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1A

Identify potential formal and informal learning opportunities

The range of learning opportunities that organisations offer to employees generally depends on the size and nature of their business. All organisations acknowledge that, whatever training is provided, it must contribute to the organisation's strategic goals through alignment with the operational plan. However, in addition to meeting the organisation's needs, learning opportunities need to satisfy a number of other criteria.

When identifying potential learning and development programs, use this list to ensure they cover these essential elements.

Does the learning program:

- cater for individual employee needs and aspirations?
- have support at all levels of the organisation?
- support membership and involvement with professional networks?
- contribute to change and improved work practices?
- provide encouragement for participation in workplace learning, value a positive workplace culture and overcome barriers to learning?
- provide an efficient feedback system dedicated to analysing and evaluating learning?
- offer cost-effective training?

Learning culture

To maintain a competitive position in its industry, an organisation needs to perform in an effective and efficient manner. Essential to this is having informed, enthusiastic and creative employees who continue to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes so they remain proactive staff members who can adapt to change, and continue to contribute to the organisation.

To help them do this, the organisation should create a culture that values employee learning by providing regular workplace monitoring and feedback, formal performance appraisals, support programs and planned professional development programs.



Formal learning opportunities

Formal learning opportunities can take a variety of forms, but predominantly they are structured learning opportunities that can take place inside or outside the workplace. Often a structured learning activity leads to a formal qualification in accordance with the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) or a documented outcome delivered by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

Informal learning opportunities

Informal learning and training can occur on a regular basis where guidance, information and/or instruction are provided to an employee as they perform their regular daily duties. Informal learning is dependent on the willingness of people to accept the guidance and instruction provided by those with greater knowledge of organisational policies and procedures, broader experience and more highly developed skills. It is the learning culture within an organisation, or department or team, that determines the success of informal learning.

You can assist a staff member to be more effective in the execution of their duties through:

- providing advice or responding to a question (increasing knowledge)
- demonstrating techniques (improving skills)
- addressing shortcomings in their approach (adjusting attitudes and providing a safer work environment).



Benefits of undertaking learning opportunities

The key benefit for an organisation in providing relevant learning opportunities is increasing productivity through improved effectiveness and efficiencies.

For staff, there should be a sense of accomplishment, a positive attitude towards work and increased confidence.

Some of the benefits of undertaking learning opportunities can be seen here.



... continued

Prior learning

Staff working on the front desk at a hotel have gained significant knowledge and skills relating to the hospitality and tourism business, but do not hold formal qualifications. Michelle, the customer service manager, contracts an RTO to determine a process of recognising their current knowledge and skills and the option for providing any further training required in order for them to obtain an appropriate qualification. Briefly looking at their roles, the RTO considers the business services training package and the tourism, hospitality and events training package. Before making a final recommendation, the RTO reviews position descriptions, interviews the staff, interviews Michelle and determines what will best suit the staff and organisation's needs.

Practice task 1

Use this table to create a list of all the learning opportunities that exist for you and those in your area of responsibility. If you are not currently employed, then consult a peer or associate who is currently working and question them about their learning opportunities.

Provide a brief description of each learning opportunity, the expected or desired outcomes and benefits from the learning or training, and how this could or will resolve a current issue in the workplace. If appropriate, consult with others and indicate who was consulted.

Learning opportunity 1	
Brief description	
Expected or desired outcomes and benefits	

continued ...



Workplace health and safety (WHS)

All organisations are required to abide by certain legislation, such as the relevant state or territory WHS laws.

WHS legislation outlines the responsibilities of all employees in relation to induction training, emergency procedures and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Picture
won't work
-corrupt?

Anti-discrimination

Staff must understand and comply with anti-discrimination legislation and may need relevant training to do so.



Documentation management

Privacy and confidentiality legislation and guidelines should be covered under organisational policies and procedures. Staff may require training in relation to the relevant legislation and the handling of personal information of clients.



Access and equity

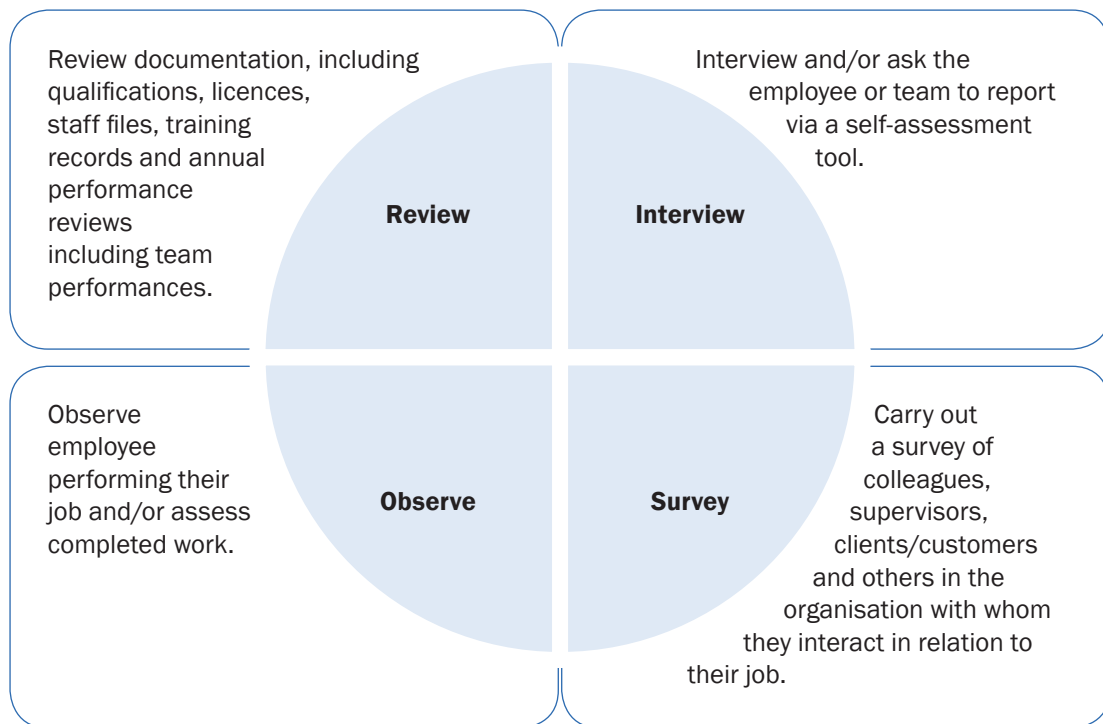
Staff must know how to work with people (both other staff and clients) from culturally diverse backgrounds and those with special needs.



Quality standards and ethical standards

Behavioural and ethical requirements need to be identified. These may be contained in industry codes of practice or other documents, or be specific to your organisation. Quality standards such as nationally accredited ISO Standards or Australian/New Zealand Standards (AS/NZS), if applicable, need to be identified.

Areas to consider when undertaking a skills audit are shown below.



Identify training needs

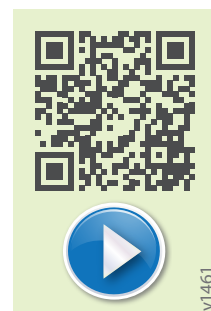
Once you have a list of requirements and a list of the employee's current competences via a skills audit, you can compare the two. This gap analysis or training needs analysis (TNA) effectively identifies the training needs of those teams and individuals working in your area of responsibility.

The result of the TNA should be a record of:

- the training that is required
- priority and timing against each training need identified
- options for the delivery of the training – use the list of formal and informal options to determine the most appropriate in terms of meeting the organisation's and the person's needs, cost and time effectiveness, and the most appropriate location.

Team learning needs

If you have identified a training need for the whole team, you need to plan an effective approach that encourages learning and maintains the team's enthusiasm and confidence. It is not appropriate to discuss or single out the performance of an individual in such a setting. Maintain the focus on team delivery with due recognition of outstanding performance and meeting of targets, if warranted.



1C

Develop and implement learning plans

Once learning needs have been identified, you need to prepare appropriate learning plans to outline the relevant opportunities and related activities to address these needs. Learning plans are used as a record of the knowledge and skills that need to be gained, and the chosen mechanism for meeting these.

The development of a learning plan is best undertaken jointly by the person or team to be trained, yourself, human resources staff and training specialists, if relevant. Once a learning plan is developed, you may need to seek approval prior to implementing the plan. Areas for training could be focused on part of the current job responsibilities and also towards succession planning and future job options. Many organisations have an appropriate procedure to follow and a template that you complete.

Here is a recommended approach to developing an individual learning plan.

Develop an individual learning plan

List the learning needs of the individual inclusive of their short-term and long-term goals and objectives.

Confirm that the organisation is supportive of meeting these needs.

Meet with each person involved and discuss their needs and best options for undertaking the necessary learning.

Complete a comprehensive learning plan that includes learning opportunities, dates, the location of the training, costs and space for feedback after the training has been completed.

Review the learning plan with the individual and obtain their signature, if required.

Individual learning plans

A learning plan should be completed for each individual even if they are part of a team. The individual should be familiar with the template and have input in terms of ideas and options for completing the plan.

In general, an individual learning plan should contain:

- details of the employee, their position and team role, and their supervisor's name
- the competences required and the area for training, the learning activities to be undertaken and justification of the area and activities
- details of how the training will contribute to personal goals and performance
- details of the learning activities, including when, where, duration, cost and resources required

Example: a standard learning plan template

Learning plans differ according to the organisation and the type of training being provided.

Here is an example of a learning plan template completed for your reference.

Learning plan	
Employee Name: John Brown Position: Compliance Officer Location: Blackburn	Supervisor Name: Samantha Jones Position: Compliance Manager Location: Blackburn
Learning/training need and standard to be achieved	To understand new legislative compliance requirements that will affect the organisation's operations
Organisational fit and priority ranking (1 = High to 5 = Low)	1
Preferred option for training (include: when, where, duration and cost). Attach documents if applicable.	External workshop to be held on 17 November at Melbourne Conference Centre from 9 am to 5 pm. Cost of the session is \$180 plus John's wages for the day.
Organisational support (for example, resources, access to equipment, time away, WHS issues)	Training will occur through a full-day external workshop and mentoring sessions with direct manager following workshop. These sessions will allow for consolidation of skills and knowledge and ensure that progress towards deadlines is being met. Mentoring sessions will be held twice a week.
Any special needs or requirements	English is John's second language, so he may need assistance in understanding terms and meanings. This will be provided during mentoring sessions.
Supervisor's comments and justification for support	John will be required to implement changes to organisational policies and procedures prior to changes being implemented to meet compliance standards.
Planned review of training (include method of review and date)	Manager will look at project objectives and John's progress towards these on 19 January 2016 and determine the level of support required for him to complete the project.
Employee's signature J Brown 24/10/2015	Supervisor's signature SM Jones Date 24/10/2015

Team learning plans

You may need to develop a learning plan for the whole team by focusing on the area/skills needed, who needs to be trained, and when and where the training will take place. Creating a table in addition to the individual learning plans can be very useful for tracking team learning requirements. This table can be linked to the individual plans and reviews on the outcome of training included in the evaluation and review of the training.



People with different learning styles

Understand people's differing learning preferences and styles. Adapt your training style and learning activities to suit different styles and provide multi-sensory materials; for example, offer handouts, pictures and diagrams to those who need to visualise; provide hands-on training to those who prefer the kinaesthetic approach; and read, ask questions and run a debate for those who like to hear the information.



Learners with families

If learners have young children or other family responsibilities, you may need to ensure the timing of the training does not impinge on family commitments.

Recognise learners' needs

It is important for those who are delivering training to employees to have an understanding of their learners' needs. If delivering the training in-house, this key information can be accessed, where applicable and appropriate, through the learners' human resources files. If engaging an external trainer, ensure that you provide them with the relevant information relating to the needs of the individuals. This will allow the trainer to accommodate for needs and adjust the training program as required.

Example: individualised learning

With changes made to the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, a Queensland university was required to conduct training to all employees in relation to the Act. Training needed to be conducted across all areas from the highest level (council members, the vice-chancellor and senior management), across all academic areas and staff (professors, tutors, research assistants and postgraduate students) and all levels of general staff (middle management, grounds staff, administrative staff and all support and auxiliary staff). There were over 900 people to be trained, ranging in age from 16 to 70+. This included people from over 45 different countries and nationalities; extreme variations in language and literacy skills; part-time and casual staff; staff with family commitments, Indigenous Australians; recent migrants; and people with various special needs to cater for a range of disabilities including hearing, sight and mobility impairments.

A strategy to address all these needs was developed: the people were divided into groups of 10–15 at a time across the complete mix of employees to undertake a half-day awareness program. By ensuring at least two people came from the same work area and others in the group came from similar backgrounds, the employees had support from a known colleague.

2A

Develop strategies to ensure that workplace learning opportunities are used

Governments, industry leaders and educational specialists now firmly believe that learning is a lifelong activity. Workers need to continually improve their knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they, and the teams they work in, maintain a competitive position in their organisation and industry. They must also want to learn, be prepared to share their learning and have the broad generic skills to participate in the giving and receiving associated with learning. Continuous learning also contributes to an employee's career path.



Characteristics of a learning culture

Here are some characteristics that define a workplace that has developed a positive learning culture. As you read, note which ones are established in your organisation.

Organisation has commitments to learning, employee development and CI

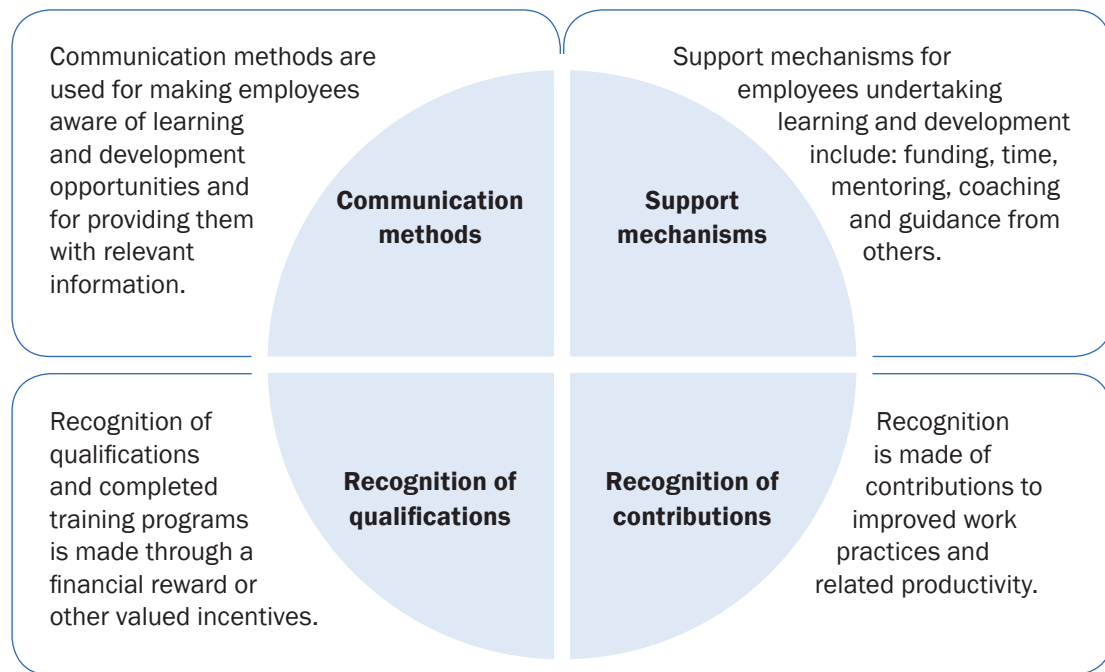
- Strategic plans, high-level operational plans and action plans highlight the organisation's commitment to learning, development and continuous improvement (CI).
- The organisation makes an active commitment to succession planning and internal career pathways to demonstrate that employees are valued.

There are policies and procedures for training and development

- Policies and associated procedures clearly articulate the support of the organisation in this area. They are available and employees are aware of them.
- Employees are expected to engage in some form of training at least once a year.

Budgets and resources support learning in the workplace

- The organisation supports learning opportunities through funding, and providing time and other resources, such as access to the internet and relevant technology, to support learning.
- The organisation allows for learning opportunities in budget requirements, with either individual or team amounts allocated.



Encourage active learning

Having the appropriate policies, procedures and other documentation is only part of the process. A proactive approach through involvement of employees in events where learning is identified, recognised and commended has a positive impact on the learning culture. For example, a manager might schedule part of each team meeting to formally recognise positive outcomes resulting from learning, training and development activities. The same meeting could involve team members sharing their recent learning experiences and thus increasing the knowledge and skills of their co-workers.



Sharing of difficult situations and approaches taken by employees provides others with information and experience that may be used in the workplace. Informal learning can take place at work between co-workers via a team activity (or team approach) to a problem relating to a work issue. Provide positive feedback and praise when you observe people sharing knowledge and enhancing other people's skills.

Adult learning principles

Opportunities should be based on adult learning principles. These principles are:

- learning by doing, active learning, problem-solving, and teamwork
- treating learners with respect, including acknowledging life experiences
- providing appropriate feedback, reinforcement and rewards
- making use of materials and resources that are meaningful and varied (multi-sensory, such as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic or practical)
- using flexible and supportive learning approaches
- Informing learners about why they are required to learn.

Learning styles

Adapt the learning to different learning styles.

Learning styles

To ensure the best possible learning opportunities, it is important to consider individual learning styles. The type of learning style needs to be reflected in the development of materials and resources.

The different learning styles are visual, auditory and kinaesthetic – an explanation of each follows.

Visual (seeing)

This learner prefers to read, rather than listen. Use posters, charts, graphs, handouts, booklets, brochures, variations in colour and shapes, and clear, well-structured documentation.

Auditory (hearing)

This learner prefers to listen, rather than read. Use question and answer sessions, stories, discussion groups, music and other audio options.

Kinaesthetic (doing)

This learner prefers to do things. Incorporate playing of games, creation of products, role-plays, and practising and refining tasks.

2**Assessing skills against job requirements**

Explain how employees should regularly assess their own capabilities against their job requirements. Make sure they are familiar with their job description and the skills and knowledge that are required of them. Jobs often change, a person may take on extra work, new equipment may be introduced or the organisation may change direction – all of which may mean the job description does not match the current job tasks.

3**Self-assessment checklist**

Provide opportunities for employees to complete a self-assessment checklist or skills audit to confirm they have the skills and knowledge required for the job. They need to be honest, open and objective in self-assessment, otherwise the self-evaluation becomes meaningless.

4**Feedback and debriefing sessions**

Have regular feedback and debriefing sessions following the completion of a project, to help employees deal with any skill or knowledge gaps that have arisen.

5**Discussing national competency standards**

Show employees the standards relevant to their job, explain how these are written and encourage them to assess their performance against the standards.

6**Self-assessment prior to performance appraisal**

Make sure employees know it is part of their responsibilities to perform a self-assessment prior to their performance appraisal. Provide them with the organisation's form (if available) in which they should rate their performance, identify learning gaps, provide suggestions for addressing their needs and discuss long-term career goals.

7**Potential learning programs**

Encourage employees to find out about potential learning programs that may address their needs by: asking them to do research; encouraging them to ask colleagues about possible courses; seeking a mentor for them; or compiling lists of options for them to consider.

Example: self-assessment against current position description

Technological advances that produced efficiencies in processing, coupled with budget cutbacks, resulted in a reduction of employee numbers in the financial services department of a local government council. The impact was such that some areas including purchasing, accounts payable and receivable, and general accounts only had two or three employees compared to the previous minimum of five in each area.

The manager, Francesca, faces the potential for an area to be dysfunctional if one person is on leave and the other becomes ill or is absent for some other reason. Francesca implements the development of a 'back-stop' program where people from other areas are the first port of call to assist if absences cause a staff shortage or seasonal demands cause work pressures.

The first step is to provide all employees with access to job descriptions and seek expressions of interest from them to be a back-stop in another area. Each employee has to complete a self-evaluation of their competences against the job description of interest, inclusive of learning needs, and provide this to Francesca for initial consideration.



Practice task 9

Your senior management advises you that they wish to increase the training opportunities for employees and they want the employees to have a significant input into determining what training would best suit them. This is a change in policy, as previously management and supervisors simply told employees what training they would attend. You decide that you will approach this task by seeking input from your team about what they feel they need as learning opportunities. You will provide an initial memorandum to all members of your team.

Draft a memo to your team in which you outline the approach they need to take in identifying their own learning needs. Ensure you provide some guidance on how they might determine their current capabilities and identify areas where they may need increased knowledge and skills.

continued ...

Collect evidence

Use a range of strategies to determine whether there has been improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of individuals or teams in contributing to the organisation. Comparisons against prior performance reviews, job descriptions and expectations, deliverables, key result areas (KRAs) or key performance indicators (KPIs) should all be recorded alongside the evidence collected. From the evidence you collect, identify where further improvements need to be made and the methods that can be used to assess this.

There are a variety of assessment methods you may choose to use that are required to be relevant to the evidence you are collating, as shown here.

Observation

Observations of an individual performing or demonstrating a specific task or set of tasks and a record of the performance via an observation checklist that highlights the relevant knowledge and skills expected

Formal tests

Short-answer tests and multiple-choice quizzes to provide an indication of the level of knowledge

Verbal tests

Questions and recorded answers (either by note-taking or audio recordings) to provide an indication of the level of knowledge

Documentation

Reviewing and copying original documentation of completed courses such as degrees, certificates or other qualifications, statements of attainment

Work sample task

Production of a completed work sample; the sample may be kept or photographic evidence used accompanied by written comments. In some cases (for example, cooking as a chef) the product has a limited life – hence the photograph and assessor's comments as documentary evidence

Evaluate the learning program

Your focus should be to determine whether improvements have been achieved in line with the objectives outlined in the learning plan, and the type and extent of additional training needed.

Here are some questions that you may find useful when evaluating a learning program.

Useful questions for evaluating a learning program

Was the learning program appropriate or should it be adjusted?

What adjustments would better reflect the needs of the organisation and/or the learners?

Is ongoing learning required in this area to maintain currency?

Are there other individuals or team members who would benefit from such learning and how can this be achieved?

Is additional personal support required for the learning and to enable the additional knowledge, enhanced skills and improved attitude to be implemented in the workplace?

Was the budget sufficient or is more funding required to achieve the levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to get the best performance?

Are additional or updated physical resources required in the workplace to achieve the desired outcomes and full implementation of the learning?

Have any WHS issues arisen, such as the need for specific WHS resources or the need for further WHS training?

Additional support

Once you have evaluated the feedback received from learning opportunities, you will be able to analyse the data to determine whether and what additional support may be required in future learning opportunities. The supports you identify may be applicable to an individual or a whole team.

Additional support identified may include:

- additional coaching
- appointing a mentor
- refresher courses at appropriate intervals
- external consultants appointed to supplement in-house training
- time away from work tasks to practise the new skills.

Feedback methods

There is a variety of methods you can use when collating feedback from learning opportunities. When choosing your method, you need to take into account the type of learning undertaken, the skills and abilities within the group, and the feedback you wish to receive.

Some methods for obtaining feedback are considered below.

Feedback questionnaire

A feedback questionnaire is presented immediately after the learning activity, with questions or statements that elicit a quantifiable response; for example, 1 = Strongly disagree/Very poor to 5 = Strongly agree/Very good; or a simple 'Yes/No' question that provides an opportunity to gather quantitative data. Comments and views should also be sought, but these can be time-consuming to analyse.

Detailed questionnaires

More detailed questionnaires can also be used. The development of questionnaires is a skill in itself and they need to be structured so they elicit appropriate responses to the areas where feedback is being sought. The wording of questionnaires should be understandable and not too taxing on the people completing them. Also consider whether anonymity will provide more open and genuine feedback.

Informal discussions

Opportunities for obtaining feedback can occur at various times both during training activities (for example, lunchbreak) and after the course or activity has concluded. Casual conversations and feedback gained at these times should be duly noted and considered alongside more formal feedback at a later date.

Structured meetings

A structured meeting with groups or individuals, with specific questions raised and feedback sought, can be beneficial in obtaining feedback. Advance notice of the areas to be considered can be advantageous in terms of preparation and thinking. Follow-up meetings are also an option for clarification on views expressed and feedback given when compared against other data or feedback obtained.

Reports from third parties

Seeking comments from third parties such as supervisors or designated mentors or coaches can also be useful. Generally you ask the third party to respond to a set of questions in writing, or possibly verbally, addressing matters relating to the training and development of individuals and the outcomes from that training.

3C

Make adjustments and negotiate with training and development specialists

In order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning, you need to consider the feedback and assessment of the learning activities undertaken by your employees. From the overall report and any other documentation you have gathered in relation to training, you should be able to clearly identify areas where improvements can be made and the changes that should be considered to improve the learning.

In many cases, it may fall back on the manager to do more research before implementing a learning activity, to identify programs that are appropriate, well resourced and within the team's budget. Not only are there many external institutions that offer training, but also the quality of training providers varies. Similarly, in-house providers may not have been given sufficient information from a manager and thus provided inappropriate training. It may be your job to negotiate with other managers, in-house training specialists or external training providers to implement the recommendations from an analysis of the feedback, to ensure future learning opportunities better meet organisational requirements.

Adjustments to improve learning opportunities

Here are some suggested adjustments that could be made to improve learning arrangements and opportunities.



Providers and facilitators

- Find a cheaper training provider.
- Use in-house delivery rather than external providers.
- Use external specialist providers who have been recommended and can deliver quality content.
- Bring providers on-site rather than employees travelling to the training.
- Prepare providers sufficiently prior to training to ensure they understand your needs.
- Ensure providers are responsive to your employees by asking them beforehand how they will address the various needs of the learners; for example, use different learning styles; consider special needs and language and literacy issues.
- Ensure there is sufficient time allocated to engage the learners, appropriately answer questions and allow time for discussion.



Content of learning activities

- Obtain a comprehensive overview of the program before you confirm a participant's attendance to ensure it is relevant and up to date in relation to the jobs in your workplace.
- Do more research to identify appropriate providers.
- Ensure that participants receive a summary of the learning covered.

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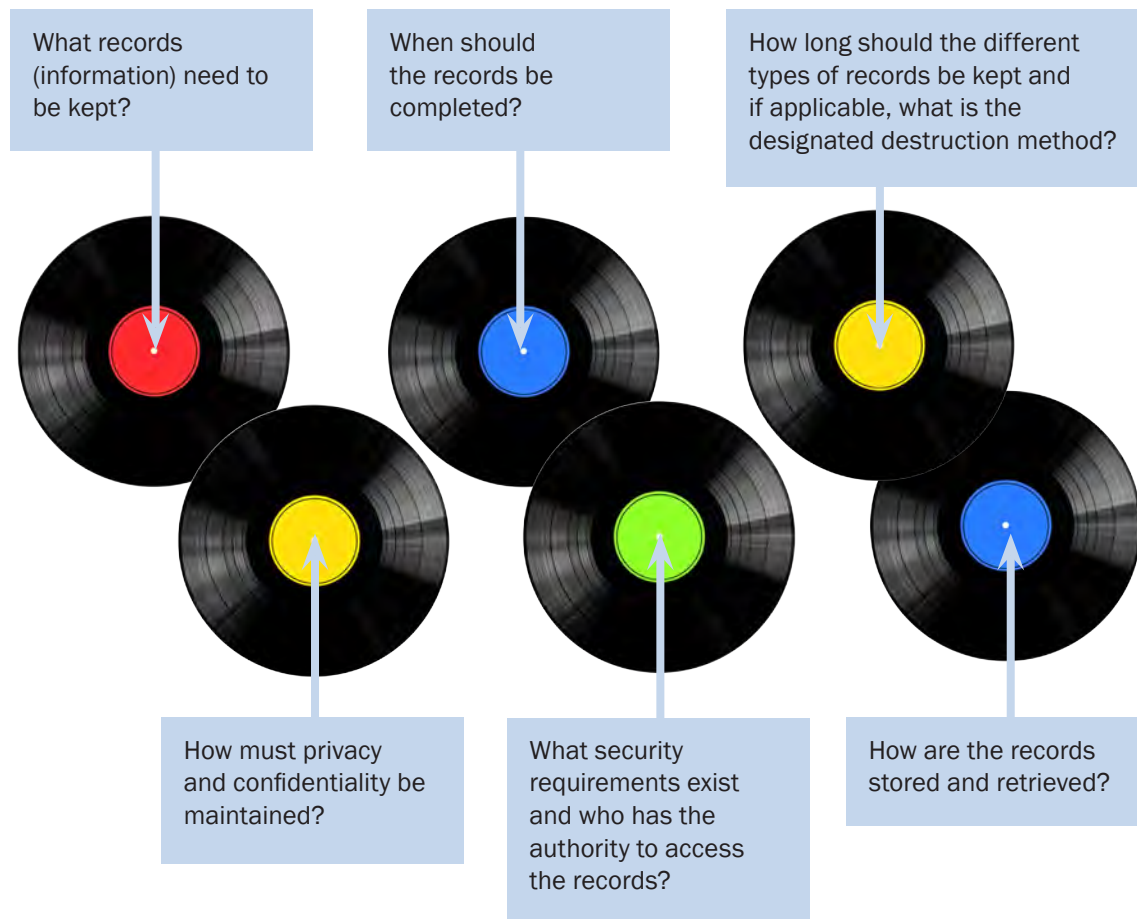
3D

Use processes to ensure that records and reports of competency are documented and stored correctly

Record-keeping is a critical function for any organisation. Certain records need to be kept in accordance with statutory requirements, legislation, regulations and/or codes of practice, and thus organisations should have appropriate policies and procedures that outline the documentation and records that need to be kept, how they should be stored and for what period of time.

It is crucial to maintain comprehensive records for each employee of competencies gained through the organisation's training and development program, and to store them in a paper-based or electronic filing system for easy retrieval.

Some of the things that you need to ensure you know about training record retention are shown below.



Documents and records

A range of training documentation and evidence related to training is required to be retained to assist you in determining the type and extent of training required in the future. This will ensure you have a team whose skills and knowledge enable them to meet organisational goals, and also help you plan personal career paths for them.

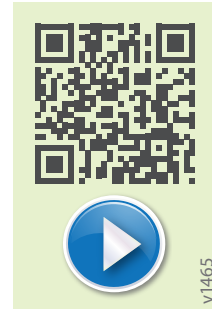
Here are some of the types of training documents and records that may need to be kept.

Example: identify future training needs

Phil manages a sheetmetal production company of 60 full-time employees. The business produces a significant range of work, predominantly in steel, but there is an increasing demand for other metals and materials to be incorporated into its output. Phil insists that all employees are provided with ongoing training in the techniques for manufacturing items out of steel and other metals and materials.

Phil keeps a detailed record of all training attended by his team and their performance and achievements in the training, and uses a matrix to document which people have had appropriate training with the range of metals and other materials that could be used or incorporated into future potential projects. Allied with this record of training, he also keeps appropriate records of what projects his team have worked on, what materials they have had experience in using and the number of occasions they have used those materials.

By combining the training records and the records of experience, Phil is able to provide capability statements for his team and these are used in tendering for and planning future projects. He is also able to determine whether there is any need for additional training in order to be competitive for future contracts.



Practice task 15

1. Explain the importance of keeping training records and records of competency current.

continued ...