brainstorming sessions
Budget constraints	Finance manager, all managers	Team members	To monitor spending	Monthly	Consultation, memo, email

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Give examples of the information needs relevant to a workplace. What internal or external information could you access to find these?

Question 2

What workplace communication covers legislative requirements?

Question 3

What information are you required to communicate in your role? Capture these in the following table. If you are not the information owner, indicate who is.

Type of information	Owner	Audience	Purpose	Frequency	Method of communication

1B Adapt communication protocols

Good, consistent communication strategies ensure that all stakeholders, including staff, customers and suppliers, have timely access to the information they require in an easy-to-understand format.

Employees and customers come from a variety of backgrounds, have different abilities and a wide range of experiences. It is useful to consider how these different experiences, abilities and backgrounds may influence the types of communication strategies you choose to use or whether the communication strategies need to be adapted in your specific working context.

Some examples of contexts to consider when establishing communication protocols are listed below.

English as an additional language

According to the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, more than 15 per cent of Australians speak a language other than English at home, and there are around 200 languages spoken in Australia, including Indigenous languages. In any Australian workplace, it is quite likely that some of the staff members will have learnt English as an additional language. This can be an asset, but it may mean that some staff may need extra support to build English written and verbal communication skills.

Educational level and demographics

Statistics from 2011 provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that people who work in the community services sector are typically female (about 84 per cent) and more than half are aged over 45 years. Many have completed Year 12 or higher qualifications, but only 20 per cent have completed a bachelor's degree or higher. This informs us to some extent about the potential communication needs of a typical community services workforce; that is, that some support may be required for complex and lengthy writing and speaking tasks.

Confidence and experience

Written and verbal communication skills improve with practice and support and, as skills improve, so does confidence. Some people may not have had very many opportunities to practise these skills and so may lack confidence in doing tasks such as taking minutes, writing reports, developing proposals and plans or giving a presentation. Extra support such as training and coaching can assist in building confidence and experience, as can having appropriate workplace expectations, without causing stress or anxiety for a staff member. Most importantly, you can provide staff members with opportunities to practise communication skills in a supportive environment.

Preference for communication styles and techniques

Some people are highly verbal and prefer to do most of their communicating face to face or over the phone. Other people prefer written communication and are more comfortable with emails, text messages and other written documents. Most work roles require people to use a combination of communication styles and techniques. It is useful to encourage people within a team to utilise their strengths, but also to encourage skills in non-preferred areas of communication. This broadens the overall skill set of your work team and makes sure that, as a group, you can continue to develop as effective communicators.

Disabilities that can affect communication

It is likely that some staff members will have disabilities that will affect the communication strategies that are used. For example, a person may have a hearing disability that may require other staff to learn how to communicate effectively, such as facing the person when talking. The person may have a learning disability that makes written tasks challenging and may require support with equipment or alternative communication strategies.

Behaviours of concern

In some workplaces, work is done with people experiencing high levels of stress and trauma, suffering mental health issues or using alcohol or other drugs. On occasion this can lead to behaviours of concern, which may include aggressive behaviour. You may need to learn to adapt communication strategies to include diffusing aggressive situations and procedures to ensure the safety of staff and others.

Adaptations that may be required

Adaptations to communication protocols must address the particular context.

You may find it useful to discuss the context or situation with individual staff to assess what their communication needs are and to decide together what adaptations will improve communication. For example, you may discuss how communication protocols can be adapted to meet the needs of people with hearing impairments with a staff member who has a hearing loss.

Adaptations may include ensuring that written and verbal communication occurs at staff meetings to meet different communication styles of the team. It could mean training for the team to communicate effectively with a hearing-impaired staff member, or ensuring a computer has an appropriate screen cover to assist a staff member with a learning disability to read more easily. Cultural diversity training may also be a way to facilitate effective communication within the team.

Alternative communication strategies that can assist in making information accessible to all people are outlined below.

Large print/braille	• For older people • For people who have a visual impairment
Audio	• For people who have a visual impairment • For people who prefer information in audio format • For people who prefer to listen to information in small sections or in the privacy of their own homes
Translations	• For people who do not read English to a level where they can easily understand written communication • For people who can read English, but wish to receive complex information in their first language
Listening devices	• For people who have a hearing impairment and are listening to a presentation, talk or workshop in a public location, such as a lecture theatre • Examples include audio loops or induction loop systems and sound amplifiers
Communication devices	• For people who do not have intelligible spoken language • For people who have a physical and/or intellectual disability • Examples include static and dynamic communication devices, communication boards and picture cues
Text-to-speech	• For people who require additional support to access computer word-processing programs or web pages, and who benefit from hearing written on-screen text read aloud • For people with dyslexia, dysgraphia and visual impairments

Adapting communication protocols for internal and external audiences

The way you communicate inside an organisation can be very different to the way you communicate with people outside your organisation. Inside your organisation you will be aware of the organisational culture, and the information needs of the employees. Internal communication protocols might be adapted to ensure they are inclusive of all staff members, particularly when they have physical or cognitive disabilities. The requirements of the external audience could be unknown unless extensive market research has been done, so you must ensure that the communication protocols contain clear, concise and inclusive language and uphold the organisational reputation and culture. Internal communications protocols may be adapted for external audiences by ensuring that they are widely-accessible.

Adapting communication protocols for risk-based or emergency guides

An important communicate protocol in an organisation concerns workplace health and safety and what to do during an emergency. Safe Work Australia has produced a fact sheet about emergency plans. It can be found here: aspirelr.link/safework-emergency-plans

Your organisation may base your emergency communication protocols on a document such as this. However, if you have employees in your workplace who are hearing or vision impaired, or have mobility or cognitive issues, then you will need to adapt these protocols to ensure the information needs of these employees are not overlooked. The plan will need to be adapted to include processes for the requirements these employees may have during an emergency.

Identify ways for adapting communication protocols

Adapting communication protocols requires a series of steps to be taken in order to work effectively within a particular context. It is important to identify an appropriate process and follow it to ensure that the adaptation meets the organisation's objectives and values.

Begin with reviewing the communication strategies your organisation has in place. For example, analyse the demographics of the team in terms of culture, language, experience and communication styles.

Consider whether the communication strategies you are using meet the needs of everyone on the team. If not, you should decide how the strategies can be adapted. This should include a conversation with team members to gain their input. Develop a proposal to adapt the organisation's communication strategies and discuss it with relevant stakeholders in the organisation.

Below is another approach you could follow to adapt a protocol.

Adapting a communication protocol
- Consider who will be involved in the process and set up a meeting.   - Be clear on the purpose – why does this protocol need adapting?   - Identify changes that are required.   - Document changes.   - Implement new communication protocol within the organisation.

Example

Adapt communication protocols to suit a range of contexts

Ruthi manages a team of staff who are responsible for the project management of the various projects the organisation undertakes. The team meets regularly for project updates, and Ruthi has an open-door policy for informal discussions with the team. The organisation has a policy that projects are tracked electronically and updated at the end of each day. Ruthi notices that one staff member, despite frequent reminders, does not complete the updates. Ruthi meets with the staff member to discuss her concerns and discovers that the staff member has difficulty reading computer screens. She describes to Ruthi how the writing on the screen swirls around. Ruthi and the staff member discuss options and Ruthi discovers that a coloured screen cover and changing the font and background colour will make working much easier for the staff member and allow her to complete written communication requirements.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Choose a communication protocol, and discuss adaptions that may be required for two different contexts.

Question 2

Explain why it is important to adapt communication protocols to suit various contexts.
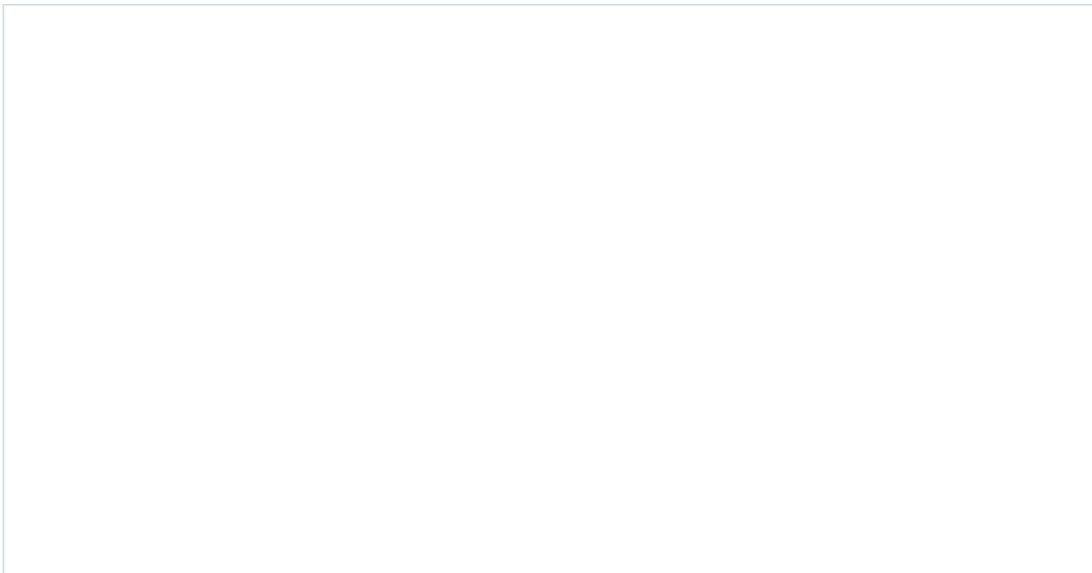
Question 3

Select and describe a communication protocol in your organisation and discuss the following:

» What is the communication need it is serving?

» How can this communication protocol be adapted for cross-cultural needs?

» How can this communication protocol be adapted to individuals with special needs or disabilities?

1C Prepare materials to support or implement communication protocols

Communication protocols are practical guidelines and, once developed and documented, need to be implemented by your team or the whole organisation in order to be useful.

You will need to share the communication protocols with staff in the most effective manner. In order to do this, you will need to prepare clear and concise information and resources to support staff in the implementation process.

Decide what types of information and/or materials staff need in order to implement a communication protocol. Think about the specific communication needs of your staff, and how much time will be required for each method in comparison to the time you have to implement the protocol.

Who needs to know about the protocol and how will the protocol be clear and useable for staff? What format will be most effective for sharing this information? Should you discuss it at a staff meeting, or place posters in prominent places?

You may develop these materials yourself, or find existing resources that you could adapt, keeping in mind that you must consider any relevant copyright laws. You can model the communication protocol by demonstrating clear communication in the way you implement the protocol.

Materials that can be used to implement or support a communication protocol include:
• written materials such as a summary or an example of the protocol
• visual materials such as graphs or a flow chart demonstrating the protocol steps
• a slideshow to use at a staff meeting outlining and demonstrating the protocol
• a prepared case study or role play to provide staff with an opportunity to practise the protocol
• digital resources such as an email outlining the protocol with links to the documentation
• posters in appropriate places reminding staff of the protocol, or small reminders placed near phones or computers.

Consider the appropriate format and style

A key responsibility for leaders is to present information in an appropriate style and format, taking into account the knowledge, experience and expertise of users, the intended use of the information and the level of urgency of the request. Formats may be written, visual, verbal or a combination of these. However, all information must be documented in some manner in order to be available for future reference.

It is essential that you have the skills to be able to generate complex written texts using sophisticated writing skills and a broad range of writing styles. Be aware of appropriate conventions and stylistic devices you can use to express precise meaning, such as using an executive summary, headings, dot-points, case studies, graphic presentations such as tables, graphs or pie charts, or a glossary. Sometimes the required format might be specified in the request from the user or may be required in order to meet a specified purpose; for example, evidence requested by an auditor may need to be presented on a specific form with answers to specific questions.

Formatting style guidelines

You may be required to follow particular formatting styles for different reasons. While this is important, you need to create a balance between the formatting requirements and the readability of your document. Here are some styles you may come across.

House style	If the style guide for your organisation emphasises the format, layout and appearance of a document, then it may be helpful to create a small portion of the document for internal review and feedback before continuing further. This provides the opportunity to verify that you have correctly understood the requirements before you spend considerable time formatting the document. If the document is formatted by other employees or an external company, this may not be required. Your manager should be able to advise you on the house style for your organisation, or there may be an organisation style guide available as a reference.
Readability	Readability refers to the reading ease of a document. Research shows that documents with a high level of readability improve comprehension, retention and reading speed. It's therefore important to aim for a high level of readability in your documents.
	There are a number of different systems to measure readability. These systems assess the sentence length, the average number of syllables per word, and the number of sentences in the document. These results are put into different formulae to create a readability score. Microsoft Word can be configured to provide a readability score when performing a grammar check, using the Flesch test.
Plain English	Using simple English will help improve the readability of your document. Some common guidelines for using simple English include the following:
	• Use active language rather than passive language.
	• Use inclusive language and avoid discriminatory language.
	• Use short sentences with one main point.
	• Vary sentence and paragraph length.
	• Avoid repeating content unnecessarily.

Ensure the information is accessible to all

From a legal and ethical perspective, communication must be accessible to all stakeholders regardless of their age, disability, gender or race. By definition, communication is an exchange of information between communication partners, so if one partner has not understood the message, then communication has not been successful.

Here is how you can ensure information is accessible to all.

Ensuring accessibility of information
• Consider the most likely communication scenarios that occur in your workplace and the strategies and processes that may be needed for these.
• Meet the needs of and demonstrate respect for the cultures and languages of your organisation and the people who receive services.
• Analyse the demographics of the people living in a particular local government area to identify the community languages spoken and cultures represented.
• Make sure any information is inclusive and free from discrimination, insensitive language and anything that may cause offence.

Formatting and document appearance

Depending on your organisation's structure and procedures, you may not be responsible for formatting the final document. If someone else will format the document, then you should ensure that they are aware of any organisation requirements, such as those contained in the style guide or any other workplace policy or procedure.

If you are responsible for formatting the document, you should be guided by the organisation requirements or the style guide. If there are no guidelines in place, then spend some planning time considering your format so you can use it consistently throughout your document.

Some elements to consider include:
• font styles for standard text, headings and subheadings, emphasising text, creating case studies, introducing new terms and so on
• headers and footers including document references, logos, copyright messages and so on
• labelling of graphics and other illustrations
• spacing between paragraphs, lists and sections to provide white space
• use of borders, break-out boxes and other emphasising tools.

> **Example**
>
> ### Information and materials to support the implementation of communication protocols
>
> Claire has developed a communication protocol about responding to telephone inquiries to the organisation. Claire presents the information at a staff meeting and prepares a flow chart, which outlines who calls should be forwarded to depending on the type of inquiry. She hands the chart each staff member and explains the process. Claire takes questions at the meeting and adds the extension numbers of relevant staff to the flow chart to make it easier to use. She then follows up by ensuring that a copy of the flow chart is laminated next to each phone in the organisation. One staff member comments on how the flow chart is visual and easier to follow than a long, written process.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Describe what resources you might prepare to implement a communication protocol in your workplace.

Question 2

Explain why resources are needed to support the implementation of a communication protocol.

Summary

- Organisations deal with various information types that meet different information needs.
- Some information needs are determined by organisational and legislative requirements.
- The structure of a communication protocol should identify the types of information to be communicated in an organisation, the person or people responsible for the message as well as the audience, frequency, and communication methods.
- Communication protocols need to be adapted to suit various contexts such as culture, language or special needs.
- The implementation of communication protocols should be supported by resources to ensure that it goes smoothly and is understood by staff.

Learning Checkpoint 1

Establish communication protocols

Part A

1. Explain how the materials used to support and implement a communication protocol will differ between internal and external audiences.
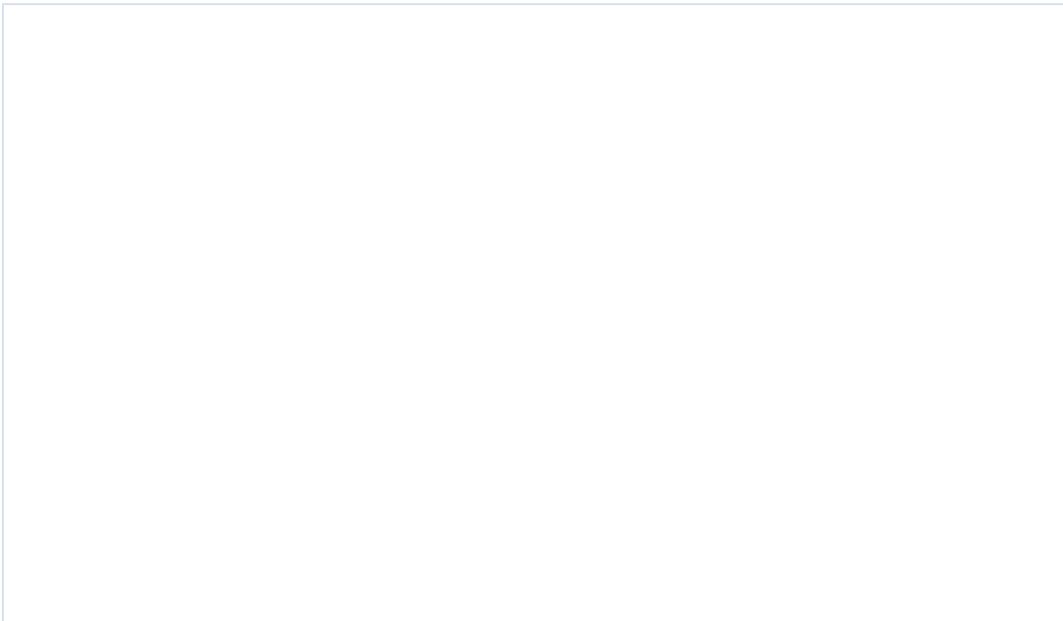
2. Suggest a way that an emergency or risk-based protocol could be adapted to suit individuals with special needs or disabilities.
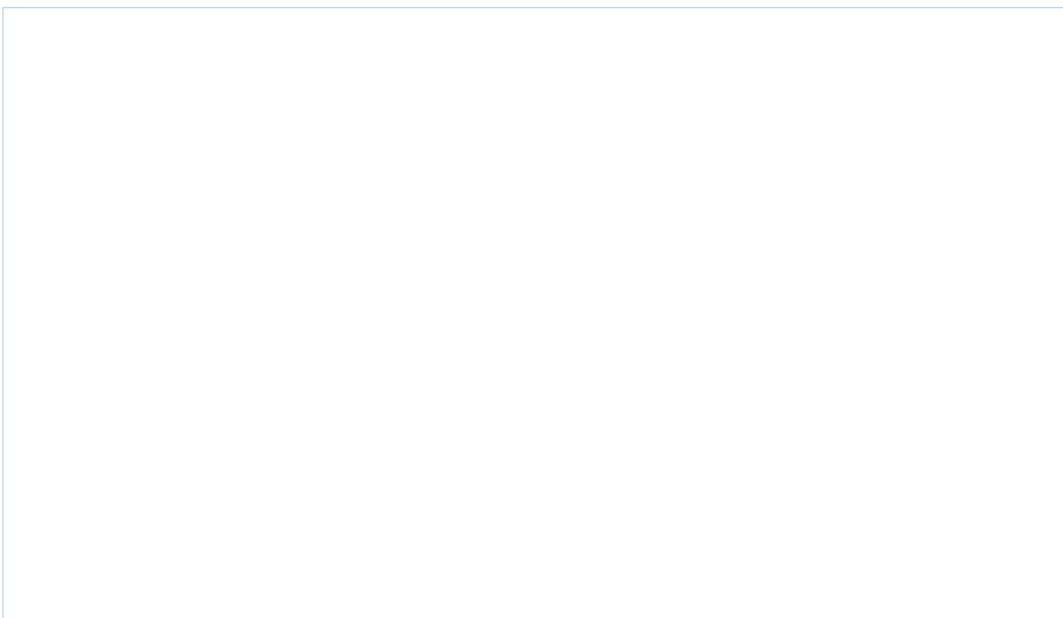
Part B

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

Case study

Josie runs a busy city café. The café is planning to introduce a new system that will allow orders to be taken more quickly by the cashier and also received via a mobile phone app. The orders will be sent to a visual display over the barista station.

1. Analyse the internal and external information needs relevant to the introduction of this new system.
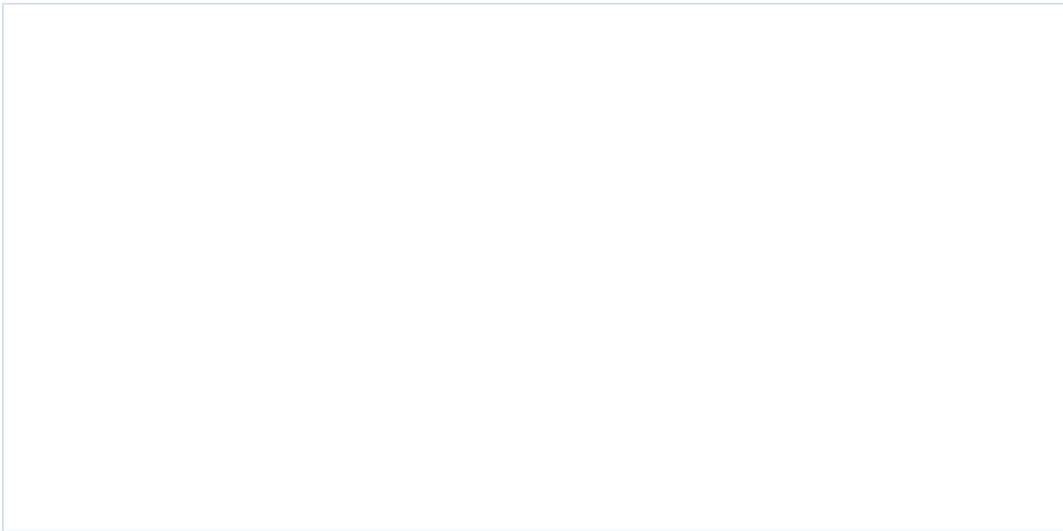
2. What legislative requirements need to be considered when introducing communication protocols about the new system?
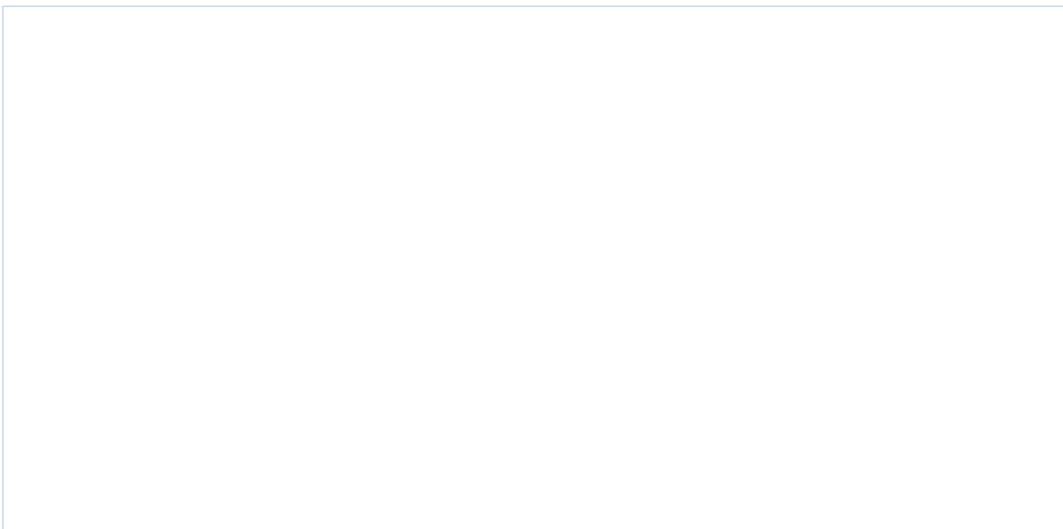
3. Complete the following table to create a communication protocol framework for both internal café staff and their customers.

Information	Owner	Audience	Purpose	Frequency	Method

4. Choose one response to Question 3 that could be adapted to suit various contexts and explain how.

Topic 2 | Coordinate effective communication

2A   Direct and motivate others to communicate

2B   Explain complex information to positively influence others

2C   Identify and address communication challenges

2A Direct and motivate others to communicate

Part of leading communication in the workplace is ensuring that others follow communication protocols and that their communication aligns with organisational requirements and goals.

Disseminating communication protocols

Official communication channels transmit organisational information such as goals or policies.

Your organisation is likely to already have a set of communication protocols in place alongside official communication channels. Messages in an official communication channel follow a chain of command. This usually means that information flows from managers to staff, and vice versa. For example, in most organisations any concerns or issues at staff level are usually communicated to your line manager directly, not broadcast to the entire organisation or sent directly to the CEO. There may even be a communication flow chart which directs staff to the persons they should contact regarding specific issues. As a manager, it is your role to ensure that staff are aware of communication protocols and that you direct them to communicate according to organisational requirements and goals.

Allocating responsibilities for standard communication

In any organisation, everyone is responsible for communication; but as a manager, it is essential that you ensure that your staff are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to communicating with internal and external audiences. Job descriptions may outline communication responsibilities, but many are likely to be related to work tasks and staff need to know what they are responsible for communicating and how they should do this.

In your workplace, you are likely to see the role of communication in an activity distilled into three main roles: owner, producer, audience.

- The owner sets the work activity and it is their responsibility to clearly communicate what is required.
- The producer is responsible for creating and completing the work activity according to requirements. The activity may require a collaborative team effort, so the communication responsibilities may need to be defined and shared.
- The audience receives the output of the work activity and it is their responsibility to engage with it either by reading, listening or viewing the content of the activity. They may also be required to respond to the activity.

In your workplace, it is likely you and your staff will fulfil all three roles repeatedly throughout your day depending on the tasks you are working on.

Your organisation is also likely to have either formal or informal requirements for how communication should occur. This is the organisation's etiquette (or standard) for communication. This may include the type of language that is acceptable, how meetings are run, rules for using social media in the workplace, and how acceptable group emails are.

Organisational requirements

There are likely to be a number of organisational requirements in your workplace when it comes to how staff communicate. It is important that staff are aware of these and know how to communicate within these guidelines. The requirements that are likely to be found in most organisations are described below.

Social standards

Social standards apply within the workplace and in the organisation's relationship with staff and external stakeholders. As a manager, you need to ensure your team members are aware of the organisation's internal standards and they are adhered to at all times. Some organisation standards are described below.

Workplace values	This document sets out the values the organisation wishes to uphold in areas such as:
	- equity and diversity - industrial relations - flexible work practices or family-friendly policies - work health and safety - fair treatment - management/staff consultation and cooperation.
Code of conduct	This document covers employee behaviour and workplace processes such as:
	- work hours and rosters - acceptable behaviour - social inclusiveness and respect for individuals - work environment (formal/informal etc.) - dress code - workplace maintenance, security, signing-on - honesty and cooperation between staff - confidentiality and intellectual property.

Employment policies	Most organisations have documented policies covering areas such as:
	• recruitment and promotion
	• equal opportunity
	• rewards and recognition for high-performing staff
	• profit sharing and other staff benefits
	• education, training and development
	• performance review and grievance processes
	• leave arrangements
	• use of vehicles and staff travel arrangements.

Ethical standards

Organisations and the people within them rely on outsiders for business and support. They are required by the wider community and by governing bodies to operate responsibly, demonstrate acceptable values and show respect to those affected by the work they do.

Many organisations willingly develop a set of business ethics that governs the way they operate, for purposes of best practice, philanthropy and a desire to be good corporate citizens. These ethical standards set out guiding principles and dictate the way an organisation and its employees act in certain areas.

You must be fully conversant with the standards you and your staff are expected to comply with. They may have been documented by your organisation in ethical guidelines or a code of conduct, or they may apply within your broader profession or industry and your organisation may not be aware of them.

Ethical standards cover areas such as:
• sustainability, health and issues related to how the organisation's operations affect the environment and local community
• the impact of trading practices on other organisations and the broader community
• investment and financial management
• dealings with suppliers, contractors, consumers and other stakeholders
• professional conduct in fields such as consulting, health, education, law, accounting, financial advice, IT, defence, etc.
• research, covering data integrity, use of privileged information, plagiarism and animal welfare issues in product testing
• publishing and the media
• legislative and regulatory requirements.

Some organisations develop statements or charters setting out their core values and the way they do business. These serve to build the organisation's reputation and culture, and to remind staff, customers and the outside world in general what the organisation stands for and how it conducts its operations.

Business standards may include a vision statement, a mission statement, a customer service charter and a brand; these are outlined below.

Vision statement

A vision statement encapsulates the reason for the organisation's existence and its vision for the future.

Mission statement

A mission statement summarises the organisation's overall objectives.

Customer service charter

A customer service charter sets out a code of best practice for servicing and dealing with the organisation's clients.

Brand or corporate image

A brand or corporate image is a tool for signifying to the outside world the identity the organisation aspires to and the essence of its products and services. This affects all areas of the organisation's operations (not just marketing and sales). Staff must be aware of the image the organisation is trying to portray and the ways in which they are required to carry out their duties in line with the organisation's corporate image.

Confidential ideas and information

All employees need to be aware of any confidentiality or privacy issues when reviewing or handling information.

Some ideas and information need to be viewed as commercially or politically sensitive.

Commonwealth, state and territory privacy legislation governs the use of personal information. To read more about privacy standards, visit: aspirelr.link/oaic

If you are unsure about how to handle particular information:

- refer to your organisation's policies and procedures
- seek advice from a more senior or experienced work colleague
- comply with all Commonwealth, state or territory privacy legislation
- make judgments about when to release certain information
- if appropriate, share information in a memo, notice or announcements at a staff meeting.

Example

Communicate according to organisational requirements

Emmanuel leads the marketing team at his organisation. He has become aware of a social media issue that affected one of their competitors and meets with the management team to discuss their social media protocols. They agree that their protocols need updating to provide staff with clearer guidance so they would be less likely to experience the issue. The changes are discussed, Emmanuel consults with his team and then the management team signs off on the new protocol. Emmanuel runs through the new protocol with his team and directs them to follow this immediately.

Motivate others to communicate respectfully

An effective leader motivates and empowers others to strive enthusiastically and willingly toward the achievement of work goals. A motivated team will deliver a higher standard of work.

Different people are motivated by different stimuli but one of the best ways to motivate staff is to make the work interesting and worthwhile. Ensure variety and challenge by rotating tasks, allocating whole projects that people can take responsibility for from inception to conclusion, and make sure they know the relevance and value of their contribution to team objectives.

The transformational leadership theory originated by Bernard Bass in 1985 suggests that leaders can achieve greater team performance through skilled communication, the formation of positive relationships, and the implementation of innovative workplace processes.

Transformational leaders:
▪ are respected and admired by their work colleagues
▪ inspire team members to be enthusiastic about achieving work goals
▪ solve problems creatively and innovatively
▪ mentor work colleagues and provide opportunities for professional development.

Modelling can be a powerful tool for teaching knowledge, skills and values and motivating others. Learning from role models occurs through observation and reflection. It allows staff to see managers 'walk the walk' and allows you to demonstrate specific skills and encourage staff when they are doing well.

Strategies to become a better role model are listed below.

Strategies to become a better role model in respectful communication
▪ Be aware of what you are modelling and the impact you are having on staff.
▪ Ensure that you are demonstrating communication that meets the standards and protocols of the organisation.
▪ Demonstrate respectful communication with staff and all other stakeholders.
▪ Make time to reflect and discuss what is being learnt with staff.
▪ Make an effort to articulate what you are trying to model to staff.

It can sometimes be challenging to know that staff are watching you and modelling their behaviour on what they see you do; however, staff are much more likely to 'do as you do' than 'do as you say'. It is important that you pay attention to not just what you say, but how you say it. Make sure you are personally meeting organisational standards regarding professional and respectful language, and that you follow communication protocols when communicating with staff or external stakeholders. Also consider the impact of cultural diversity in terms of language and body language.

Respectful communication

Communicating respectfully means you are willing to show consideration or appreciation to the person you are communicating with.

As all communication begins from within the sender, you have the power to choose to be respectful. You can therefore plan your communication in such a way that it shows others you care.

Respectful communication
• Be mindful of the other person.
• Accept that everyone is different and has the right to be so.
• Value their point of view.
• Be polite, sincere, professional and empathetic.
• Use common courtesies, such as please and thank you; know and use the other person's name.

Communicate with a diverse audience

For a communication strategy to be effective, the individual differences of those receiving the communication must be taken into account. If you are to successfully establish positive workplace relationships, you need to recognise diversity and the special needs of those around you, and respond to them by communicating appropriately and sensitively.

What some people consider 'normal' communication may be quite different and even offensive to other cultural groups. 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 don't understand'. In some cultures, it is not accepted practice to look someone in the eye when conversing and people often have different ideas about how closely someone should stand to them during a discussion.

You should know if any cultural sensitivities are associated with the subject of your communication. Consider the person's feelings and if you accidentally cause offence, be prepared to apologise. Respect each person as an individual and try not to make assumptions when you communicate with them. Prejudice and stereotyping are almost always unhelpful, whether they relate to gender, age, physical appearance or any other form of diversity.

Language differences

The 2016 Australian census showed that 20 per cent of Australians speak a language other than English at home. In certain areas or workforce sectors, the percentage is much higher. More than 200 languages are spoken in Australia, with 17 languages predominant.

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

Tips for accommodating language differences in the workplace
- Always check the information you want to convey has been correctly 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 may sometimes be inadequate or inappropriate. You may need to phone rather than email a message to someone who doesn't read English well.   - When speaking with someone for whom English is a second language, speak clearly and slowly and don't shout. Remember that strong accents don't necessarily mean poor English skills.   - Be careful when using slang or idioms. Many expressions that are part of everyday speech don't have a literal meaning and can be very confusing to a person unfamiliar with colloquial English. For example, many instructors tell trainees they will 'get the hang of it'. Think about how someone unfamiliar with the phrase may interpret this.   - Avoid acronyms, even common ones like ASAP, and abbreviations like 'uni' and 'this arvo' unless you are sure the people you are talking to will understand them.

Disability and special needs

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

When communicating in the workplace, you must ensure that people with disabilities have information presented to them in an appropriate format. This may include providing supportive communication devices such as telephone typewriters for those with hearing impairments, making assistive technology available where necessary or placing noticeboards in a position where they can be read by a person in a wheelchair.

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

Tips for communicating with a person with a disability
• Get to know your team members and those you deal with and ask them about their requirements and preferences.
• Do not make the person's ability 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 others by extending sympathy or assuming their disability is a major problem.
• Check the confidentiality status of the person's disability, taking into account privacy and any safety concerns.

Use non-discriminatory language

Exclusive language leaves people out. Using non-discriminatory or inclusive language in workplace communication means that what you say includes everyone regardless of their gender, status, race or abilities.

As a manager, you have a vital role in raising awareness of discriminatory issues among your staff members. Consider organising education programs on cross-cultural awareness, discrimination, bullying and grievance processes. You may also consider other means of increasing the literacy and basic education levels of your work colleagues.

In Australia, it is an offence to harass or discriminate against another person based on their perceived differences. Victims of discrimination have legal recourse. It makes good business sense to be tolerant, flexible and considerate in the way you manage all your workplace relationships. The Australian Human Rights Commission provides information about employers' and employees' rights and responsibilities under human rights and anti-discrimination law in Australia.

You can view the Commission's website at: aspirelr.link/human-rights-commission

Tips for avoiding discriminatory language
• Avoid using 'he/him' or 'she/her' by using 'they/their' or 'the worker', 'the manager'. You can often revise the wording so gender is not an issue.
• Try not to use broad categories. Terms such as 'the blind' and 'Asians' exclude the possibility of differences within these definitions.
• Do not place undue emphasis on differences; for example, '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.

Communicate respectfully

Some of Johanna's team have been invited to join her in a client meeting. They are waiting in the meeting room when Johanna arrives with the client, who is in a wheelchair. It is at this point that they observe that there are some seats missing from the end of the table closest to the door and this is where Johanna suggests the client sits. Johanna allows the client time to get settled, offers assistance and then introduces the team. The meeting goes well and Johanna returns to debrief with the team after she has escorted the client to the lift. When Johanna asks for thoughts and reflections on the meeting, one team member asks how she knew to prepare the meeting room for a wheelchair. Johanna tells her it is good practice to always ask visiting clients if they have any special requirements before they attend a meeting. The others nod in agreement and they have a short discussion about how a meeting could be adapted to suit other specific needs of clients.

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Describe a time when you've had to direct others to communicate according to organisational requirements. Or, alternatively, describe your experience in being directed by others.

Question 2

List how you could motivate others to communicate respectfully and inclusively, using cross-cultural communication strategies.

Question 3

Which of the following outline requirements for workplace communication? Tick all that apply.

○ Social media policy

○ Sustainability policy

○ Code of conduct

○ Communication policy

○ Ethical standards

2B Explain complex information to positively influence others

It can be a challenge to explain complex information to a diverse audience, but there are strategies that can be employed to ensure your message is inclusive and accessible.

Communicating complex information

If information is complex, it may be more difficult to comprehend and you will need to determine how best to deliver the information to your audience.

Consider these tips for communicating complex information:

- Summarise the main ideas into appropriate language for your audience.
- Consider using multiple methods of communication, such as verbally presenting the information with the aid of a presentation and providing written communication to reinforce your message.
- Use metaphors, imagery or examples to help convey complex ideas.
- Use positive language (verbal, non-verbal or written).
- Explain the impact or benefit of the information on your audience, addressing the question: Why do I need to know this?
- Ensure that the expected actions from the information are clear.
- Allow time for questions (written or verbal) or for information to be digested.

Use appropriate language

The language used in communicating complex information is an important consideration.

Some suggestions for using appropriate language are outlined in the following table.

Minimise technical language	It may not be possible to avoid technical language, but ensure it is used at a level that would be easily understood by the audience. If in doubt, define terms carefully when they are first introduced. You may need to repeat this in longer documents, depending on how frequently the terms are used.
Minimise jargon	Many organisations use unique jargon, abbreviations and acronyms. While these may be in common use within the organisation, defining them when they are first used and using simple English alternatives where possible will help avoid confusion for new employees or other readers unfamiliar with the terms.

Use active voice	Previous sections have explained how active voice is generally more concise, and easier for readers to understand. Passive voice often requires a more complex sentence structure, which can confuse the message.
Selective use of passive	Traditionally, passive writing was used for formality in business writing, but this trend is declining. Passive voice can be a helpful tool when the writer is deliberately obscuring the subject, such as 'The error was overlooked in the editing process' rather than 'The editor overlooked the error'.
Use simple vocabulary	It's tempting to use your extensive vocabulary. While complex words may more accurately convey the meaning and be more descriptive, if your readers do not understand it, you will not have achieved your purpose. Using simple vocabulary also allows the reader to concentrate on the message, rather than the words.
Use lists and summaries	It may be useful to summarise the key points at the end of each section, using bullet points, tables or similar lists. This is a concise way of repeating information to reinforce the key messages. When using lists, ensure that all bullet-point headings have the same grammatical structure and flow logically from the leading sentence.
Avoid complex sentences	Keep sentences short and simple, with one subject for each. Paragraphs should also be limited to one primary subject, which is introduced in the first sentence.
Use appropriate tone	Emails, promotional materials or staff newsletters may have a friendly, conversational tone. Documents that may become legal records, such as business letters, tenders or submissions, generally require a more formal tone. Consider your audience when deciding the appropriate tone for your document.

Positive communication for influence

Positive communication is about choosing words and phrasing that communicate what you want, not what you don't want.

The goal of positive communication is to deliver a message in an uplifting and constructive manner so others feel empowered. Incorporating positive communication techniques into all your messages, whether the receiver is going to like the message or not, helps to ensure you achieve the outcome you are looking for without damaging the relationship.

If you make a habit of always communicating positively and respectfully, you will minimise misunderstandings and continue to build and maintain effective working relationships. Team members will have the confidence to raise workplace issues if they know their communication will be treated in a positive manner.

> **Example**
>
> ### Explaining complex information
>
> Yusef has been working with the management team on new communication protocols based on an update to WHS legislation relevant to their organisation. The legislation is dry and complex and his task is to break the information down into simple instructions and guidelines that will be understood and adopted by his staff. Yusef prepares a presentation that summarises the update, outlines how it affects their current processes and describes what the new processes will look like. He also prepares a hand-out and posters that can be displayed throughout the organisation. Yusef recognises that WHS updates are considered boring, so he reflects on what he can do to positively communicate this information and ensure staff respond positively to the new processes. Yusef checks the language in his communications and considers the body language he must use to positively present this information. The management team members are impressed with his preparation.
>
> Yusef runs the WHS update meeting and is pleased to observe the positive body language and engagement from his team as they digest the new information.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

Give examples of situations when you needed to explain complex information. What did you do and was it effective?

Question 2

What communication techniques can you use to positively influence others?
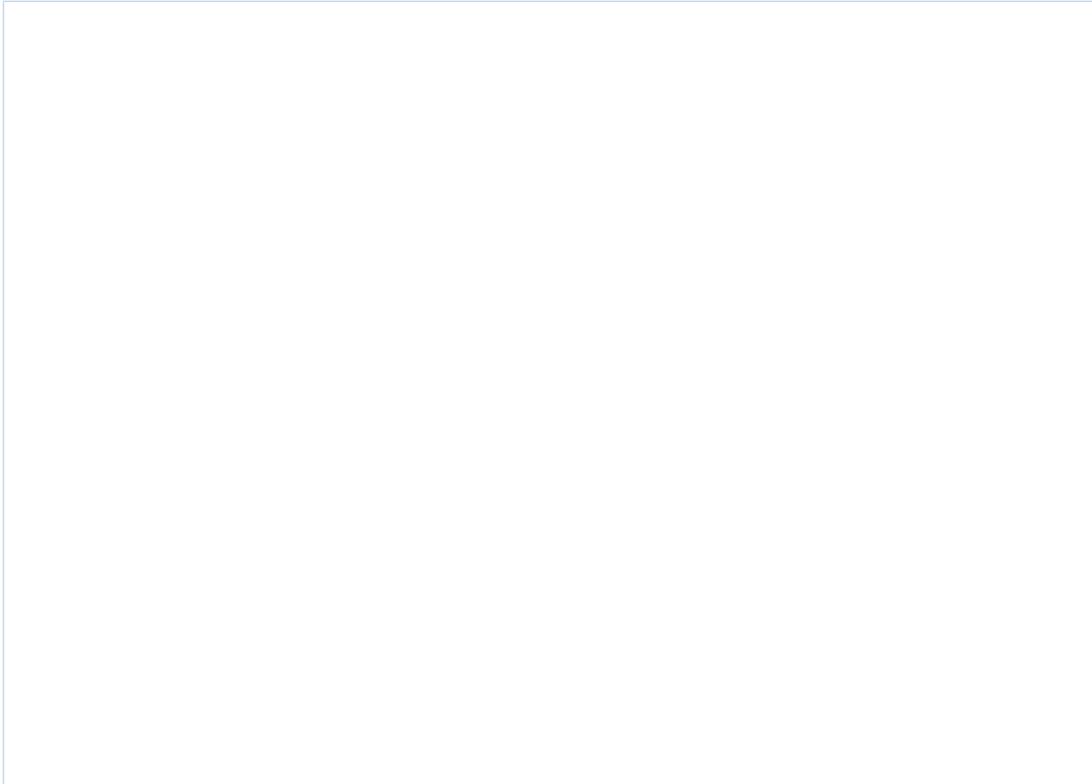
2C Identify and address communication challenges

A barrier to communication is anything that gets in the way of the message being understood.

Every time you communicate effectively with another person, you are engaging in a complex exchange of information on a physical, intellectual and emotional level. At any one of these levels, various factors can influence the communication and act as a barrier to information being received and exchanged.

A communication barrier can obstruct the process without fully stopping the communication. As a result, the message can be misunderstood or misinterpreted by the receiver. The message is not received in exactly the way the sender intended.

This breakdown can be due to a range of events or situations that block the communication process. As a workplace leader, you need to be aware of these barriers and use strategies that minimise their impact.

Barriers may include linguistic, cultural, physical, psychological, environmental and listening barriers. It is important to identify barriers and the challenges they create so you can consider how to address them.

The following shows some of the barriers to communication that may exist, and strategies to deal with them.

Types of barriers

There are a number of barriers that may affect communication.

Language

Communicating with someone who speaks a different language can create a barrier.

Using technical jargon and abbreviations unfamiliar to the receiver, even if they speak the same language, can lead to communication breakdown.

Physiological

Communicating with someone with a sensory dysfunction; for example, a hearing impairment, speech disorder or vision impairment, can make it difficult for you to be understood.

Psychological

Communicating with someone who is concerned with their emotional state may have a serious impact.

For example, a person may be having personal problems, causing them to stress and worry to such an extent they are unable to concentrate and clear their minds in order to receive your message.

Physical

Communicating with people who are not in the same location can limit face-to-face communication, which can diminish the effectiveness of the communication.

Inappropriate layout of the room and lack of privacy can create communication barriers.

Attitudinal

Communicating with someone who has a negative perception that prevents them from taking part in the communication process effectively can limit the success of the communication.

They could be using:

- selective hearing, meaning they only hear what they want to hear
- emotional editing, meaning they can be predisposed to liking or disliking something because of how they feel about it or their past experience with it.

Cultural

Communicating with someone from a different culture who uses different body language cues can limit understanding.

For example, in many Asian countries eye contact can be seen as disrespectful or a challenge to authority; whereas in Australia it is considered polite, and an element of effective communication.

Stage of the communication process

Sender-orientated barriers include lack of planning, improper choice of words and unjustified assumptions.

Receiver-orientated barriers include poor listening, lack of interest and bias.

Method-orientated barriers include a poorly selected method of communication that is not appropriate for the purpose, or issues with technology that prevent communication.

The impact of communication barriers

Any communication barrier has the potential to cause communication breakdowns. The impact could vary from a small misunderstanding to a major conflict with long-term repercussions. Communication barriers that are not dealt with have the potential to damage interpersonal relationships, slow down a project, cause clients to move their business elsewhere, waste time and cause stress.

Being aware of the context of the communication can help to identify any potential barriers. When planning any communication, ask yourself questions such as:

- What could go wrong with the communication?
- What can I do to prevent it going wrong?

Resolving communication challenges

When communication challenges occur, rapid problem solving and decision making can prevent challenges escalating into major issues. Consider these steps to identify and resolve communication challenges.

1	Identify the problem	Define what the problem is and seek agreement that the problem has been properly and comprehensively defined.
2	Identify the cause	What is causing the problem? Consider communication barriers and gather all the facts, undertaking research as needed.
3	Consider solutions	What actions could resolve the problem? Ensure you don't include options that will side-step or leave the problem unresolved. Undertake research as needed and seek advice as required.
4	Decide on a solution and implement it	Choose the best option, justify this as required and put in place actions to address and resolve the problem.

Removing barriers to understanding

You may experience the challenges of communication before you understand what barriers are creating them. For example, conflicts may arise with colleagues, which may lead to resentment and hostility without ever fully understanding what has caused them. Consider the following examples:

Communication challenge	Likely barriers creating the challenge
Experiencing conflict with clients or team members	Language, cultural, psychological or listening barriers could be causing the issue. Try to uncover the basis for the conflict and reflect on what you could do to remove barriers and improve communication.
Potential risks or safety hazards	Language, environmental and attitudinal barriers could be causing the issue. Have safety procedures not been properly communicated and understood? This requires immediate attention to protect the health and safety of everyone at work.
Unethical or inappropriate communication	Language, cultural and psychological barriers may be causing the issue. Is the person aware that their communication is unethical or inappropriate? This requires immediate attention in order to ensure everyone is working to organisational and legislative requirements.

Appropriately framing organisational messaging

Framing a message is about positioning it so that both the intention and the content are interpreted as they were meant. The way information is framed first by the message sender, and then by the receiver, will determine whether it is perceived as good, bad, or something in between. When framing a message, you need to be aware of the communication barriers that might prevent the message being received as you intended. Seek advice from others on the messaging to ensure your intention is clear. Minimise barriers by keeping language clear, concise and inclusive, and ensure the message is accessible to your audience by making it available in a number of ways.

Minimise the impact of barriers

It is very difficult to eliminate all barriers in every communication context. However, you can take steps to minimise their impact.

Here are some examples of strategies you can use to minimise the impact of communication barriers.

Communication context	Potential barrier	Possible solution
Oral presentation to a group	Physical: background noise, phones and people talking	Locate the presentation in a quieter location.
Training employees on a new computer system	Language: use of technical jargon	Provide each person with a glossary of terms that explains them in plain English.
Giving negative feedback to a team member about their performance	Attitudinal: team member displays negative behaviour, does not take feedback well	Use assertive language when providing the feedback and ensure body language is open and positive.
Inducting a new arrival from India as a team member	Cultural: team leader has no previous experience working with someone from India and does not know anything about the culture	Research Indian culture to ensure communication is respectful and appropriate.

Example

Addressing communication challenges

Adriana has a new team member, Suki, who is always positive and friendly. Suki is agreeable and accepts tasks readily and asks very few questions. Adriana is pleased with Suki's approach to her work until she begins to review some of her work. On many occasions it is wrong, late or incomplete and Adriana is puzzled by this. Adriana talks to Suki about her work and together they identify cultural and language barriers that have created this issue. Suki believes it is expected of her to always say yes to each task, not question the instructions she has received or ask for help as it could reflect poorly on her. Adriana reflects on how she has communicated with Suki and realises that she did not confirm her understanding of tasks and did not ask clarifying questions. Adriana shares this with Suki and asks her to communicate honestly with her, so they can both ensure she is able to complete work according to requirements and timeframes.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

Describe a conflict situation due to communication barriers with a client or team member that you may have witnessed or experienced in your workplace. Give an example and explain how to address it in an ethical way.

Question 2

You need to inform staff of how a recent WHS update will affect current work processes. Identify potential challenges relevant to safety hazards and how communication can help to minimise them. Give an example of how you can frame your organisational messaging.

Summary

- Staff should be aware of their responsibilities when communicating and will need to be directed to communicate according to organisational requirements.
- Managers can motivate staff to communicate respectfully by role-modelling appropriate behaviour and inclusive language.
- Complex information can be explained by breaking ideas into smaller chunks, using accessible language and providing metaphors and examples.
- You can positively influence others through communication by using positive language and demonstrating how the information benefits the audience.
- Communication challenges can be created by communication barriers, which need to be removed or minimised to effectively address the challenges.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Coordinate effective communication

Part A

1. Outline two communication challenges (including conflict) in the workplace that may occur when communicating with your team. Describe the techniques you could use to address these.
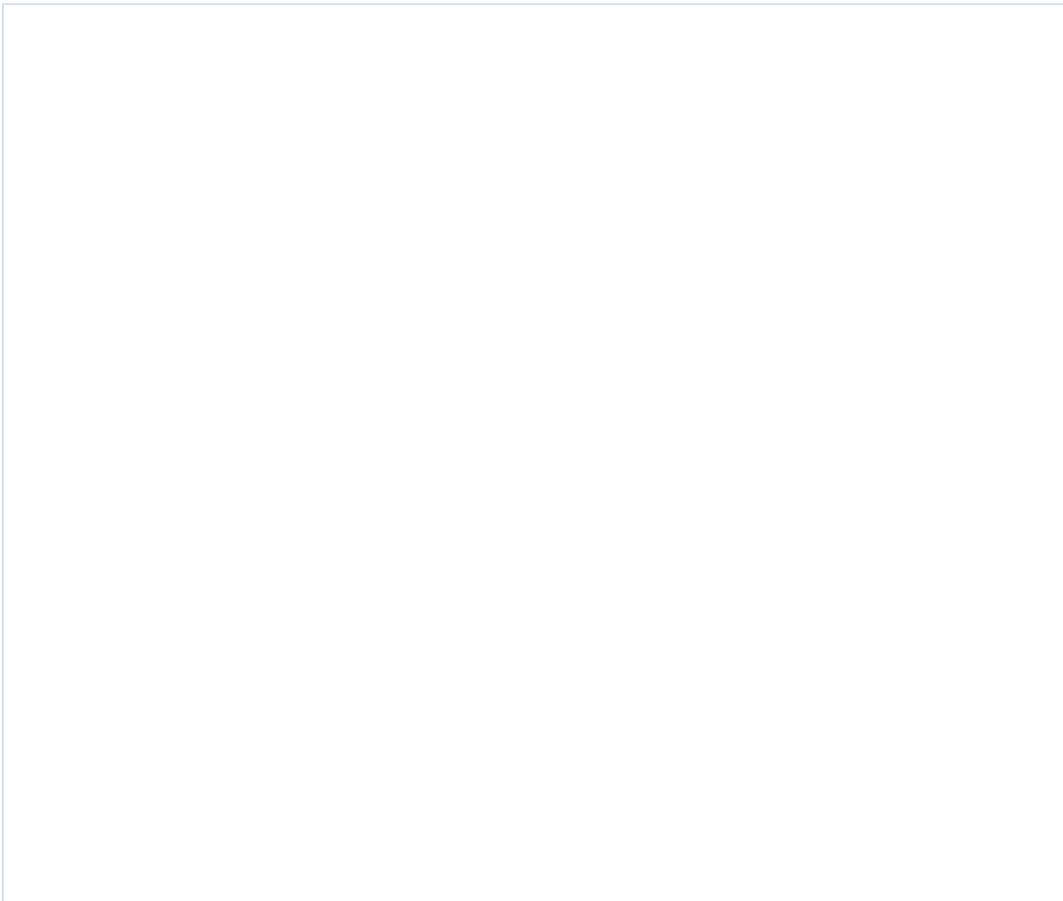
Part B

Read the scenario below and then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Julie is a call centre manager. She has a team who come from diverse backgrounds, and they collectively answer thousands of customer queries every week. Julia needs to ensure that her staff communicate consistently and respectfully with customers by following organisational requirements, and she needs to allocate responsibilities for standard communication with their customers.

1. List three organisational requirements that Julia would need her team to follow when communicating with customers.

2. Suggest cross-cultural communication techniques for Julie to motivate her team to communicate respectfully.

3. Describe how Julie could explain a new, complex process in a way that would be positively received by her team.

Topic 3 | Present and negotiate persuasively

3A   Present information persuasively

3B   Evaluate different perspectives

3C   Negotiate and implement agreed outcomes

3A Present information persuasively

Everyone has a preferred way of giving and receiving information. If a message is not understood, this may be due to different communication styles being used by the 'sender' and 'receiver', rather than a right or wrong way of communicating.

One way of categorising communication styles is by the senses that we use to process the information. Some people send or receive information better by seeing it (visual), hearing it (auditory) or demonstrating it (kinaesthetic). As a manager, using different communication styles both encourages inclusion and increases your chance of being understood. Be aware of your team members' communication preferences.

Visual	This is a person who prefers a visual approach and focuses on what is seen, such as documents and diagrams, facial expressions and body language. Good communication techniques include electronic presentations, watching a demonstration, printed handouts, speaking face to face or using video-call/Skype technology.
Auditory	This is a person who prefers an auditory approach and focuses on what is heard, such as spoken words, sounds and noises. Instructions are best delivered by verbal means such as asking someone to do something, training, phone calls, podcasts etc.
Kinaesthetic	This is a person who prefers a kinaesthetic approach and focuses on what is felt or experienced, so they prefer active participation and being involved.

Use a communication style relevant to your audience

Different audiences require different communication styles and content.

You may need to use different language or examples to emphasise the parts of your message that are of most interest or urgency to various sub-groups. Sub-groups are people with similar interests or of similar:

- ages
- incomes
- backgrounds
- cultures
- occupations.

Tailoring your information and communication style requires audience research. This may include reviewing the information you already have about your audience (see Topic 1) or conducting further research about sub-groups within your audience.

Researching and analysing your audience helps you to better understand:

- their basic level of understanding about your subject
- what makes them tick and who they are as a collective group
- their individual needs, expectations and communication preferences.

How to tailor your communication style to a particular audience:
• Be concise. Only include the relevant information about your topic and avoid unnecessary information or irrelevant examples.
• Be thorough. Where appropriate, provide detailed information to your audience to make your points clear.
• Be considerate. Think about the impact that your message may have on the audience and how you can help them to deal with this.
• Be accurate. Double-check your facts before you deliver them and make sure they are in a suitable format for the audience.
• Be clear. Use language that is easy to understand so that your audience is clear about what you want them to do, and what the desired results are.
• Be courteous. Show respect to the audience, and establish trust and rapport by being appreciative, thoughtful and respectful to them.
• Be appropriate. Tailor your message to the audience and always attempt to communicate in their preferred style, not your own.

Presentation styles

When presenting information to an audience you may need to vary your communication style depending on the topic and the audience or even the location of the presentation. These factors might affect the delivery methods you choose and the way you deliver information to your audience.

Presentation styles are also likely to be personal. Take a look at this website that explains eight presentation styles and provides examples of each: aspirelr.link/hubspot-presentation-styles

Presenting information

As a presenter, your role is to communicate with the audience and control the presentation. When preparing your presentation, keep the following in mind:

- Be aware of the context and resources you will have access to.
- Consider the purpose of your presentation – it will dictate how you prepare it and the style you use.
- Consider the characteristics, experiences, knowledge and values of your audience – this will affect the way they receive the message.

- Use different ways of communicating to suit this audience. This will make it a more successful and effective presentation. For example, use different tools, facilities and equipment, and different styles of presenting.

Create and present clear verbal messages

When communicating verbally, choose the best time and place; make the communication clear, brief and logical; and be prepared. If there is detailed or sensitive information to share, you may need to make notes and outline key points in writing so you can maintain a professional approach.

Tips for presenting clear verbal messages
• Project your voice so you can be heard.
• Avoid a monotonous pitch and tone to promote audience attention.
• Speak at a comfortable pace.
• Pronounce words clearly.
• Make eye contact as appropriate.
• Make use of strategic pauses.
• Use natural gestures and movements to reinforce the verbal message.
• Look for nonverbal cues from your audience, and adjust as required.

Presentations of all types rely on communicating the central message successfully to the target audience. Where the objective of the presentation is to encourage the target audience to take action or change their attitudes or beliefs, you also need to use communication techniques that have the power to persuade.

Effective communication is the key to any presentation. You need to connect with the audience, use language that is accessible to everyone and keep them interested. Once you have their interest, you can use the remainder of the presentation to convince them of the idea or concept and, hopefully, gain their agreement to take specific action.

Verbal communication techniques

Speak clearly, using an appropriate tone, pace and volume. Vary the pitch of your voice to avoid a monotone presentation that encourages boredom in listeners. Consider individual differences and the audience's ability to listen and understand what is being said. You may need to adjust the way you speak. For example, you may need to speak more slowly and clearly for people whose first language is not English. Keep your voice at its usual volume, though. Shouting does not increase a person's ability to understand English.

Use language that can be understood and assimilated by the target audience. Pitching language or information at the wrong level can reduce the effectiveness of your communication. Effective verbal communication relies on you using the appropriate structure, vocabulary, emphasis and supporting materials to suit your audience's characteristics.

Here are some language principles to keep in mind when delivering a presentation.

Technical jargon

Use technical and industry jargon only to people you know will understand. Always consider the audience's background and what they are likely to know. If such language is crucial to the presentation, then define technical words and phrases and confirm participants' understanding.

Colloquial words and phrases

Avoid using Australian colloquialisms or slang that may confuse people whose first language is not English. Terms such as 'She'll be right' and 'We'll cover that in the arvo' may be meaningless to many people and may lead to misunderstandings.

Non-discriminatory language

Always use non-discriminatory and inclusive language. Repeating the word 'he' when you mean both males and females can be off-putting to many people.

Don't use sexist language or cultural stereotypes that are likely to offend participants.

Reflect on your language

Continually check that your verbal communication is clear, jargon-free and culturally appropriate. Address any weaknesses or areas that need improvement by self-assessing or partnering with a critical friend.

Reflect on your use of language by considering the following questions:
❑ Are you using language at an appropriate level for the audience or learners?
❑ Have you contextualised your language so it is appropriate to their situation?
❑ Are you using language that is culturally appropriate?
❑ Are your explanations and instructions free from unfamiliar jargon or concepts?
❑ Do you frame concepts in a way that is meaningful by relating them to participants' work or life experiences?
❑ What impression do you create with your pitch and tone?
❑ How often do you use fillers such as 'um' and 'ah'?
❑ Do you regularly repeat certain phrases such as 'at the end of the day' or 'moving forward'?

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is an important part of persuasion. Body language, particularly hand gestures and eye-contact, is used to emphasise important points. Smiling at appropriate times makes people feel comfortable. Adopt a non-threating stance; leaning forward and sweeping a glance across the audience from time to time lets them know you are aware of them.

Be aware of your body language to ensure congruence between your words and actions and avoid overusing particular gestures. Participants can be easily distracted by a presenter's personal habits, such as making repetitive hand movements or pacing during a presentation or demonstration.

Eye contact is a key element in any public speaking situation. Try not to focus on reading materials or slides while instructing or demonstrating. You need to be familiar with the content of your presentation so you can make eye contact with the audience, hold their attention and gauge their understanding. Use eye contact to emphasise key points in the instruction or demonstration. For example, when you are explaining safety instructions, make eye contact with each learner to ensure they are listening and responding positively.

Establish your credibility

A presentation that aims to persuade participants requires communication techniques that are specifically targeted at connecting with the audience on an emotional level.

In order to interest an audience and persuade people to take action or change their attitudes or behaviour, you must have a high degree of credibility and knowledge of the topic. Credibility is the audience's perception of how qualified you are to talk about a topic.

> **You can establish your credibility by:**
>
> - being introduced by a person the audience respects, who explains why you have been asked to deliver the presentation
> - outlining your expertise, qualifications or experience
> - using your communication skills to demonstrate your commitment.

Use evidence

Marketing, advertising and sales experts use evidence in various ways in presentations. Evidence such as quantifiable data, statistical information, expert opinions, testimonials, images and media reports may be used to secure interest and convince the target audience that they are being given reliable, credible information. This can reassure them that they will be making the correct decision in changing their attitudes or behaviour.

- Make sure that the evidence you choose is current and accurate. Any mistakes or contradictory information will detract from your message.
- Evidence may be shared with the audience verbally; however, it can be more effective to use images or present the information graphically to reinforce your message.

Influence how people respond

Everyone reacts differently to information and ideas. Each person's responses are filtered through their own culture, life experiences, knowledge, personal beliefs and values.

An audience brings with them expectations, knowledge and attitudes about the occasion, the topic and the speaker. Factors that may influence how your audience responds include:

- age
- sex
- culture
- religion
- ethnicity
- sexual orientation
- occupation
- education.

Here are some ways that you may influence your audience to accept your ideas and information.

Contextualise your presentation

Contextualise your content to the audience's needs and expectations. This means preparing your presentation so that your audience can relate to it, using points of reference they are likely to understand. Providing a context will help your audience connect with your message and keep them engaged.

Use case studies, stories or real-life examples to bring the audience into your space and incorporate them into your presentation.

Appeal to self-interest

Appealing to the needs and expectations of your audience members is a powerful way of gaining their acceptance, provided your idea does fulfil what you are offering.

Explain how members of the audience can individually benefit from your solution compared to the current situation.

Motivating factors you can use include power, pride, self-respect, recognition, security and reward. For example, a new work process could be sold on its greater efficiency, leading to reduced workload for employees.

Involve the audience

In a one-way conversation, the speaker can dominate the narrative without really acknowledging or interacting with the audience. In a two-way conversation, the speaker directly connects with their listeners.

A two-way conversation is a dialogue where the presenter speaks and listens to the audience, responding to their reactions and questions.

To gain the respect of your audience and encourage them to accept your idea, involve them in your presentation. For example:

- plan a question and answer time
- give audience members a role in the presentation
- organise activities so that audience members can contribute to implementing your idea.

For people to accept and be fully committed to the successful implementation of your idea, they must listen and fully understand the implications of the situation.

Prepare to listen to objections

There is usually a person or group who may oppose or challenge your idea. Don't try to suppress objections. If you don't give people the opportunity to explain their objections you can create the impression that you are covering up flaws in your idea and deny yourself the opportunity to clarify the information. Don't argue with audience members or try to embarrass them in front of others. Your earlier research and analysis should have prepared you to anticipate and overcome most objections.

Present your idea effectively

The key to a successful presentation depends on the way you explain and deliver your ideas and solutions.

Make your content easy to understand, show that it has been well thought out and that it is the best solution available under the circumstances.

Be prepared to vary your presentation to accommodate individual needs, particularly those of people who are required to take action or provide resources for implementing your idea.

Show enthusiasm and passion for your idea – the audience can tell if you are unsure or uncertain about any aspects.

Consider linguistic style

Everything you say must be said in a certain way, using the right tone, speed and volume.

'Linguistic style' refers to a person's speaking pattern, which is unique to them. It is made up of culturally learned signals that are used to communicate and understand meaning. A person's style might include:

- the pace, number and length of pauses
- word choice
- the use of humour, stories and questions.

Your own linguistic style and the style of your audience members influences how they respond to your ideas.

Be prepared to negotiate

One way of encouraging acceptance of your idea is to make concessions on certain points. This is particularly important when people expect negotiation.

To prepare, identify the aspects of your proposal that are not essential to achieve your objective. You can trade these for others that are essential to the success of your idea.

> **Example**
>
> ## Presenting persuasively
>
> Liandra and her team have worked hard on a new product proposal and Liandra must present it to the board for approval. They have been sent her proposal document and financial forecasts prior to the meeting, but Liandra must persuade the board to approve the proposal and be prepared to answer their questions. She considers how best to engage and influence the board and decides to structure her presentation around the story of their customers: who they are, why the product will benefit them and how the organisation will reap financial and reputational benefits by developing the product. During the presentation, Liandra uses rich, descriptive language and visual imagery to describe the customer and she ensures she aligns her story to that of the proposal, so she is effectively summarising the product and why the organisation should create it. Liandra's strategy works; the board expected a dry outline of what was already in the proposal, but become engaged with Liandra's vision for the product. Her presentation is followed by a robust discussion about the financial forecasts, and Liandra is confident her team has done the hard work required to know the product will sell and will fit into the final forecasts.

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Describe your preferred communication style.

Question 2

Provide two workplace examples of how you adapt your communication style for different audiences. Be specific and describe the context.

Question 3

You are asked to present information on your department's progress on the project you lead. You are allocated 10 minutes for your presentation to the company board and need to persuade board directors to allocate additional resources for project implementation.

How would you approach the communication challenge?

3B Evaluate different perspectives

We all have our own way of viewing the world and this is often built on our own life experiences, culture, values and beliefs. It is likely that at various times, the way you perceive something is very different to the way someone else does.

Preconceived ideas can come from our own biases and prejudices, from stereotypes or from thinking that one culture is better than another. Your job is to recognise and understand the characteristics that make people different from each other, and to be able to respond effectively and sensitively to issues that arise. You need to acknowledge that, while differences exist, no-one deserves less courtesy, respect or consideration because of these differences.

When taking into account each person's perspective, employ active listening techniques to encourage others to speak openly without premature judgment. This includes listening to everything that is said with the intention to understand, and asking open-ended questions such as: 'What do you think happened that caused the equipment to malfunction?' Use your communication skills to explore and evaluate different perspectives.

Use interpersonal skills	Use your interpersonal skills to ensure your manner helps the person to trust you and to be inclined to explain the situation honestly.
Different points of view	Give the person time to express their point of view. Remember, different people may have different ideas about what the issues are.
Avoid emotional reactions	Avoid reacting emotionally if the person becomes upset or angry.
Positive relationships	People are more inclined to speak openly and positively about problems when a culture characterised by trust-based working relationships is already in place.

Critical thinking techniques

Critical thinking techniques can be helpful to question assumptions and consider different points of view.

In his book, *Teaching for critical thinking* (2012), author Stephen Brookfield states that critical thinking happens when we uncover and check assumptions, explore alternative perspectives and take informed actions. In addition, he suggests that we use critical thinking when we analyse, clarify, question and test ideas.

Discover assumptions	• What assumptions have we made that influence how we think and act?
Check assumptions	• Are our assumptions valid? • Are the assumptions supported by evidence? • Under what conditions do our assumptions make sense?
See things from different perspectives	• Consider multiple points of view.
Take informed action	• Actions should be based on thought and analysis. • Actions should lead to the desired results and be supported by evidence.

Critically examine outcomes

A critical analysis is a task that requires you to summarise and evaluate an idea. Conducting a critical analysis requires you to understand an idea in detail, and learn about similar ideas so you can present a fair and reasonable evaluation of the first one.

Being critical is not about being negative. Critical analysis involves questioning the information and opinions of others, and presenting your evaluation or judgment constructively. To do this, you must understand the idea from different perspectives and in relation to reliable evidence.

Here are some questions that you can consider when you critically examine outcomes.

- Did the outcome fully meet expectations?
- Is the outcome still relevant?
- Was the original goal still relevant and appropriate when met?
- How has achieving the outcome contributed to team or department goals?
- Were there any unforeseen consequences or advantages in achieving the outcome?
- Does everyone agree that the outcome has been achieved?
- Were there any lessons learnt from the process of achieving the outcome?

It is important that the process of critically examining outcomes is not a solo activity. It should be conducted as a team to share experiences, ideas and solutions. You can facilitate this discussion and role-model appropriate critical thinking and inclusive communication skills by ensuring the discussion remains focused, objective and non-emotional.

> ## Example
>
> ### Critically examining outcomes
>
> At the end of a project, Michael holds a meeting to evaluate the project and examine the outcomes. The team had produced a suite of 10 products within budget, but it was one month late. Michael asks the team to consider the following questions:
>
> - Do the products meet or exceed our expectations?
> - Was the deadline realistic?
> - What obstacles prevented us from meeting our deadline?
> - How could we remove these obstacles from future projects?
> - What did we learn from this project?
> - What would we do again?
> - What would we do differently?
>
> Michael facilitated a lively discussion with his team as they each offered their perspectives on the questions. He ensured everyone got to have their say and was pleased to see that his team respected each other's ideas, even if they didn't agree with them. Michael ended the discussion by summarising their ideas which would be included in his debrief to the senior management team. He then ended the meeting with a celebration of their efforts.

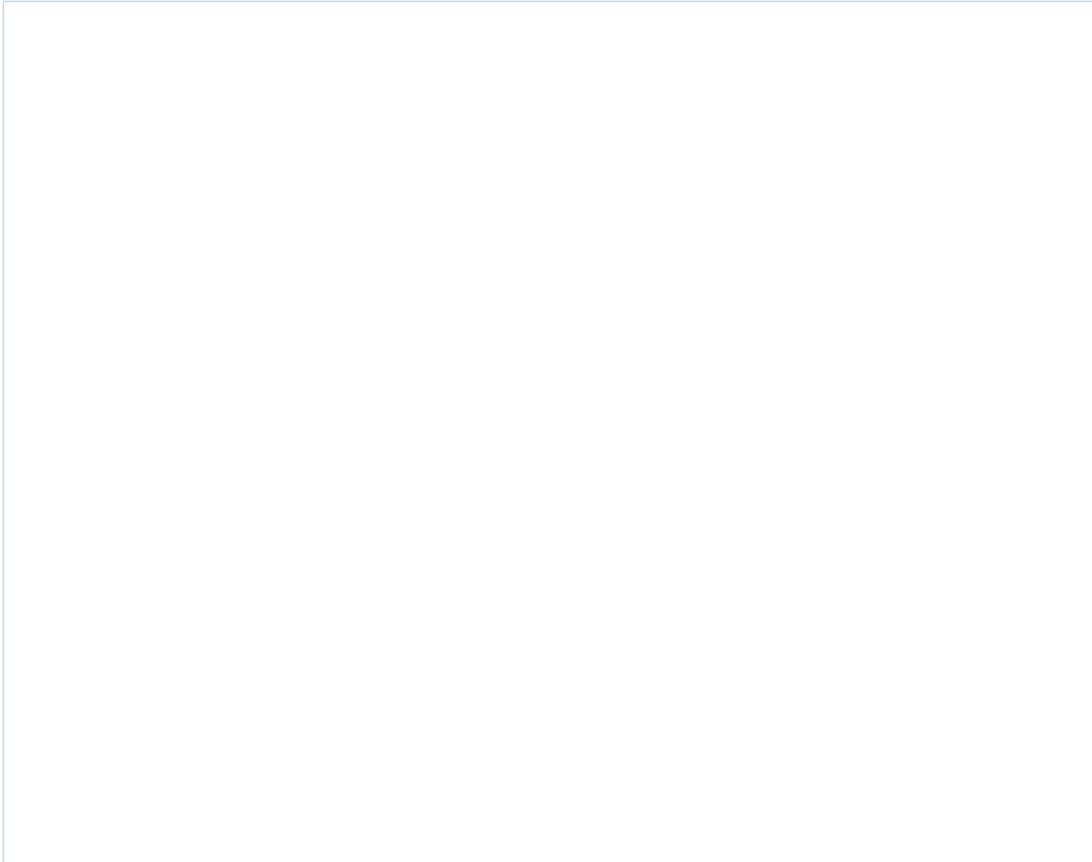# Practice Task 8

Question 1

Give a workplace example when two team members had shared different perspectives on the subject or problem. How would you evaluate their differences?

Question 2

Why is it important to critically examine outcomes?

3C Negotiate and implement agreed outcomes

Negotiation is a process where two or more parties with different interests and goals discuss an issue to find a mutually acceptable solution.

Effective negotiations contribute significantly to business success, as they help to build better relationships, deliver lasting, quality solutions, and help managers to avoid future problems and conflicts.

Negotiating requires elements of give and take. Managers should aim to create a courteous and constructive interaction that is a win-win for both parties. A successful negotiation is where a party makes concessions that mean little to them, while offering something to the other party that means a lot to them. A manager's approach to negotiation should foster goodwill, regardless of the differences in party interests.

Before entering into negotiations, managers and workplace relations professionals should determine their desired outcomes, negotiation strategy and time frames with the aim of leaving each party satisfied and ready to do business with each other again.

Negotiation strategies

Understanding the other party's interests and tactics is integral to good negotiating. Selecting a strategy that best responds to their interests and tactics will help managers and workplace relations professionals to achieve the best outcomes.

Negotiation strategies should be matched to the situation. The strategy selected will depend on who managers are negotiating with and the type of relationship they have with them. For example, identifying the level of cooperation and common interests that exist between the parties, and how each party will behave during the negotiation will also depend on what is being negotiated, and the time frame and setting in which negotiations are taking place.

Negotiation strategies	
Problem-solving/ collaboration – win-win	· Win-win strategies result in situations where both parties are satisfied with the settlement negotiated. · Each party commits to examining and discussing issues closely when entering into long-term agreements that warrant careful examination.

Negotiation strategies	
Dominating/ competing – win-lose	▪ Win-lose strategies result in situations in which one party is satisfied and one is dissatisfied. It focuses on the resolution of one party's issue to the exclusion of others, until one side is defeated. ▪ It involves persuading your negotiating party to concede to your outcome if you are bargaining in one-off negotiations over major 'wins'.
Accommodating/ yielding – lose-win	▪ Lose-win strategies result in situations in which one party is dissatisfied and the other is satisfied. One party withdraws or makes a number of concessions while the other party wins. ▪ Conceding a point that is not vital to you but is important to the other party is valuable in ongoing negotiations.
Avoiding – lose-lose	▪ Lose-lose strategies result in situations where the objectives of both parties are too rigid, or when both parties are unable to compromise or problem-solve, or are unaware of the opportunity to do so. ▪ Both parties forgo their ideal outcomes, settling for an outcome that is moderately satisfying to each participant.
Compromising	A compromising negotiation style is a form of bargaining. Compromisers split the agreement's value between the two parties versus finding a solution so that everyone benefits from an agreement's full value.

Negotiation approaches

As well as selecting a strategy, managers and workplace relations professionals should consider how they will approach the issue being negotiated. There are three key approaches to negotiations: hard, soft and principled negotiation. Many experts consider the third option – principled negotiation – to be best practice.

Negotiation approaches are described below.

Hard	The hard approach involves contending by using extremely competitive bargaining techniques.
Soft	The soft approach involves yielding, where one party tries hard to meet the interests of the other party and forgoes their own interests.
Principled	Principled negotiation focuses on achieving a lasting, win-win outcome by separating the people from the issue, focusing on interests not positions, generating a variety of options before settling on an agreement, and basing the agreement on objective criteria.

Negotiation process

Every time managers or workplace relations professionals negotiate, they have to make choices that affect whether a successful outcome will be achieved for their organisation. To get the best outcomes, managers need to understand the steps involved in the negotiation process.

While many negotiations are straightforward, there will be some that are challenging. Success will depend on careful planning and preparation. Negotiations should always be approached with a clear set of strategies, messages and tactics that guide the manager from planning to closing.

Plan	No amount of planning or preparation is too much when approaching complex or high-risk negotiations. Plan your approach to the subject under negotiation, your tone and communication style.
	In approaching the subject of negotiations:
	▪ clearly set your objectives in your own mind, including your minimum acceptable outcome, anticipated outcome and ideal outcome
	▪ determine what you will do if the negotiation fails
	▪ determine your needs, the needs of the other party, and the reasons behind them
	▪ list, rank and value your issues and then consider the concessions you might make
	▪ analyse the other party and assess their objectives and the information they require
	▪ research the market and consult with colleagues, supervisors and managers
	▪ rehearse the negotiation
	▪ write an agenda that includes discussion topics, participants, location and a schedule.
	Decide on your communication style and familiarise yourself with successful negotiation strategies. Use a calm, confident tone and a set of considered strategies and responses to the tactics you anticipate the other party using.
Discuss	Your intention is to establish common ground before moving into areas of difference.
	In engaging with the other party during the negotiation:
	▪ introduce yourself and articulate the agenda
	▪ demonstrate calm confidence
	▪ remember your objectives and confirm the objectives and feelings of the other party
	▪ use active listening skills to identify areas of agreement and aim to build rapport with the other party
	▪ discuss concepts and ideas.

Propose	Specifically define the issues you wish to resolve. Link issues to the other party's objectives and focus on interests rather than positions.
	Give and take by:
	▪ proposing your first offer and listening to the proposals made by the other party (do not accept the first offer unless it satisfies your interests)
	▪ checking your understanding of the other party's proposal
	▪ paraphrasing the other party's suggestions to summarise the content, ideas and feelings being communicated.
Negotiate	Begin by asking for what you want, but accept that your objectives might have to be modified. Aim to collaborate with the other party in order to produce a solution that satisfies both parties.
	Negotiate by:
	▪ considering concessions, then making and seeking concessions
	▪ suggesting alternative proposals and listening to offered suggestions
	▪ summarise points throughout the discussion to confirm understanding
	▪ take the time to agree on what you have negotiated so far.
Close	Take a moment to revisit your objectives for the negotiation. Once you feel you are approaching an outcome that is acceptable to you:
	▪ look for closing signals, such as fading counter-arguments, tired body language from the other party, or negotiating positions converging
	▪ articulate agreements and concessions already made
	▪ make closing statements
	▪ put agreements in writing as soon as possible
	▪ follow up promptly on any commitments you have made.

The Queensland government has compiled a comprehensive document on negotiation that may be useful for you: aspirelr.link/hpw-qld-negotiation

Confirm and implement outcomes of negotiation

Your negotiation should have closed with an agreement on next steps or actions both parties have agreed to take. It is important to confirm the outcome of the negotiation in writing and acknowledge the steps both parties have agreed to in order to implement the outcome. Communications that are likely to occur after a negotiation may include:

- an email summarising what was agreed
- minutes of the negotiation meeting
- a draft contract or agreement.

You must ensure that you follow through on promises made in order to strengthen the relationship and to build trust.

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Example

Negotiating

Tina and Helena are meeting to negotiate timeframes for a product delivery and launch. Tina wants more time to ensure the product is the highest quality, while Helena wants the product available earlier to ensure her sales team can make the most of the key selling period and maximise their sales. Ultimately, both Tina and Helena want the product to be successful. Tina knows that if it's not out at the right time, their customers may buy an alternative product. Helena knows that if the product is rushed, there may be quality issues and that will affect sales and the company's reputation. So both attend the meeting with their ideal dates in mind, but are prepared to compromise.

Tina and Helena both talk through their ideal timelines and then look for ways to have their needs met, even though their dates are too far apart. As a compromise, Tina suggests that she could investigate the cost of having more prototype products produced to bring forward the product launch date, and provides examples of how other organisations use a similar strategy. Helena is enthusiastic about that idea because it would allow for an earlier product launch than she had hoped and she could contribute some of her marketing budget towards the cost of the additional prototypes. Tina agrees to investigate costs and prepare a proposal for Helena to contribute to, which would need to be approved by their CEO. Both are pleased that they have been able to find a way to work together to achieve a successful product launch and Helena captures their agreed actions in an email following their meeting.

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Practice Task 9

Question 1

Describe a negotiation that you have been involved with and its outcome.

Question 2

Which negotiation techniques would you use if you were seeking a win-win outcome in negotiations?

Question 3

Principled negotiation strives to achieve a lasting, win-win outcome by separating the people from the issue, focusing on interests not positions, generating a variety of options before settling on an agreement, and basing the agreement on objective criteria.

Give examples of behaviours you should avoid during a negotiation.

Question 4

How would you communicate with stakeholders and the other party after a negotiation? Tick all that apply.

- ◯ Send an email to stakeholders advising the outcome.
- ◯ Send minutes of the negotiation.
- ◯ Send reasons why you think negotiation succeeded or failed.
- ◯ Send contracts or other paperwork to finalise the negotiation.

Summary

- Communication styles should vary depending on audience and context.
- There are a variety of presentation styles that can be used when presenting to audiences.
- Persuading an audience can be achieved using different strategies to engage them and convince them of your credibility.
- Managers should lead on the critical evaluation of outcomes to review their success and relevance.
- It is important to both consider and evaluate different perspectives, as they offer insights you may not have considered.
- Negotiating a is an important skill in the workplace, and planning and preparation is key to success.

Learning Checkpoint 3
Present and negotiate persuasively

Part A

1. When presenting a proposal, what audience requirements may exist?

2. What communication and presentation style should you use for the audience requirements you have identified?

3. What techniques are recommended to help persuade an audience?

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Cali's organisation has submitted a tender application for funding for a community project. Cali has been successful in getting to the last stage of a tender and is invited to a meeting. She has been told that her organisation's request for funding is greater than they can afford and that she should come prepared to negotiate on the costs.

1. What should Cali do to prepare for the negotiation?

2. Outline the techniques Cali should use in the negotiation.

3. What actions should Cali take following the meeting?

4. Cali learns that they didn't win the tender. Outline the process and questions that should be asked to critically examine this outcome.

Topic 4 | Review communication practices

4A   Provide mentoring to others to achieve communication goals

4B   Obtain feedback to manage outcomes

4C   Identify and implement improvements to communication processes

4A Provide mentoring to others to achieve communication goals

Mentoring can be an effective way of encouraging improved communication in your organisation.

Mentoring is a relationship between two individuals based on a mutual desire for development towards career goals and objectives. It pairs a skilled or experienced mentor to provide encouragement, challenge assumptions, support ideas and share experiences with a less-experienced mentee. These strategies allow you to work alongside staff to increase their verbal and written communication skills and to encourage best practice.

Principles of mentoring

There are principles that ensure that mentoring is done effectively and meets good practice standards. Principles of mentoring are listed below.

Important principles of mentoring
• Regular, consistent contact between the mentor and mentee
• Mentor has appropriate skills and experience
• Both parties are willing to learn and grow
• Clear purpose to the mentoring relationship
• Confidentiality is maintained
• Boundaries of the mentoring relationship are clarified

A workplace mentor is someone who is considered to have sufficient experience or expertise to be able to assist and counsel those who are less experienced.

A mentor can help an individual reflect, adapt and explore new approaches. They should give constructive feedback, offer practical advice and help the learner develop their unique skills and attributes. Mentoring is particularly useful for inducting new members into an existing team but it is equally important for increasing skill levels or modelling behaviour required from team members.

The mentor need not be the team leader, but the team leader can foster a system of mentoring within the team, pairing less-skilled and experienced people with more-skilled and experienced colleagues.

Role of the mentor

- The role of a mentor is to lead and act as a role model. The mentor provides informed advice and encourages and supports the individual over the longer term. Mentors need to respond to the individual employee's needs and treat them with respect and patience.
- The mentor may also offer emotional support to someone who is having difficulty fitting into the team by listening to their concerns and providing encouragement and support.

The mentoring relationship

- The mentoring relationship should foster openness, trust and mutual respect between the two people involved. Both the mentor and the learner must be willing to participate in the process.
- A good mentor is someone who:
- has life and work experience that relates to the learner's concerns
- is a good listener
- has strong interpersonal skills – particularly understanding and sensitivity
- can provide constructive, candid feedback as well as encouragement and advice
- respects confidentiality and engenders trust.

Advantages for the learner

A successful workplace mentoring relationship helps the learner to:
- clarify the goals and requirements of the organisation and the workplace
- develop competencies
- improve communication
- increase motivation and productivity
- enhance self-confidence and self-esteem
- share experiences.

Advantages for the mentor

The mentor also benefits. Some simply gain satisfaction from helping others reach their potential but mentoring also sharpens problem-solving, communication and training skills, and fosters a sense of achievement within the mentor's own career.

Key skills for mentoring

Good communication is key to a successful mentoring relationship. You are role-modelling communication skills in your mentoring sessions, and you should consider the communication requirements and skills required so you can maximise your effectiveness as a role model. Listening is perhaps the most crucial element of mentoring, but it requires more than just hearing what your mentee is saying – you need to practise active listening and self-awareness.

Active listening

Being a good listener demonstrates that you value the other person, which helps to build a rapport and enables the development of a trusting relationship. Active listening requires you to hear more than just the message, but observe tone and body language and respond accordingly.

The two key features of active listening are paraphrasing and summarising. Paraphrasing is where you reflect back the content and the feelings of what the other person has expressed to check that you have understood their meaning. Summarising involves repeating what the person has said in a few words to let the person know you understand their position. Ask if you have correctly paraphrased or summarised an issue.

Here are some tips to help you listen actively.

How to listen actively
• Briefly recap the speaker's message in your own words.
• Soften your summary with phrases like, 'You feel …', 'It sounds like you …', 'You think …', 'It seems to you that …'
• Try to use paraphrasing statements more than questions.
• Allow sufficient time and pauses for the speaker to add to what they are saying.
• If more than one feeling is expressed, focus on the last or most prominent one.
• Do not add or ask for any new information.
• Use neutral words, body language and tone of voice.

Self-awareness and listening

Good listening requires a high level of self-awareness. We often engage in listening, but only really take in and comprehend a small portion of the information. Good listening requires us to give our full attention; to avoid distractions such as mobile phones or a person walking past; and to do all of the following all of the time.

Use body language

This indicates to the person speaking that they still have your attention, and that you are actively engaged in listening to what they have to say. Body language, such as smiling, nodding your head or facing the speaker, reinforces the nonverbal message, 'You have my attention, and I am focused on you'.

Do not interrupt

People need to have the opportunity to speak without interruptions. However, your skills are needed to determine when the person is repeating themselves or taking up too much time at the expense of other parties. If this happens, you need to find the right moment to stop them.

Defer judgment

Hold off on responding until the end of the person's speech, both verbally and mentally. If you make judgments part way through, you may become biased towards only hearing the parts that reinforce the judgment you have already made.

Consider the following tips when mentoring others.

Establish ground rules

A mentoring relationship should be based on trust, so it's good for both parties to share their expectations of the mentoring process and identify any areas that are out of bounds. Agree how often you will meet and commit to making the time.

Set goals

It's important to know what the mentor wants to achieve. Set goals and objectives so the mentoring has a focus and you can monitor progress.

Don't anticipate issues

⌐ Try to empty your mind of preconceived ideas about the mentor's issues and challenges. Encourage them to explore their own issues and ask questions that will guide their thinking, rather than you identifying what you think their issues are.

Agree actions

⌐ Work together to identify actions in each mentoring session that can be taken to practise and improve skills. Encourage reflection between sessions.

Review goal

⌐ Review the goal to consider whether it has been met. Both mentor and mentee should reflect on the process. The mentoring may naturally finish at this point or both parties may agree to continue, even if informally, if the process has been mutually beneficial.

Differences between coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentoring can use similar skills, but the outcomes and structure of the two development tools differ.

Mentoring and coaching are both vital professional development tools.

Coaching is often a short-term arrangement, which is performance-driven. It is generally a structured arrangement, with meetings regularly scheduled. Coaches are often used due to their expertise in certain subject areas, and can help you achieve specific goals in these areas. The aim of coaching is to improve performance in a certain area or areas. Think of it like a tennis coach – they are hired to enhance their player's performance and achieve their goals, like increasing the speed of their serve, and improving their back hand.

Mentoring tends to be a long-term arrangement, which is development-driven. Meetings generally follow a more informal schedule, and are set as needs arise. Often mentors are senior members of your organisation, or within your professional network. Mentoring depends less on meeting specific goals or performance objectives (although they can help with that too), but focuses instead on the overall professional development of the mentee. To borrow from the same example, a mentor to a tennis player could be another player who performed at a higher level in the game but has now retired. They can pass on their years of experience and provide their insights in a way different to a coach.

Example

Coaching

Kai approaches Gary after a team meeting and compliments him on his presentation skills.

'You are so confident and your presentations are interesting and engaging,' Kai tells him. 'I fall apart when I have to give a presentation. Have you got any tips you can share?'

Gary suggests that he could coach Kai and help him to develop his presentation skills. Kai accepts his offer and looks forward to their first meeting. They agree some ground rules and then Kai looks expectantly at Gary, waiting for critique of his presentation style. Instead Gary asks Kai a lot of questions about how he feels when communicating with others and what could be causing this. Gary helps Kai reflect on his feelings and his stumbling blocks and Kai feels pleased that Gary is really listening to him.

Gary makes suggestions of some actions Kai could try before their next meeting and Kai agrees. He is really happy that he's taken a step towards conquering his fear of presentations and Gary is impressed that Kai is willing to address his own communication challenges.

Practice Task 10

Question 1

Have you ever mentored or been mentored by someone in the workplace?
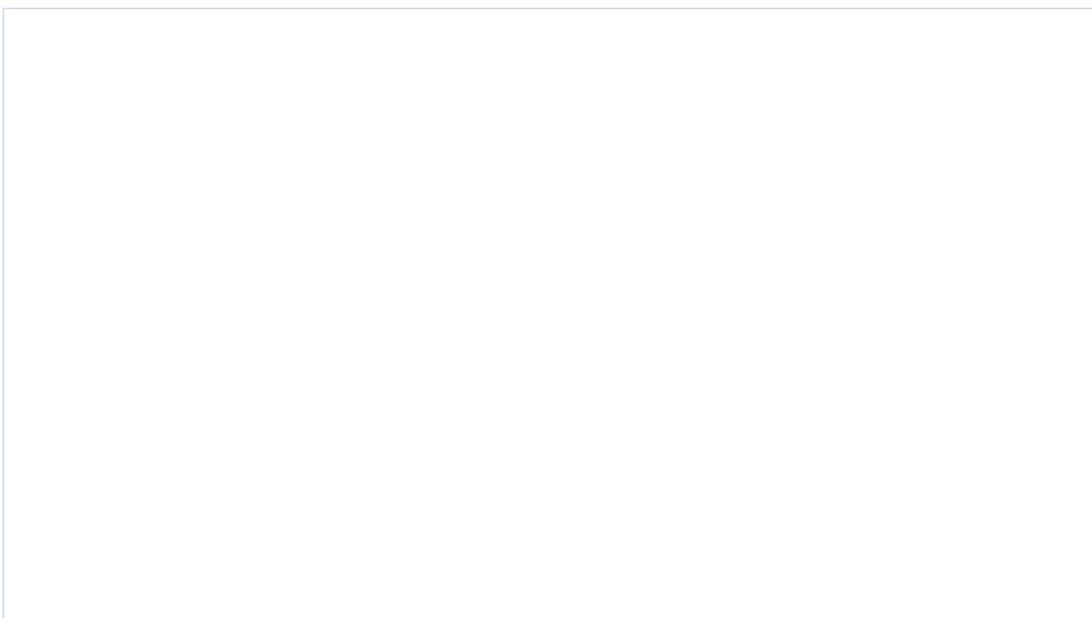Describe the experience.

Question 2

Explain what skills you think are most important when mentoring others.

Question 3

What are the differences between coaching and mentoring? When would you seek a coach, and when a mentor?

4B Obtain feedback to manage communication outcomes

Feedback is an important continuous development tool that allows workers to reflect on their performance in a constructive way that enables further improvement and achievement.

Successful workplace leaders know the importance of reviewing their communication in order to improve it. To reflect on the way you communicate, it is important to include all parties and take their views into consideration when identifying areas for improvement. Feedback provides useful data and information on the effectiveness of any communication.

By asking for feedback on your communication you set a good example for your team. You are showing them you are accountable for your communication and genuinely interested in their views. Gathering feedback information from all parties means you get a range of perspectives to draw conclusions from. It means you can learn more about how others see things and use this information to tailor any future messages.

Being proactive means you are taking charge of your communication and not leaving it to chance. This process increases your self-awareness. It helps with future decision-making and will improve your communication skills.

Seek feedback

Giving and receiving appropriate feedback is vital to effective communication. For example, it is difficult for a person to determine if they are doing a good job or if there are areas of their performance that are not up to standard if they don't receive feedback. Without the right type of feedback, people don't know if their role and work is valued by their manager and others.

It is important that the people you seek feedback from understand the need for continuous improvement and the role their feedback will play in this process. People are more likely to be forthcoming in providing feedback if they first understand why it is being done and that it will not impact them negatively. When obtaining feedback, consider what you need to know and who can provide you with useful feedback. You should consider a variety of sources of feedback, including team members, people who receive services and external stakeholders.

Feedback on communication

Feedback is information about reactions to your communication process, which can be used as a basis for improvement. Be proactive. Effective workplace leaders are aware that communication is one of the most important skills they can develop; they own their communications and take full responsibility for the successful receipt of their messages. It is crucial that they strive to improve their communication skills by seeking feedback about the processes they use. Consider the following tips when seeking feedback on communications.

Tips for seeking feedback on communication processes
▪ Ask a peer to observe you running a meeting or giving a presentation and give you specific feedback on how you present your messages.
▪ Establish a focus group of customers to provide you with ideas on the best ways to keep them informed and up to date.
▪ Conduct one-on-one interviews with team members to discuss your communication style and choice of communication methods.
▪ Post draft copies of procedures or guidelines for completing tasks on the intranet and ask for comments.
▪ Develop email surveys and send them out to stakeholders, asking them to rate particular aspects of your communication.
▪ Review work health and safety data and records to establish if policies and procedures are being followed or training has been effective.
▪ Review exit interviews to pick up any patterns that link communication to reasons for leaving.

Feedback methods

Feedback can be obtained using a variety of methods; you will need to decide which method will be most effective in gaining the feedback you require. For people to effectively participate in a feedback process, it must be seen as having value and relevance, so select the methods best suited to your target group and the situation. Feedback on communication practices will provide information on what is working well and what strategies and protocols need to be adapted or improved to meet the organisation's objectives.

Mechanisms such as scheduled meetings, bulletin boards, text messaging, shared computer network spaces, blogs, and even tweets and other social media can be used to provide feedback to the work team in relation to outcomes of any particular consultation.

Here are some methods you may consider using to obtain feedback.

Methods to obtain feedback in the workplace	
360-degree feedback and individual interviews	360-degree feedback is provided anonymously, using an online survey with a common set of questions. It comes from all directions: management, staff members, peers, colleagues and others. All can be invited to provide information via the survey. Information is collated and used for professional development or performance appraisal purposes. Interview feedback is obtained through individual questions and discussion. Interviews can provide very specific information about processes and systems within a team or organisation, although their success varies depending on the interviewer, the questions asked and the rapport established. Interviews can be conducted with individuals or with a group.
Observation	It can be wise to step back and allow another staff member to chair the meeting while you conduct observations. Observations can be biased by your own attitudes and emotions. For this reason, use observations in combination with other methods for a more complete picture. You may decide to observe the participation of an individual or several people in the team. Areas to note include their contribution to discussions, body language, interaction with other team members, the questions and comments, and their general professionalism, such as their appearance, behaviour and attitudes to others.
Formal evaluation forms	Evaluation forms should use a consistent question style, and be trialled before use to ensure any ambiguities or difficulties are corrected. Questions often provide multiple-choice or scaling responses as this style is perceived as being quicker and easier to complete than open-ended questions. Questions should be written with either three or five possible options, with the central option being a neutral or middle choice. Always include a section for comments to give the person an opportunity for an extended response. Obtaining feedback from team members may occur via a formal written evaluation form. Limit your questions to no more than 10.
Meetings	Formal, scheduled meetings and informal, ad hoc gatherings between team members contribute to a better understanding of tasks, responsibilities and roles.
Brainstorming sessions	The group as a whole considers a number of possible perspectives. Successful brainstorming requires commitment, contribution and cooperation by all team members.
Email/intranet communication	If a team is geographically dispersed, a system of electronic communication can aid understanding and contribution by all team members.
Newsletters or other processes and devices	Use widely-distributed mediums to help ensure that all employees have the opportunity to contribute to team and individual performance plans.

Determine outcomes

One of the fundamental approaches for obtaining feedback is to look at the end result. There should be a very clear understanding of what is expected from the process. Feedback objectives should be quantified and used as a benchmark to measure the success.

Look at the end result by asking the following:
- What exactly do you want to achieve?   - What areas are you seeking feedback from?   - What techniques will you use to obtain feedback (for example, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups)?   - Have these techniques been used before? What were the outcomes?   - What will happen once the information is obtained?   - How will you measure success of improvement?

Example

Obtaining feedback to identify issues

Melanie is the customer service manager at her organisation. She has observed the number of customer complaints has slowly been rising over the last four weeks and discusses this observation with her manager. As the content of the complaints vary, there is no specific indicator as to why customer complaints are rising. Melanie suggests a proactive response, which involves calling recent customers and asking for their feedback on all aspects of the purchase process. She creates a questionnaire which is also placed on the website and trains her team to use it to seek customer feedback. Melanie also consults with teams within the organisation and their suppliers to gather their insight into recent issues and problems that could be contributing to the customer complaints. Once sufficient data has been gathered, Melanie summarises the data and the key factors to present at a senior management meeting.
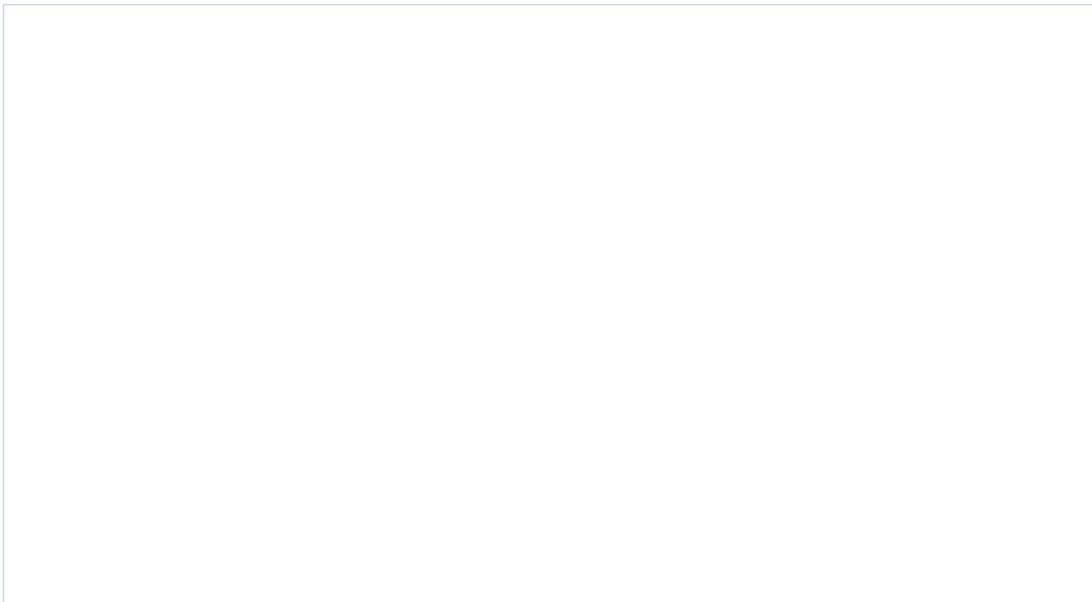
Practice Task 11

Question 1

What methods to obtain feedback are used within your workplace?

Question 2

Your organisation has improved visual communication on their website for visually impaired users. Outline a process that could be used for obtaining feedback about the outcomes of the implemented improvements.

4C Identify and implement improvements to communication processes

Reviewing communication protocols should be part of a continuous improvement cycle.

As part of an overall communication strategy, it is important to review communication practices on a regular basis to ensure they are meeting the needs of your organisation as well as the organisation's objectives. There may be a specific person in your organisation who is responsible for developing and reviewing overall workplace communication strategies, or you may do it as a team or be responsible for certain aspects yourself.

Reviews of communication practices should take place to ensure that strategies and protocols comply with relevant legislation and with the organisation's standards and policies. Reviews also assist in assessing whether communication practices are meeting the needs and objectives of the organisation and its stakeholders across different contexts. Finally, it is useful to evaluate whether the communication practices are effective at promoting the organisation internally and externally, including the services provided, the organisation's achievements and its values.

Review and evaluate communication practices

You may also decide to conduct a regular formal review of your team's communication protocols and practices to ensure you are following organisational standards and they fit well within the broader organisational communication strategy. You may also need to review communication practices within the team, within the organisation and with external stakeholders.

Evaluate the current approach and then make adjustments where necessary. An evaluation of communication practices should be a structured process of assessing the success of communication strategies and protocols in meeting the objectives of the organisation and to reflect on the lessons learnt. The evaluation process can be broken down into stages which include planning for the evaluation, collecting information (which will include the process you've used to obtain feedback), and reporting on the information gathered.

Evaluation can be summative or focused on the outcomes of your communication practices, or it can be formative or focused on how your communication practices can be improved or a combination of both. To decide what type of evaluation you should use, you need to decide what the purpose of your evaluation is. What information do you need? You should also consider whether you want to evaluate all of your communication practices, or simply focus on a specific individual or set of strategies or protocols.

Here are some possible steps to consider in an evaluation process.

Evaluation process
Determine the objective or purpose of the evaluation – what do you want to learn?
Determine who needs to participate in the evaluation – internal stakeholders, external stakeholders or specific individuals?
What is your time frame for the evaluation to be completed?
What budget do you have – can you afford an external consultant to do the evaluation or will someone within the organisation be completing it?
What methods will you use? Do you need to use a specific tool like an online survey tool?
How will you report your evaluation findings? What will you do with the information you gather?

Identify opportunities for continuous improvement

Continuous improvement in an organisation means constantly improving practices and processes in incremental steps. Continuous improvement is the process of ensuring communication practices are continually improved.

The lessons learnt from evaluating communication practices can be used to identify opportunities to improve those practices immediately and over time.

This means identifying any issues or opportunities and adapting and implementing communication practices and protocols to address these.

Document areas for improvement

The opportunities for continuous improvement need to be recorded and communicated to appropriate people. This might be the organisation's management team, the Board and/or staff members. There may need to be a team identified who will work on improving existing communication strategies and protocols, and developing new ones where appropriate. It is helpful to document the steps for improvement in an action plan.

Documenting an action plan helps you and others think through all the details of the action plan and its implications. Make sure all relevant parties understand the proposed solution and are clear about what their responsibilities are in implementing it. Never assume everyone already knows how to undertake their tasks; perhaps training, counselling or further information will be needed. Each party should be aware of their responsibilities and should agree on how the situation will be monitored.

The plan may need to be altered if new issues arise or certain tasks prove to be inconsequential or impossible. However, the fundamental intent of the solution should always remain a focus.

Involve your team

Workplace issues should be addressed, as far as practicable, at the team level; discuss them in an open and honest way without recourse to external parties if possible. However, if you cannot find a workable solution, you may need to repeat the process of examining the issue and considering other possible solutions. This may need to be undertaken at a more senior level or in consultation with specialists.

Follow organisational and legislative requirements

When taking action, you must always work within the requirements of organisational policies and procedures and any relevant legislation or regulations. Refer to the relevant award or enterprise agreement, legislation from all levels of government, and codes and standards from regulatory bodies that affect business operations.

Seek further advice

To ensure you are following the correct procedures, seek further advice by consulting managers or supervisors, union representatives, work health and safety consultants, legal advisers and other people with specialist responsibilities within and/or outside of the organisation, such as an employee relations officer.

Implement plans to improve communication processes

Managers are responsible for developing and implementing an action plan to address the identified improvements. Consider whether the audience has changed, whether more appropriate tools should be used or people need further training in understanding and following the plan.

Include measurements of success of your communication practices and making adjustments to communication strategies when required. Measures of success may include:

- Was the information disseminated accurate, current, sufficient and relevant?
- Was the information presented in the appropriate format and language for the audience?
- Was the information communicated in a timely manner?
- Was confidentiality of information maintained where appropriate?

Monitor plans

Monitoring should ensure all tasks and changes agreed to are, in fact, completed within specified timelines and with allocated resources. In many cases, those who have identified and analysed a problem can believe their task is over when a solution is established. A clear understanding of how progress will be monitored ensures that those involved are alert to unexpected delays or difficulties associated with certain actions or tasks.

As the solution is being actioned, talk to people involved with the implementation and those who are affected by it. This helps to ascertain how they feel about what is taking place and whether they are experiencing any problems. If you communicate directly with people who are affected by the situation, you can gain cooperation and identify difficulties before they become unmanageable. If timely feedback is given, it is easier to take corrective action to prevent more severe problems occurring in the future.

Example

Implement improvements to communication processes

As part of her feedback exercises, Melanie identifies that the main problem has been with responses to incoming correspondence, queries and complaints. Customers' feedback revealed that the cause for most dissatisfaction was the time the customer service team took to reply to their requests. On investigation, Melanie discovers that correspondence was being lost due to an inadequate CRM procedure. Customer-service levels were declining and this would eventually impact on the whole organisation as profits decreased. Melanie knows she has to address this problem promptly and discusses the situation with her team. They agree to develop a new procedure and train staff accordingly.

The following table is a record of the team's action plan.

Task	Person	Completion date
Discuss a new CRM procedure in consultation with team.	Susan and Walter	30 January
Develop a new procedure within the CRM for recording customer emails and monitoring its handling.	Sanjeev	15 March
Test the system for functionality.	Susan and Walter	10 April
Draft an instruction manual.	Sylvia and Walter	30 April
Approve the instruction manual.	Melanie	6 May
Conduct staff training.	Mina	30 May

Practice Task 12

Question 1

Identify a communication issue or failure in your organisation. How would you evaluate the issue?
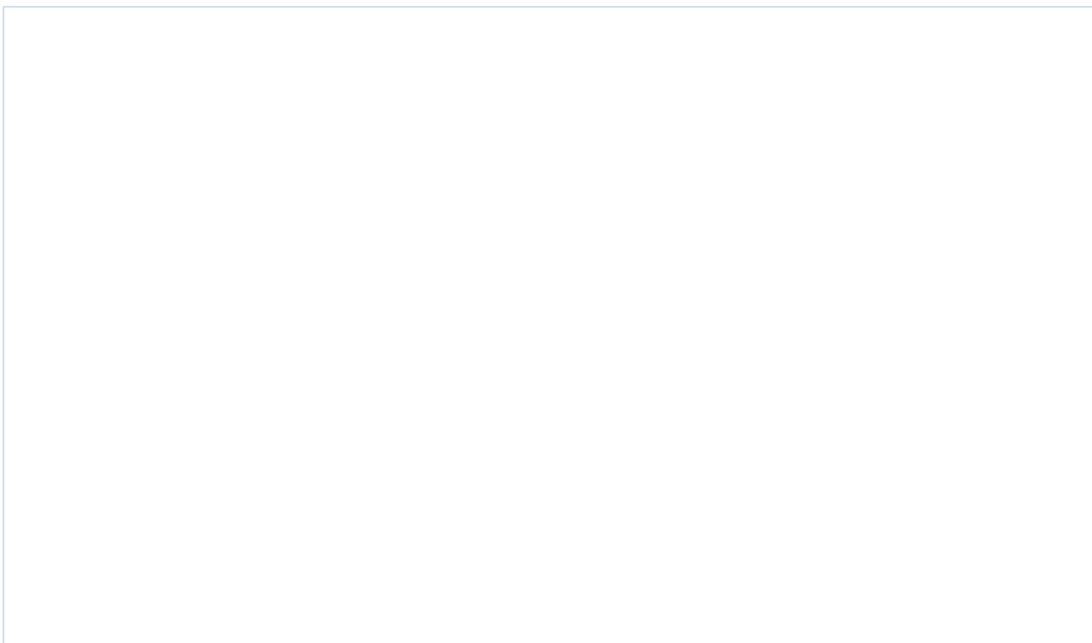
Question 2

Outline an action plan to resolve the above issue.

Question 3

Provide an example of a communication challenge to continuous improvement.

Summary

- Mentoring is a relationship between a mentor and a mentee, based on a development of the mentee's career goals and objectives.
- The mentor is required to demonstrate active listening in order to be effective.
- Coaches are often used in the short term to meet specific, measurable goals.
- Feedback is information about reactions to your communication process and is used as a basis for improvement.
- There are a range of methods that can be used to obtain feedback.
- Feedback and evaluation can be helpful in identifying areas for improvement in communication.
- Strategies to improve communication should be documented and supported by an action plan.
- An action plan is a useful tool for implementing improvements to communication processes as it allows for easy monitoring.

Learning Checkpoint 4
Review communication practices

Part A

1. Outline some mentoring strategies that could be used to help achieve communication goals.

2. Which of the following are features and methods of coaching, rather than mentoring?
   Tick all that apply.

   ○ Short-term goals

   ○ Informal meetings

   ○ Development-driven

   ○ Performance-driven

   ○ Specific and measurable results

Part B

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

Case study

Sunita manages the sales and marketing teams, which both have team leaders. There are have been some recent issues with some of the social media posts by the marketing team and Sunita meets with the team leaders to discuss the issues. Olive, the marketing team leader, is upset; her team have not been following the protocols and she feels responsible for the social media issues they have created. Tim, the sales team leader, admits that team members occasionally use their own social media accounts to contact customers. It becomes clear to Sunita that there are several issues that need to be addressed.

1. What steps could Sunita take to address the social media communication issues?

2. Who would you seek feedback from for the social media issues and why?

3. What changes do you think need to be made to social media communication protocols?

4. Outline an action plan to implement your changes.

Information	Owner	Audience