

---

# Contents

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Before you begin</b>   | <b>vii</b> |
| <b>Topic 1: Recognise individual differences and respond appropriately</b>                      | <b>1</b>   |
| 1A Recognise and respect diversity and individual differences                                   | 2          |
| 1B Respond to differences sensitively   | 24         |
| 1C Comply with legislation and guidelines   | 32         |
| 1D Consider diversity when communicating  | 39         |
| Summary   | 44         |
| Learning checkpoint 1: Recognise individual differences and response appropriately              | 45         |
| <b>Topic 2: Work effectively with individual differences</b>                                    | <b>49</b>  |
| 2A Recognise and document diversity in skills to enhance teamwork                               | 50         |
| 2B Encourage colleagues to use and share their skills and talents with team members and clients | 55         |
| 2C Demonstrate that diversity is valued by your organisation                                    | 58         |
| Summary   | 62         |
| Learning checkpoint 2: Work effectively with individual differences                             | 63         |

# 1A

## Recognise and respect diversity and individual differences

People learn from each other's different experience and skills. Interacting with diverse people tends to generate knowledge and innovation. Diversity challenges people's assumptions and makes them think differently about the world around them. Within business, human difference is essential. Different people are good at different things and a business or organisation needs a wide variety of skills.



More and more organisations are now competing globally and dealing with many international businesses. This means that all sorts of different people from around the world will be involved in, or affect, your organisation. The most successful businesses are those that accommodate diversity in all its forms.

Australia has a very diverse workforce that reflects the different people who make up the Australian population. Australian employers recognise the value of having a diverse range of employees. Australian employers are prohibited by law from denying anyone of employment based on gender, disability, race or religion. In your work life, you will encounter colleagues of different ages, races, religions and levels of expertise or ability, among many other things.

Australia has a very diverse workforce that reflects the different people who make up the Australian population. Australian employers recognise the value of having

### Value diversity

Diversity brings together different points of view, different ways of doing things and different methods of solving problems. This can result in improved products and services, a larger customer base, greater profits and/or enhanced productivity. Australian workplaces rely on teamwork and the ability of employees to work with and support each other. Whether you deal with the public, your organisation's suppliers, consultants, business associates or with your colleagues, you will be expected to accommodate the full range of diversity.

Valuing and accommodating diversity means we avoid stereotypes and prejudices, and don't discriminate against people. Many organisations implement diversity policies that provide guidelines and encourage staff to embrace diversity. This also helps organisations to increase their competitiveness and market relevance, and attract valuable and talented people working for them.

## Racism

Racism is the notion that a particular race of people is superior or inferior to another race of people. Racial vilification refers to behaviour that insults individuals and groups on the grounds of their colour, race or ethnic or national origins. This includes racist jokes and racially offensive terms, stereotyping, provocative media reporting, historical revisionism and racist hate propaganda. Many countries have legislation prohibiting racism.

In the workplace, racism causes conflict and problems, preventing employees from contributing as effectively as possible. The reputation of an organisation can suffer if it is known to have racist attitudes.

## Avoiding racism

Australia is a signatory to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Racial discrimination and abuse is illegal under the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), and the *Racial Hatred Act 1995* (Cth).

Avoiding racism is largely a matter of eliminating prejudices and stereotypes, and focusing on the qualities and value of each individual. For example, you should not make assumptions that people from a certain area such as Africa, America, Asia or Britain are all the same in some way. Nor should we make assumptions about people who share the same religion.



## Work with diversity: religion

Many different religions are followed in Australia, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Paganism, Shinto and Sikhism. People in Australia are free to practise any religion they find appropriate to their beliefs, faith and values and have the right to express those religious beliefs, or to practise no religion at all.

Religion can play a part in diet, dress and how a person chooses to be administered health care. It can also influence how people approach events like births, deaths, birthdays, anniversaries and marriages. Some religions also have taboos (restrictions or bans) on certain things, issues or people.

Experienced or senior colleagues can show others how to deal with real-life situations and problems. They can help others adjust to different workplaces and can coach or mentor less experienced or junior colleagues.

There can also be tension between traditional practices already within the workplace or industry and new practices brought into the workplace or industry by newcomers.

## Work with diversity: work practices

The people you work with will all have different methods of approaching their work. These methods may or may not be consistent with your own work habits. Some people like to focus on one task at a time, others are happier when they can take breaks from tasks and spend time on other work. Some people like to work in a noisy environment, while others prefer a quiet workspace. Some employees take great care with detail, while others prefer to look at the bigger picture. Some people are perfectionists, while others are happy to do the best they can as long as the work gets done on time. Some people are very organised, while others are less so. There are lots of different ways people like to work, and many different ways people do their work.

Individual personalities affect the way people work, and because everyone is different, everyone works differently. This mix of personalities can make for a very positive and dynamic team if people learn how to work with each other's different work styles, not against them. Learning how to work with others involves finding the positive and productive elements of others' work practices.

### Example: work with each other's different work styles

Eddie was continually frustrated because her colleague, Raoul, took on so many tasks that he never finished anything on time, and held up everyone else. Raoul was always irritated because Eddie liked to point out tiny ways she thought his work could be improved. He thought if she stopped trying to make him do everything perfectly he would have enough time to finish his tasks. Eddie thought that if Raoul would just do one thing at a time he wouldn't have so much trouble doing the work correctly.

Eventually both of them realised that the friction between them was creating a tense atmosphere that no-one was happy with. They decided to try to find more productive ways of working together.



After discussing how each of them felt they could best contribute to the work at hand, they decided that it would be better for themselves and the organisation if they worked more closely together. That way, Eddie could keep an eye on Raoul's workload, correct errors and make improvements where necessary and on time. Raoul was then free to deal creatively with the work he did and keep an eye on the bigger picture.

As a result of working together, the team's work improved considerably and both Eddie and Raoul were much happier.

### Example: present information in a number of languages

Joseph wondered why counter sales in his deli were so low. He decided to do a demographic analysis of the local community, relying on council statistics and local research. He realised that many of the women in the local community were from non-English speaking backgrounds (particularly from Greece), and his store only had English-speaking staff. He translated all the signs and information in the store into a number of different languages, introduced a few new food lines, and did some advertising about his new promotions.

Sales increased immediately and Joseph found he needed to employ another person. He ended up employing a young woman from the local area who could speak Greek as well as English.

## Work with diversity: gender issues

A number of issues relate to a person's gender and these must be acknowledged and dealt with sensitively in the workplace. Until the twentieth century, most males and females in Australia were separated by work and domestic duties and roles. Australian society now promotes equality between the sexes. While there are still elements of society that conform to gender stereotypes and expect others to conform also, there are no longer laws that prevent females from accessing



advantages traditionally only accorded to males. Equal rights are protected under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

Many people from different cultures and religions may uphold 'traditional' gender roles and values. It may be hard for some older people to accept change and it may be hard for some younger people to accept habits of stereotyped behaviours

from older workers, but we all have to work together to ensure the workplace is fair for everyone. Our laws provide a framework for that to happen.

People who discriminate against women should understand that national laws override cultural or religious doctrine.

## Work with diversity: sexism

Sexism is a behaviour that demeans or discriminates against people based on their gender. Sexism involves a lack of respect for the qualities of individual human beings. It reduces humans to sexual and gender stereotypes that usually focus on traditional gender roles or the person's sexuality. People who behave in a sexist manner are usually trying to assert their superiority or dominance over others, and prefer people to conform to traditional roles.

Sexism is also noticeable when issues such as pregnancy and family duties arise and impact on an employee, for example, breastfeeding a baby in public.

Your organisation may implement policies and procedures that make the workplace more accessible for disabled clients and customers. Making the workplace accessible means taking steps to ensure that all people can participate fully in the workplace for what it does, regardless of whether they have a disability or not.

Organisations that have addressed accessibility have looked at a number of workplace features and situations such as those shown here.

**Physical access**

Physical access, including the layout of a building; fittings such as doorways, stairs, furniture, and kitchen facilities; appropriate lighting and signage.

**Communication**

Communication, including use of appropriate formats, use of interpreters and other spokespeople; provision of supportive communication devices such as telephone typewriters (TTY).

**Training and accountability**

Training and accountability, including ensuring that everyone within the organisation is aware of the organisation's policies and procedures regarding disability and diversity.

**Assistive technology**

Assistive technology such as speech recognition programs, screen readers, touch screens, keyboard and mouse alternatives.

## Work with diversity: mental abilities

Mental or cognitive ability means how well a person is able to understand and process information, as well as understand the consequences of their own behaviour and decisions. It involves memory, focus, attention, awareness, logic and reason, as well as self-awareness.

People's abilities differ. Some are better at numerical problems than language or word problems. Some may have high recall abilities while others are slower with information processing. People who don't have high levels of mental ability are often very capable in other areas. Sometimes a person's mental ability is affected by an intellectual disability or impairment or by disorders or diseases such as autism or Alzheimer's disease. Finding out how people think is a good way of assessing how to allocate tasks in the workplace.

Learning styles vary from person to person, too. People may be visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learners. Catering to a client's preference for comprehension and learning will help make your dealings with them more effective.

Mental ability is often judged by a person's:

- spatial reasoning
- numerical reasoning
- verbal reasoning
- logical reasoning.

# 1B

## Respond to differences sensitively

Our differences as people are displayed in many ways. To be effective within a diverse workplace, we need to be able to recognise and understand the characteristics that make people different from each other, know how these differences can affect the individual and know how these differences can affect others in the workplace.

At work you will deal with managers and supervisors, internal customers, stakeholders and people from other organisations. Everyone you deal with will be different from you in some way. Some of these differences may not concern you at all, while for others you may need to make adjustments in your work practices or your usual way of thinking. Other people may need to make adjustments to accommodate you. Everyone needs to cooperate, respond positively to differences and respect the rights of all individuals to ensure that your organisation performs successfully.

Being able to respond effectively and sensitively to these issues in your day-to-day work means:

- acknowledging that differences exist between people, but that no person deserves less courtesy or respect because of those differences
- not ignoring or dismissing differences, but giving them appropriate attention where it is warranted
- recognising that people have a right to be different and all individuals should be treated fairly, regardless of any perceived differences.

### Respond to diversity: age

Workplace structure has changed and many people now experience workplaces where all employees are involved in decision-making and plans. Conflict can occur when people of any generation stereotype others and refuse to acknowledge different values and opinions.

Australia's population is ageing. This means that older people are increasingly making up a larger proportion of the whole population, of consumer and client markets and the workforce. Below are some tips for communicating effectively with older people in the workplace.

#### Tips for engaging with older people in the workplace

- Acknowledge the experience and skills an older person brings to the workplace.
- Be open to being mentored by an older person.
- Offer to assist with or teach new technologies to an older colleague.
- Question older people on operations, best practice and how to deal with problems.
- Listen and observe how they approach work tasks and problem-solving.
- Avoid stereotyping.

## Recognise low literacy and numeracy skills

There are a number of ways you can identify if someone is having difficulty with literacy and numeracy. They may tell you and ask you for assistance when they need it, or you may have to be observant and take notice of the way reference to written material is avoided. Some guides for how to recognise someone who has trouble with low levels of literacy or numeracy are shown here.

To recognise low literacy or numeracy in others, check for people who:

- avoid written material, including documents, letters, email and internet sites
- ask you to verbally summarise written information for them
- continually miss appointments, don't respond to letters and arrive for interviews without relevant documentation filled out
- claim to have visual impairments when asked to read text
- ask questions that should be obvious if they had read the information
- ask no questions about written material
- may appear uninterested or uncooperative
- ignore or misunderstand written instructions; never refer to written information or figures
- take time and effort to read and understand text
- scan written material quickly and with no evidence of understanding
- don't take notes or make lists or reminders
- appear anxious when confronted with written material or figures.

## Work with those with low literacy skills

You can do many things differently to assist those with low literacy and numeracy skills. Some tips and ideas are shown below.

Contact people by telephone where necessary and possible.

Physically take people through a set of actions, such as accessing public transport or using new technology.

Describe instructions in pictures rather than written words.

Avoid jargon and use simple and plain language when speaking and writing.

Use face-to-face meetings wherever possible.

Look for alternative ways of presenting information, such as on DVD, video, CD or audiocassette, picture books and models.

*continued ...*

# 1C

## Comply with legislation and guidelines

Organisations within Australia must comply with a variety of federal Acts and national standards. Organisations must also comply with the anti-discrimination legislation that applies within their state or territory of registration and operation, and with training industry standards, such as standards addressing access and equity issues.

For example, the organisation you work for, or the training organisation you study with, must act in accordance with a number of Commonwealth Acts, which are explained below.

### Age Discrimination

#### ***Age Discrimination Act 2004***

The *Age Discrimination Act 2004* is a law that is especially important with regard to Australia's ageing population. It protects people who are discriminated against because of their age and states that, regardless of age, everyone has the same rights before the law.

The Act also allows appropriate benefits to be given to people of a certain age, particularly younger and older people, according to their circumstances. Objectives of the Act also include removing barriers to older people participating in society and changing negative stereotypes about older people.

Exemptions include stipulations regarding youth wages, health care and voluntary work.

### Disability

#### ***Disability Discrimination Act 1992***

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* gives a broad definition of disability and prohibits direct or indirect discrimination based on disability. It also prohibits discrimination against those associated with people who have disabilities; these may be friends, relatives, carers and co-workers. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate in the areas of:

- employment
- education
- access to public premises
- purchase of house and land
- provision of goods, services and facilities
- administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs.

Exemptions to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* include when a potential employer would be placed under unjustifiable hardship in order to employ a person with a disability, although the employer is expected to make reasonable adjustments. An example of an unjustifiable hardship might be the cost of extensive renovations to allow for wheelchair access to and throughout a small, second floor studio owned by a small business.

By dealing with challenges and issues in an ethical manner, a workplace will comply with the law, increase staff motivation, gain community support and maintain a pleasant working environment.

Ethical issues may be a factor involved in:

- unlawful or unfair dismissal
- discrimination, harassment and bullying
- accidents and injuries
- stress and work overload
- compensation.

## Code of ethics

A code of ethics offers guidance and/or direction on a range of ethical issues that you may confront in your day-to-day work or study. A code of ethics is a statement of the ethical principles, values and behaviours of an organisation. A code of conduct is based on the principles, values and behaviours outlined in the code of ethics. These ethical principles may include principles such as:

- equity and justice
- diversity
- honesty
- integrity
- respect for others
- personal and professional responsibility.



## Codes of conduct in the workplace

A code of conduct is a collection of policies, rules or guidelines that define the specific actions or procedures applicable to a particular organisation or workplace. It offers guidance and/or direction on a range of ethical issues that you may confront in your day-to-day work or study. A code of conduct applies to all employees, visitors and others who may conduct business with the organisation or workplace. It will be informed by a variety of federal Acts and national standards, and state or territory legislation.

A code of conduct is a reminder of our responsibilities to our co-workers at all levels of an organisation. All staff should be involved in developing a code of conduct which should be consistent with the vision and branding of the organisation. It may include all or some of the items listed below.

## Appropriate language terms

As language and society changes over time, terms that are deemed acceptable at one time may no longer be acceptable at another. This can be either because the language itself has changed or because the communities referred to have objected to the terms used to describe them. Working with diversity means you have a responsibility to refer to people with respect and consideration, and this means using terms that are acceptable to them. For example, the best general reference for Indigenous Australians is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

When referring to a person with disability, the good rule of thumb is to refer to the person first, then the disability: for example, a person with a hearing impairment.

Gender-specific terms can be neutralised to include the possibility of both male and female subjects.

### Objectionable terms

- The elderly or the aged
- Disabled people
- Handicapped, unfit, incapacitated
- Diabetics
- Epileptics
- Wheelchair-bound people
- HIV victims
- Mentally handicapped person
- Mankind
- Mr and Mrs Gerald Pareda
- Chairman, foreman

### Appropriate terms

- Older/senior people
- People with a disability
- Disabled
- People with diabetes
- People with epilepsy
- People using wheelchairs
- People with HIV
- Person with a learning difficulty
- Humanity
- Mr and Mrs Pareda
- Chairperson, foreperson

## Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication includes body language and eye contact as well as touching. Body language is different the world over and many cultures have different ways of interpreting nonverbal communication.

Some people avoid eye contact as a sign of respect; others urge eye contact as a sign of honesty. Many people smile when they are nervous or embarrassed, others when they are



## Learning checkpoint 1

### Recognise individual differences and response appropriately

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in recognising individual differences and responding appropriately.

#### Part A

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

##### Case study

Keiran and Bella have received a grant from the government to help them establish their small catering business, Fantastic Foods. In the area where they live and do business there is a wide range of ethnic groups including Vietnamese, Chinese, Italian and Chilean. They would like to target festivals and special religious days as occasions on which they could be employed to cater.

The grant will enable Keiran and Bella to undertake a three-month marketing campaign, part of which will involve a market research phase to ensure they understand the diversity of the area they live in, particularly the needs of these potential client groups.

1. Identify the information that Keiran and Bella need to gather regarding this diverse community. Outline the strategies you think would be most effective in gathering this information.

2. Explain how the information you have identified will assist Keiran and Bella to develop appropriate marketing strategies for their business venture.

## 2A

## Recognise and document diversity in skills to enhance teamwork

Every person can do a number of things to develop effective working relationships. When dealing with a diverse group of people, the most important thing to remember is not to make assumptions about a person, their differences or their preferences. Also remember that everyone has something to offer.

As you read this checklist of things to do, see how well you rate yourself as someone who can work effectively with people from a range of backgrounds. Are there any gaps? Do you have any areas where you could make improvements?

Guidelines for developing effective working relationships:

- Advise others of what is expected in the Australian workplace. Ensure everyone in your team or group is included and valued.
- Have patience with people with physical, intellectual or communication problems.
- Don't assume that a person's differences limit their capability.
- Realise that excluding people because of their differences is a waste of human resources and adds to everyone else's workload.
- Effectively engage the skills and talents of everyone in your team.
- Try to remove or overcome barriers where you see them and encourage a solid and cooperative team. Identify those who assume, generalise and stereotype.
- Make sure other relevant people understand the needs of your colleagues and customers and investigate any assumptions made. If in doubt, ask colleagues how they would like to be referred to.
- Respect people's privacy and treat everyone with equal consideration and courtesy.
- Make an effort to present views that do not assume, generalise or stereotype. Support everyone's right to be different.
- Report discriminatory behaviour to your supervisors or managers. Support colleagues who are being discriminated against.
- Ask your colleague if there is anything they would like you to know about their religion, culture, beliefs or needs that might help you work better with them.

### Use diversity to benefit the team

Your work team may be made up of people who are different from you in a number of ways. It is useful to understand how this diversity can benefit the work of your team, and how you can harness the different qualities, skills and experience of the people around you to accomplish goals and meet any challenges set for the team.

## Work effectively in a diverse team environment

Here are some strategies that you can use when working with a diverse group of people in a team situation:

- Provide opportunities for team members to discuss team objectives as they are allocated or formulated. This will help everyone understand how and why the objectives are set, what is expected of the team, and give people a chance to contribute and to express their opinions.
- Encourage team members to outline what needs to be done to meet the team objectives.
- Identify the team member/s that could best carry out each task.
- Encourage each team member to make an effort to negotiate differences and recognise and respect others' expertise, working and interpersonal style and work practices. This will help the team to work effectively together and avoid disruption within the team.
- Encourage the team to plan and work around the qualities exhibited by individual members. Think of the characteristics that are the basis for differences between people. What challenges have people had to overcome to accept their own differences from other people, or have their differences accepted by others? What skills or qualities have been gained from overcoming these challenges and experiences that can contribute to a more effective workplace?

### Example: work with the qualities exhibited by colleagues

Olga is new to Red Tile and has been asked to put together a new catalogue for her company's tiling products. She needs someone experienced in the company who can describe all of Red Tile's products. Olga also needs people who are good at written communication and graphic design, and someone with attention to detail who can edit and proofread the drafts. She also needs to know about the local market so that she can determine who the company is marketing towards, and adapt the catalogue to suit them.

Red Tile doesn't have a publishing department so Olga needs to see who in the company already has these skills.

After making an effort to build a friendly relationship with her colleagues, Olga is able to discuss their experiences and backgrounds with them. She finds there are lots of people with hidden talents at Red Tile.

Leif, the secretary, knows how to organise and budget, so Olga asks him to help plan the project. Kay, who comes in on Fridays to do the filing, has a great eye for graphics and visuals, so Olga asked her to help with the design of the catalogue.

Essam has an interest in the local community and can tell Olga about the area's demographics. Olga uses the written communication skills she learnt through a writing course to create descriptions of the products. Most of Red Tile's clientele are men, so Olga asks the male employees for a male point of view.

Olga gives a draft copy of the catalogue to a number of colleagues and asks them to look at it to make sure it is easy to read.

She asks Brett, who normally processes orders and has a reputation for having an eye for detail, to proofread the final copy before it goes to print.

The final result is that Red Tile now has a product catalogue that is informative, accurate and visually exciting to look at.

## 2B

### Encourage colleagues to use and share their skills and talents with team members and clients

Teams need a mix of skills, personalities and attitudes to work effectively, so everyone should be encouraged to use and share their special qualities, skills or backgrounds to enhance work outcomes. The best way of encouraging others to use and share their individual skills is to value and make use of them yourself.

Letting people know they belong and are valued members of the team helps to build trust. This helps people to be more open about their experiences and personal characteristics, so they are more comfortable about displaying and using their differences in the workplace. This creates a more effective team.

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth anything.

To show diversity is valued in the team, you can also:

- encourage participation in discussion and interaction
- emphasise the advantages of having a diverse range of people in your team
- celebrate everyone's team contributions
- focus on positive outcomes and strengths
- show interest and ask questions as appropriate
- ask others to mentor or teach a skill in which they are proficient to another team member
- encourage sharing of knowledge at team meetings
- demonstrate respect
- not tolerate discrimination.

### Be inclusive

It is important to always try to be inclusive of everyone in your workplace and allow people to contribute in the best way they know how. If you know a newcomer is shy or having trouble fitting in, let them know they are valued and that the team is looking forward to finding out about them and what they can do.

Stereotyping and allowing prejudices can stop people from seeing the qualities and attributes a person has that might be useful to their team. Bias can also undermine team cohesiveness and cooperation, especially if it leaves people feeling alienated or forced to work in a hostile environment. An under-achieving team cannot hope



to reach its objectives or provide quality outcomes. Stereotyping, prejudice and bias should always be challenged, whether directly aimed at a certain person or group of people, part of the dominant culture. Challenging bias in all areas is important, since many people will be put off expressing their own differences if they feel differences are not tolerated, and that everyone is expected to conform to the 'norm'.

## Commonality

One of the most effective ways of countering work disruption caused by bias or discrimination is to demonstrate the common links between people otherwise considered 'different.'



Finding points of commonality involves recognising the links that already exist between people as well as recognising links that bring people together. Commonality means creating an 'us', rather than an 'us and them' attitude. Remember that the link that brings everyone together in the first place is a common work goal. Encouraging employees to think in this way encourages them to bring the best of themselves to the task at hand.

### Example: counter discrimination using points of commonality

Jason is a young Anglo-Saxon male who has just started working in a team of male employees very similar to him in ancestry, age and training. Many of them share the same interests and see each other in social groups that reflect the characteristics of the work team. At the same time, the organisation hires Dominica, a female supervisor for the team. Dominica is older than the male employees, has more experience and higher qualifications, has recently migrated from England and is a single parent.



Jason notes that the other members of the team appear resentful. They make derogatory comments about Dominica that refer to her gender, age, race and family status and make speculations about her sexual preference. They try to make work difficult for her so that she will leave and, perhaps, be replaced with someone more like them.

At first, Jason doesn't want to incur the discrimination of his team-mates and so doesn't tell them about his relationship with his Asian partner who has two children of her own. He lets them believe he is single and that he shares their beliefs about women, single parents and racism. Suppressing his true feelings makes him very uncomfortable and Jason begins to dread coming in to work to face the team and Dominica, who is also suffering from the team's attitude.

To turn the situation around, Jason uses the common points he has with Dominica, such as their connection to children and single-parenthood to connect with her. He also tries to focus on many common links between him and his team-mates to build the relationship and at the same time starts to open up about his own preferences and beliefs. Instead of joining their derogatory comments, he gradually relates Dominica's situation to his own or voices his opinion objectively to encourage others to be up-front about their differences.

## 2C

## Demonstrate that diversity is valued by your organisation

Organisations can show employees that they value their differences by celebrating them. For this to work successfully, people need to see it in action and working effectively. These people are within your organisation, such as managers, supervisors and employees in different departments, as well as external customers in the form of suppliers, patrons, consumers and clients and anyone else who can influence the reputation of the organisation.

Showing your manager and other members of your organisation that you can communicate with colleagues and use their experience, skills and talents effectively, whatever their background or circumstances, demonstrates that you value diversity and that you are able to work effectively within the culture of your organisation. If you and your team can work effectively with diversity, you will provide an example for others in your organisation, and attract the talents of others who can contribute to your team's goals as shown below.

#### Ways of encouraging team participation

- Show you value all individual members of the team by making sure their contribution is sought and including them in group sessions or activities.
- Bring up any ideas you may have with your manager and team to show your initiative and encourage participation.

#### Example: a team that values differences attracts talents



The members of Lana's marketing department were asked to split into teams and told that they would be assessed on their approach to a new project. Lana wanted to form a diverse team. She knew that if the team could have as many different points of view and methods of problem-solving as possible, they would be able to tackle the project more effectively. Lana's manager, John, was impressed with Lana's sensible approach and gave the project to her team.

Later, when a new employee joined the department, he also wanted to be on Lana's team. He could see that Lana's team valued differences and would therefore be a more interesting and productive group to work with.

## External customer relations

It is extremely important that your organisation shows external customers that it recognises and appreciates the diversity of its clientele. As a representative of your organisation, you should make an effort to reflect your commitment to diversity in all your dealings with external customers and display your knowledge of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination policies.

Often experiences of good – and poor – customer service are spread by word of mouth. Part of an organisation's customer satisfaction assurance involves ascertaining whether the client feels valued and has their differences catered to where necessary.

Remember that, even if your organisation has no policies or programs regarding diversity, diversity is a business as well as a social issue. The organisation's reputation and business will grow, along with your own individual reputation as a valuable employee, if you make an effort to value diversity. Some of the ways in which you can demonstrate good customer service are shown below.

Ways to demonstrate good customer service:

- Acknowledge and recognise the client's differences (if necessary).
- Treat every customer as an individual and try to meet their individual needs and preferences.
- Be approachable, genuine, patient and tolerant when dealing with customers in any form of communication.
- Check if your customer is satisfied and offer further assistance if needed.

### Example: demonstrate to customers that diversity is valued

Nail and Co is a funeral company that implements a strict diversity policy and program for all customers. Its customer service representatives are trained to cater to the diverse needs of their customers by doing their best to accommodate the wishes of the bereaved in any matter regarding funeral arrangements and the funeral service.

Employees ask clients whether they understand the documentation that needs to be processed, and offer to help where necessary. They tactfully ask about payment arrangements, and offer plans for payment for those on low incomes. Employees enquire about religious and cultural traditions and conventions, and make no assumptions about a client's preferences based on the deceased's religious or cultural status.



Clients are asked what language they would prefer the service to be read in, and asked about the interests, values and beliefs of the deceased so that appropriate additions to the service and final details can be suggested.

All of Nail and Co's clients are appreciative of the interest the company takes in their loved ones as well as the respect the company obviously has for the diversity of its clients.

## Your organisation's reputation

Reputation can make or break a business. If your organisation has a reputation for intolerance of difference it will inevitably receive negative publicity as society grows less and less receptive to discrimination and prejudice. Organisations that embrace diversity very often receive public tributes and admiration in addition to business success. It is worthwhile for your organisation's reputation to publicly acknowledge its commitment to diversity, as demonstrated in the following example.



### Example: promote diversity through a community event

Mudrain Council received a request from members of the public to expand International Food Day into an event that would bring the community together and benefit everyone in the area.

The Council decided to turn International Food Day into a community event and organised a day where a street could be blocked off and, invited restaurants to participate.

Musicians of different ethnic backgrounds were invited to play and traditional art and craft stalls were set up. There was a general invitation for all members of the public to attend and buses were organised for those who had difficulty with transport. Everyone was encouraged to dress in a 'traditional costume' of their choice and a soapbox was established so that people could speak publicly about matters of national and cultural significance. Media representatives were invited to participate or become involved in the event.

The Mudrain Intercontinental Carnivale has subsequently become the highlight of the year for the community and the public appreciate the effort the Council makes with respect to supporting and organising the carnival each year.

Stories about the Mudrain Council have appeared in the local newspaper, radio and television. This has prompted other councils in the area to adopt similar programs, and also encouraged new migrants, Australians of ethnic minorities and other Australians who valued diversity, to move to the area.

## Summary

1. When colleagues value the diversity in their team it leads to a harmonious and vibrant workplace.
2. Teams need to set goals and analyse the tasks and roles required to meet them.
3. Analysis of the roles should be looked at alongside the diverse skills and knowledge of individual team members.
4. Recognition of diversity in a team will result in better problem-solving strategies.
5. When diversity is respected, every team member can confidently take part in team planning and teamwork.
6. When an organisation values diversity in its workforce, this will be reflected in its relationship with its external customers.
7. Customer diversity needs to be recognised in domestic (Australian) and international customers. Recognition and appropriate response to such diversity helps in international trade.