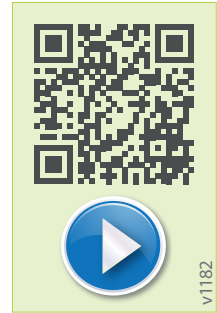

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Evaluation processes

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

Below are some examples of ideas and appropriate evaluation tools.



Improve budgetary performance

- └ Idea
 - Reduce stationery purchases
- └ Evaluation tool
 - Analyse financial records and stores requests

Develop a new service or product

- └ Idea
 - Develop a 'green' product
- └ Evaluation tool
 - Customer feedback

Keep staff motivated, lower staff turnover

- └ Idea
 - Improve work conditions
- └ Evaluation tool
 - Team brainstorming session

Give back to the community

- └ Idea
 - Adopt a charity
- └ Evaluation tool
 - Survey local charities

... continued

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

Example: being innovative is more than working together

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

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

Amita = work output

Juhail = work output

Teresa = work output

Tomasz = work output

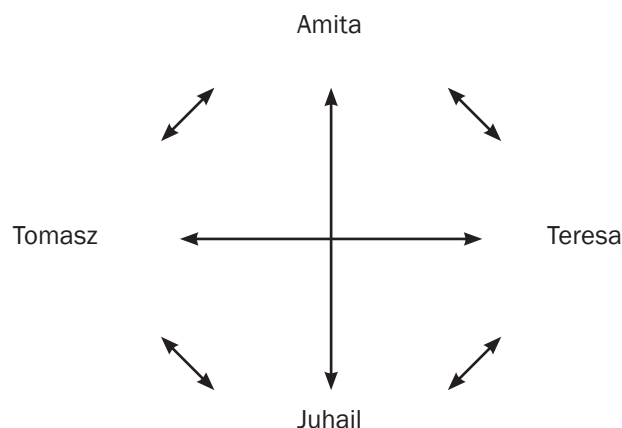
Total = four work outputs

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

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

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

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



The elements of innovative teamwork

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

Communicate openly and effectively

- How easily do people share information about themselves, their roles, their needs and their wants?
- How well do they listen to others when they communicate?

Resolve real and potential conflicts

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

Generate ideas

- How are people's ideas responded to in the group situation?
- Can all ideas that are presented be discussed and extended by the group?
- Are there sufficient knowledge and experience in the group to provide input at the ideas stage?

Make decisions

- Can the group reach the decision stage at an appropriate point?
- Are decisions based on compromise, incorporating the best of each person's contributions?
- Are they made in line with common goals and stakeholder expectations?
- Are decisions agreed on, or are they forced on people?

Carry out necessary activities to a high standard

- What is the skill base of the group?
- Are all the skills and capabilities required held by the group or do new members need to be enlisted?
- What training and development are required?

Example: develop the capacity of the team

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

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

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

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

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



Acknowledge others

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

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

Team members can acknowledge others' contributions by:

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

Topic 2

Develop effective ways to work

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

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Establish ground rules for the team
- 2B Agree on and communicate responsibilities
- 2C Make the best use of your team's skills and abilities
- 2D Plan challenging activities that encourage collaboration
- 2E Establish rewards

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

Example: develop ground rules collaboratively

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

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

Set ground rules collaboratively

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

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

2C

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

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

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

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



Play to team members' strengths

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

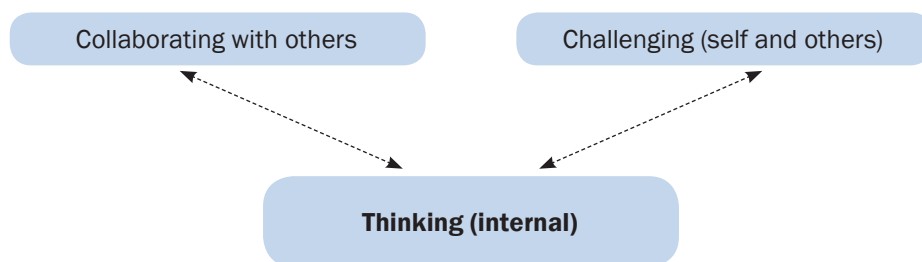
Here is a list of group functions and brief descriptions of what they bring to the group.

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

- Challenging is not about arguing points with others, but questioning our own thoughts and ideas and those of others.
- Collaborating with others helps us understand how others think and gives us new ideas to think about. It also helps others feel involved and that their contributions are valued.



Think, challenge and collaborate



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

Thinking exercises

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

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

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

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

Understand a person's motivation

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

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

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



Example: benefits of rewarding your team

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

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

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

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

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

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

Topic 3

Support and guide your colleagues

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

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Model behaviour that supports innovation
- 3B Find and use ideas from outside the team
- 3C Share information, knowledge and experiences
- 3D Challenge and test ideas in a positive and collaborative way
- 3E Explore ideas with team members

3B

Find and use ideas from outside the team

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

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

Seek new ideas

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

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

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

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

Commercial-in-confidence

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

Intellectual property

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

Confidentiality and privacy

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

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



Example: files and personal documents

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

3. A pros-and-cons investigation is based on the idea that no idea is all good or all bad.
4. A SWOT analysis is used for identifying the internal strength and weakness factors, as well as the external opportunities and threat factors, that work for and against the achievement of goals and objectives.

Be positive and work together

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

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

Be positive in the team

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

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

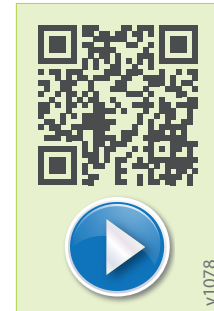
Practice task 13

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

4A

Identify opportunities for improvement

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



Take time to debrief

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

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



Practice task 15

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

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

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

How to use feedback

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

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

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



Example: gathering stakeholder feedback

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

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

4D

Act on ideas for improvement

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

However, all change involves a level of discomfort.

The following quotation encapsulates this:

‘To change is to live, not to change is to die.’

American playwright Tennessee Williams (1911–1983)

Plan for change

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

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

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



4E

Identify, promote and celebrate success

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

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



Measure success

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

Success in implementing change can be measured as follows.

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