Contents

Apply communication devices and processes

Make it easy for staff to contribute, offer suggestions and display their innovative ideas. Think laterally. You might encourage them to email ideas they have which you can then collate and present at a team meeting. Articles on innovation might be published on the organisation's intranet. The intranet is also a good medium in which to present articles about innovation or feature a staff member who contributed a suggestion that helped the organisation make a decision. Suggestion boxes have a varied success rate but may be worth a try.

There is a range of well-proven techniques you can use to encourage team members to participate in the continuous improvement process. Here are examples of five commonly used techniques.

Brainstorming

This useful technique encourages the generation of ideas amongst team members, allows each participant to state their opinions in a non-threatening environment. Managers can use brainstorming to unite a group with diverse ideas and needs and identify systems and processes that would support continuous improvement. The process is as follows:

- Define and agree on the objective.
- Brainstorm ideas and suggestions having agreed a time limit.
- Categorise, condense and refine ideas.
- Assess and analyse the pros and cons of each idea.
- Prioritise options and rank list as appropriate.
- Agree on action and timescale for implementation.
- Control and monitor follow-up.

Mind mapping

Mind maps are a useful tool for documenting a team's approach to a problem or process.

A key word, idea or specific problem is placed in the centre. Three or four key ideas (written in different colours to help you categorise the ideas) are then written to radiate outwards from the key word. Ideas are built up by writing brief words or notes that spread out from these words like the branches of a tree.

A manager can use a mind map to show the structure of the problem and to identify linkages between points. It is important to create mind maps in a format that makes it easy to remember and recall information.

Facilitate training and development

When an organisation is committed to continuous improvement, it must ensure that employees understand their role in the process and how they can contribute. Training and development is two-fold. It is essential that you are able to give staff the skills in teamwork, decision-making and assertiveness so they can fully participate in the continuous improvement cycle. Here are some further considerations about facilitating training and development.

Decision-making training

To give staff skills in decision making you can:

- provide training in being assertive so team members have the ability to speak at meetings, make suggestions and discuss issues, and are confident to assume responsibility for activities
- practise decision-making techniques
- provide information about innovation and the use of creativity to effect improvement
- provide training in communication skills so people are confident when speaking
- provide training in public speaking so people are comfortable speaking in a group.

Mentoring and buddy systems

Mentoring and buddy systems are two strategies that an organisation can employ to support team members to participate in decision-making. A manager may appoint an experienced colleague to provide encouragement and support for a new team member. This mentoring relationship is an informal arrangement and one in which the mentor does not tell the team member what to do but rather offers advice and suggestions based on their experience and particular expertise.

An even less formal arrangement is the buddy system in which the manager may select a colleague to be available if the team member needs help or has difficulty understanding something.

Both strategies work well if people have trust and confidence in one another and want to learn, are willing to ask questions and have the initiative to clarify anything they don't understand.

Provide skills to implement an improvement

Provide the skills and knowledge needed for staff to take on the improvement; for example using a new software program; operating a new piece of machinery. It might involve training in change management so the change to the new system or procedure is problem-free and carried out efficiently. Training might be conducted in-house, off-the-job; you might use colleagues with expertise or external consultants. In-house coaching is a costeffective way to improve skills.

1B Ensure continuous improvement processes are communicated to stakeholders

It is crucial that the processes an organisation uses to identify the need for improvements are communicated clearly to staff and other stakeholders, so everyone knows what they are doing and what is expected of them. Continuous improvement practices vary among organisations depending on the goals and culture of the business. Continuous improvement can be applied to any activity and should follow the following four steps.

Step 1 Encourage the team to consider ways to improve

Questions to ask:
- Is there a better way this activity could be done?
- How can we do it more efficiently?
- Are there any wasteful or redundant elements to this activity?
- Is the activity achieving what we want it to?
- What would we have to do to improve the process?
- How can we ensure the change will be successful and improve performance?

Step 2 Plan to implement the change

Questions to ask:
- What do we need to do to introduce the change?
- What resources do we need?
- How can we ensure everyone views the change positively?
- How will we measure the effect of the change?

Step 3 Review and monitor changes

Question to ask:
- Is the change improving performance?

Step 4 Implement changes to improve performance

Question to ask:
- How can we support the team when introducing change?

Stages	Objectives	Tools and techniques	Key outputs
Control process	• Understand the importance of planning and executing against the plan • Determine the strategy to ensure achievement of the targeted results • Understand how to disseminate lessons learnt • Identify opportunities for standardisation	• Project planning • Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle	• Process control systems • Standards and procedures • Training • Team evaluation • Change execution plans • Potential problem analysis • Success stories

Modifications and improvements

Improvements may range from small changes, such as requiring staff to sign in when they arrive at work, to large-scale improvements, such as an organisational restructure to improve production and reduce costs.

When an improvement has been identified, whether it is to systems and processes, products or services, it must be clearly defined and articulated to all stakeholders regardless of the size of the improvement. For example, a simple change of moving a photocopier to improve the health and safety of operators can be discussed at a staff meeting and followed up with an email and a notice on an information board. A more substantial improvement such as the introduction of a new customer management software program will require discussions, opportunities for staff to ask questions and training prior to its implementation.

The most important part when implementing modifications or improved processes is making sure that everyone understands the change, why it is being introduced and the role they play in implementation. This must be supported by accompanying documentation; for example, new standard operating procedures will have to be written; a new policy may have to be developed; implementation procedures will have to be prepared and disseminated.

Audits to evaluate and monitor effectiveness of improvements

Audits are an integral component of an organisation's continuous improvement systems. They are recognised as a valuable tool for monitoring how effectively an organisation's policies and procedures are being implemented and can assist the organisation in identifying weaknesses in their systems. In addition, audits can be used to confirm compliance with regulatory obligations. If an audit is being conducted, inform the staff and let them know why it is being done and what their role in it, if any, will be.

Reports are used to provide specific targeted information to internal and external stakeholders. Financial reports, operational reports and team reports are just a few examples. External stakeholders, such as government departments, may also require information from an organisation regarding its operating status. This is often requested in the form of a statistical report.

Policies and procedures

Improved work practices and processes should be immediately incorporated into existing policies and procedures. Staff should be made aware of any new procedures linked to an improvement. Depending on the breadth or complexity of the policy or procedure, this might be done through an email, an intranet article, notices in the office or factory or in an information session.

Electronic communication devices

Many organisations are embracing electronic communication as a vehicle for regular and immediate communication with employees, customers and suppliers. Electronic devices need to be accessible, easy to use, understood and supported with appropriate training if they are to be relevant and useful. Some of the common ways in which electronic communication supports continuous improvement processes are outlined here.

Intranets

An intranet is an organisation's private communication system. It is an extension of the internet available only to employees of that organisation. Intranets provide an ideal place to facilitate internal communication and publish results from improvement initiatives. Intranets can also be used to provide easy access to key continuous improvement information such as employee manuals, benefits documents, company policies, business standards, and newsfeeds and training materials.

Extranets

Extranets extend a private network onto the internet with special provisions for access, authorisation, and authentication. While intranets are generally restricted to employees of the organisation extranets may also be accessed by customers, suppliers or other approved parties.

Web conferencing

Web conferencing is a useful tool for conducting live sessions with an organisation's stakeholders. Web conferencing also provides great cost savings. Some of the features of web conferencing include: screen sharing, live video streaming, real time audio, meeting recording, and polls and surveys.

Social software

Interactive software tools are increasingly being used to facilitate instant communication between individuals and groups. Tools include instant messaging, text chats, wikis, blogs and social bookmarking. They provide opportunities to discuss ideas in a wider context so you can gain immediate comments and feedback on suggested improvements.

Regulations and social responsibility

Ensure changes comply with relevant regulations. By complying with appropriate legislation and codes of practice, an organisation demonstrates that it recognises the level of social responsibility it has towards the environment. This can enhance its standing in the community and business environment. You might suggest that the organisation implement an environmental risk assessment and develop a corporate sustainability/environmental policy to promote awareness and encourage commitment.

Each state and territory has departments that deal with environmental legislation across Australia and have developed their own environmental protection policies including legislation on noise control, pollution and construction planning. They issue relevant licences, act as regulatory authorities and can prosecute non-compliant offenders through the courts with fines and jail terms.

Environmental and resource sustainability initiatives

Make sure proposed changes take into account any environmental initiatives the organisation has implemented such as environmental management systems; environmental performance standards; action plans; green office programs; surveys; audits; or specific initiatives such as using natural light and airflows to regulate the office environment.

For example, to reduce the costs of paper, an organisation may have selected a cheap, nonrecyclable paper that is in conflict with its policy to purchase recyclable paper. To meet their sustainability initiative requirements, the organisation may have to reconsider the cost restriction or investigate paper manufactured from plantation timber. Another example of initiatives could be that any audits and surveys always include questions or observations about environmental performance.

Waste management

Waste management includes procedures for waste minimisation, recycling, and pollution prevention through proper disposal. Ensure that any improvements to work practices consider the hierarchy of waste management, an internationally accepted guide that prioritises waste management practices from most to least preferred as shown here.

Priority of waste management practises

1 **Avoid**
Aim for zero waste; for example, choose products with no packaging.

2 **Reduce**
Buy and use less; for example, circulate one copy only for review; carpool; turn off lights when not required.

3 **Reuse**
Use the item or parts of it again (convert paper used on only one side to notepads).

Any changes suggested as part of a continuous improvement program should take into account the environmental management system in place. For example, if an organisation is considering a change to its purchasing strategy, it needs to identify any environmental impacts that may occur as a result of the new strategy, identify environmental/sustainability objectives and targets, and ensure the strategy is reviewed on a regular basis.

Change initiatives

There may be a range of government and other initiatives are in place that might assist or impact on the introduction of a change in your organisation and workplace. Some of these possible initiatives are described here.

Resource and energy consumption/efficiency

All changes should be reviewed to see how they can assist in improving resource and energy consumption and efficiency. For example, a change from an overseas supplier to a local supplier who does not use packaging may reduce transport costs, petrol usage and the amount of waste generated. The introduction of a green office program needs to highlight where the organisation can reduce energy consumption (for example, purchasing equipment that is energy star-rated) and where staff can assist (such as switching computers to stand-by when not in use).

Green office programs

A green office program focuses on attempts to make the workplace environmentally friendly and efficient by changing the culture of a workplace and people's behaviour. Check to see how any changes being considered can be incorporated into a green office program; for example, encouraging minimum use of paper; reusing paper; using non-disposable items such as cups and cutlery; switching off lights when not in the room; reducing energy consumption by not turning the heating or air conditioning up higher than is needed; using dishwashers only when they are at full capacity; reducing all types of wastage; or following waste disposal methods.

Green purchasing

What purchasing components are there in your proposed change? To meet sustainability requirements, you need to ensure the organisation follows a green purchasing policy; that is, where the organisation purchases preferred products that are less damaging to the environment and health than other products. Green products have features that include recycled content, energy efficiency, water saving, low contamination or toxicity, minimum waste/packaging and/or little impact on habitat and land degradation. An organisation committed to reducing their environmental footprint will buy recycled paper; use recyclable toner cartridges; refuse excess packaging; and purchase equipment with the international 'Energy Star' feature.

Referencing standards, guidelines and approaches

All changes should make references to relevant standards, legislation and guidelines, as already discussed, as well as approach such as triple bottom line reporting and sustainability covenants and compacts.

Triple bottom line accounting is an approach to accounting that, in addition to reporting financial measures, reports on the total performance of a company including social activities, the strategies the organisation has in place to reduce its impact on the environment and its performance against targets.

A sustainability covenant is a voluntary agreement between local environmental groups and an organisation to explore ways of reducing environmental impact and achieve sustainability goals. Covenants and compacts document a signed agreement between two parties, form part of each party's policy on sustainability and are a forum for publicly announcing the organisation's commitment to broad-based sustainability initiatives and goals. Covenants are time-specific. This means they aim to document realistic, achievable objectives with a specific time frame in mind; for example, a 12-month 'pact'.

Example: meeting organisational sustainability requirements

Blake is the production manager in a small company that produces doors and window frames.

He has recently developed a number of changes to work practices, designed to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Blake knows that any proposed changes must meet the organisation's newly developed sustainability policy that focuses on reducing energy consumption, reducing waste and improving the staff's perception of environmental responsibility.

Blake checks relevant legislation and organisational policy and consults with other organisations who have successfully managed changes in line with environmental concerns. The following changes to work practices were introduced as a result of Blake's findings.

Introduce green purchasing

- Sustainability policy states that the organisation is to use the list of preferred suppliers of products.
- Use local suppliers to reduce transport costs.
- Use local suppliers who have a good environmental record.
- Purchases should include recycled paper; recyclable toner cartridges and equipment with the international 'Energy Star' feature.
- Refuse excess packaging.
- Ensure the entire supply chain supports sustainability.

Example: mentoring tips

Graham works as a team leader in a call centre specialising in investment products. He currently supervises 15 staff members. Noticing a gradual decline in motivation amongst team members due to the constant improvement changes they were asked to implement, Graham decides to use the services of an external consultant to initiate an internal mentoring program. The objective of the program is to develop highly motivated, self-starting individuals who are both goal and client focused, are flexible and can adapt to changes.

The program has the following features:

- The program relies on natural and authentic relationships between those involved. This natural approach to mentoring allows for trust to develop more easily and promotes immediate feedback. Once the feedback has been received, it is more likely to be accepted and acted on because of the already healthy relationship between mentor and mentee.

- Although the mentoring relationship is not highly structured, some goals are set so they can easily see progress is being made. The mentor regularly checks progress against the goals they set out to achieve.

- The mentor listens carefully and keeps notes to remind them of the issues and ideas discussed.

- The mentor makes sure their advice isn't instructional, nor do they make decisions for the person. Instead, they act as a sounding-board, providing ideas, motivation, guidance and support.

v1340
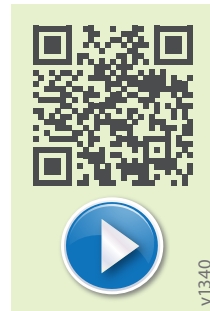
Practice task 4

1. Explain how you see coaching and mentoring working as a management style that will assist the implementation of continuous improvement processes.

2. You have been asked by senior management to act as coach for a team member who needs to learn time management skills because of changes to their work plan as part of an improved work practices initiative. Prepare a brief coaching plan.

Summary

1. Managers should establish ways of clearly identifying the roles and performance goals of team members and ensure that these are fulfilled according to expectations. This can be achieved by developing performance plans, providing training opportunities and rewarding and recognising individual and team achievements.

2. Managers should use a range of techniques to ensure team members are encouraged to participate in the continuous improvement process; for example, brainstorming, mind mapping, using cause and effect diagrams, gaining team consensus, stepladder problem-solving and reward and recognition programs.

3. In order to bring about a continuous improvement approach to business, an organisation must cultivate communication between management and staff and between the organisation and other stakeholders. Communication strategies include using meetings and forums, policies and procedures, newsletters and reports, and web-based communication tools.

4. All change and improvement processes must meet sustainability requirements as outlined in the organisation's environmental policy. Aspects to address include improved resource and energy efficiency, waste treatment and reduction, green purchasing and a green office program.

5. Coaching can assist managers in helping team members to solve problems, make better decisions, learn new skills and adapt to changes brought about by continuous improvement processes.

6. Mentoring is a relationship between two people in which a more experienced person agrees to support the development of a less experienced person. It is an informal structure in which the mentor provides advice, listens to ideas, helps junior staff adjust to changes and to see possible solutions to challenges, describes strategies for solving problems and provides networking opportunities.

7. Insights and experiences gained from business activities must be systematically documented in an organisation's knowledge management system (KMS) to ensure they are in a form that enables the material to be readily accessed by the relevant people.

2A Develop strategies to monitor progress and identify improvements

Monitoring performance is a crucial part of the continuous improvement system. Any review undertaken should be broad enough in scope to address the implications of all the organisation's activities, including their impact on the performance of the organisation. This process is a management responsibility but there should be input from all areas and all levels of the organisation.

The main reasons for monitoring performance are to maintain quality, to learn and improve, to report externally and demonstrate compliance.

A monitoring process

There are four steps that managers need to take when monitoring and reviewing information in a continuous improvement environment. These steps are outlined in the following information.

Four steps of the monitoring process

1	Collect information by measuring performance and other factors.
2	Analyse the information to find out what is causing the problem or issue. Identify areas where improvements could be made.
3	Decide on action that will solve the immediate problem and prevent future substandard performance by making changes to processes and systems.
4	Make sure the changes have had the desired result by further measurement and analysis of data.

Sources for information collection

You may use the following sources when collecting information as part of the monitoring process.

Reports	
	Reports, charts and other data generated by computer systems.

2B | Adjust and communicate strategies to all stakeholders

When an organisation can reliably and predictably deliver a quality product or service, it is said to be 'in control'. For this to happen, there needs to be effective operating systems in place, a focus on quality input and output and well trained staff supporting all aspects of the organisation's operations.

Amend current monitoring strategies

Your organisation may find that current monitoring and review processes need to be improved. To make adjustments to your systems, focus your improvement efforts on the various strategies you are currently using and see where they need to be modified or amended to ensure monitoring in the future will be more effective. Some suggestions for amending monitoring strategies are outlined in the following information.

Customer service

- Prepare a customer service charter for staff or amend the current one to ensure compliance.
- Rewrite the surveys used to monitor customer service.
- Make sure all customers are aware of the procedures they can follow to provide feedback; ensure all customers receive a feedback survey or have access to online feedback.
- Upgrade databases so the team can better record the rate of returns.
- Arrange for customers to test products and provide feedback.

WHS

- Monitoring WHS may be done on an ad hoc basis and may need to be formalised with regular audits.
- WHS audits may need to be improved to focus on specific WHS elements such as ergonomics, equipment operation, manual handling.
- You might need to prepare a WHS induction checklist to ensure all WHS information is supplied to new staff.

Productivity

- Improve budget information.
- Improve how sales figures are presented.
- Set different targets.
- Identify new or different sources of production information.
- Alter scheduled milestone reporting points to improve the regularity of reporting.

Communicate with internal stakeholders

You need to inform your team about any new monitoring strategies you plan to introduce as well as any changes that have been identified to operations. All communication should be clear, with the new strategy or procedure clearly articulated and including any new responsibilities, tasks or training staff members need to be involved with. Use a variety of appropriate strategies to communicate with the team which may include:

- team meetings
- individual one-on-one meetings
- communication via the extranet
- information disseminated in newsletters, on notice boards, via email.

Communicate with external stakeholders

With any continuous improvement program, an organisation runs the risk of becoming too inwardly focused. As a result, external stakeholders may unknowingly be given a low priority. To prevent this from happening, organisations should consult with their external stakeholders when new strategies or procedures are introduced. Changes in procedures and business operations often result in variations to reporting formats to external entities or other changes that can result in external bodies having to make adjustments. For example, if an organisation changes over to using BPay and will no longer accept cheques, then all external entities paying invoices will need to be informed. If contractors are working or visiting on site it will be necessary for them to be informed of changes.

Report variance

You might provide them with specific site inductions before they can come on site or distribute formal written instructions. Changes that result in variation to reporting may need to be advised to government bodies; for example, an Australian-based company makes adjustments to move their financial year from July to June to October to September in that it better reflects their annual business cycle.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and the Australian Securities Investments Commission (ASIC) would need to be informed as would shareholders and the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) if it were a listed public company. In this case formal documentation would be provided to the regulatory authorities and shareholders advised via email or letter with a notification on the website.

Changes such as this would have an impact on the internal operations of the company and significant consultation and communication would be required as a wide range of policies and procedures would also be amended.

... continued

Scenario	Stakeholder	Communication action plan
Scenario A		
Scenario B		

3A | Inform the team of the outcomes of continuous improvement efforts

It is important to ensure that team members are fully informed of savings, productivity or service improvements that are made as a result of continuous improvement efforts. The results of the team's ability to achieve their key performance indicators (KPIs) should also be shared with team members on a regular basis.

By comparing budgets, sales targets and other numerical data, you can see how changes to a system, procedure or activity have affected performance results. For example, savings (which represent a reduction in wasted financial resources) can be ascertained by comparing costs, expenditure or money in a bank account. Productivity and service improvements as outlined in a person's KPIs can be measured in similar ways that may involve comparing 'before' and 'after' quantitative data about the completion of tasks on time, number of finished products completed, customer proportion of repeat business. Another area to consider is potential improvements relating to reduced lost time as a result of better safety procedures or an improved training regime.

Providing feedback is especially important when team members have been involved in other stages of the continuous improvement process (such as participating in identifying a problem, helping monitor and review performance, gathering information or formulating a recommendation).

Use communication when contributing to improvements

The process of informing team members about improvements can involve simply relaying information, or it can be an on-going process where team members participate by asking questions, debriefing after the implementation of change, reviewing information and then applying knowledge.

One of the fundamental aspects of a continuous improvement program is that all experiences are used as opportunities to learn; informing staff of improvements can be used as a key learning opportunity. Managers need to encourage staff to reflect on how individuals and teams have contributed to improvements, ask questions and discuss the issues associated with how the change and subsequent improvement came about, and think proactively about future changes. In this way, informing team members and communicating information is not simply a one-sided process, but a valuable tool for managers to use to reinforce continuous improvement practices.

Communication processes

In order to utilise the most effective means of communication it is paramount that you are able to ask the most appropriate questions. Your questioning technique used will be essential in ascertaining the required communication or information.

Email and intranet services

Email and web-based systems (such as intranets) are used to communicate information and inform staff efficiently. When used well, they can promote the effective flow of information among team members. However, they are best used in conjunction with other communication methods so that team members can actively participate in discussions regarding the improvement program. Here are some useful tips for using email and intranet services.

Tips for using email and intranet services

1

Receiving an email

If you receive an email you would like to pass onto your team members that highlight the team's achievements, add your own comments and tailor the email to employees' needs before you forward it. Check that the language other people have used is clear and comprehensible to your audience.

2

Sending an email

If you are sending an email about organisational performance improvements, include references to team activities so team members can see the impact their performance has in the wider organisation.

3

Linking information

Link information in reports or other documents back to your own team's objectives and the organisation's business plan.

4

Acknowledging contributions

Acknowledge the contribution of particular individuals or the whole team in achieving goals.

5

Using information for discussion

Use the information contained in an email as the basis for discussion in team meetings, informal chats or other opportunities to discuss progress with team members.

3B Record work team performance to identify improvement opportunities

An important aspect of recording continuous improvement outcomes is to ensure that your team's work performance is documented clearly and accurately so you and the team can identify areas and opportunities for future improvement. Written performance results (both quantitative and qualitative) are a reliable method of comparing outcomes and creating an accurate historical record. The record can then be used to identify trends and opportunities for further improvement. You will be able to pinpoint exactly where a process is breaking down.

Documentation also highlights whether the process itself is at fault and needs revision, or whether adherence to the process is the problem. Documenting the performance of staff against standards underpins the success of a quality system and forms the basis for continuous improvement activities that are central to any quality program.

The importance of record-keeping

Documenting the work performance of team members offers many benefits to managers who are implementing a continuous improvement program. Some of the benefits are outlined here.

Consistent record-keeping

Consistent record-keeping provides managers with the means to measure performance of team members in an equitable manner.

Controlled information

Information is controlled, in that forms and templates provide a guide as to what information should be recorded and how it can be used in continuous improvement activities.

Consistency

Consistent forms or templates used to collect and document performance data can help managers organise and plan discussions and meetings (such as performance review sessions) in an ordered, logical manner.

continued …

Identify substandard performance

Substandard performance can be due to a variety of factors. Options to improve productivity could relate to training, better calibration or adjustment of machinery or more appropriate allocation of tasks so that changeover time on machine settings is minimised. It may also be that the more effective worker has been only taking 45 minutes for lunch or is commencing work earlier without recording their time. The slower worker may have an additional responsibility for an apprentice or be the 'buddy' for a new employee, which reduces his or her time on the job. Any substandard performance identified by quantitative data should be investigated to eliminate justifiable reasons for the variation before action is initiated.

Annotated performance plans

Performance documents should be discussed with each team member so they understand how well they have performed and where improvements need to be made. It is important to remember that the act of recording their performance and placing it in a file or lodging it with human resources means that the information (whether positive or negative) is available for others to access. This could be very important legally – for the employee, the organisation and yourself.

A performance plan for an individual or a team is developed in consultation with their supervisor and details the levels of performance that are expected of them. It should clearly align with the organisation's overall strategic goals and objectives.

The performance plan should include:

- goals for development
- actions required in order to achieve these goals
- performance measures
- timelines for achieving the goals.

Record-keeping process

When documenting work performance, there are a number of important aspects to consider. This is particularly so if you have decided to set up your own documentation systems to complement those used by the organisation or if your organisation does not have systems, forms and templates in place. Make sure the system is accessible and doesn't create problems for you or your team members because of high complexity or time use. Like all processes, review the system regularly and think proactively about how it can be further improved. Important aspects to consider when documenting work performance are provided in the following information.

Documentation is a necessity

Documentation is a necessity if an employee is to be disciplined. Consult the various legal requirements of managers that apply in your state or territory. The nature of the documentation you need to keep varies depending on the issue; for example, non-compliance with work health and safety laws requires documentation by law, whereas other less serious matters can be documented as you see fit.

continued ...

3C | Incorporate areas for improvement in future planning

The planning process is an integral component of the continuous improvement cycle. After you have made a change for the better, you should continue to look for better and more efficient ways of working in the future.

Focusing on process and outcomes is the essence of true continuous improvement. By evaluating the process you can identify inefficiencies in the system that contribute to a poor quality product or service. By evaluating the effectiveness of your outcomes with your customers, you can work backwards to identify improvement needed in your process. Many organisations hold staff planning days in which all staff participate in identifying areas for improvement based on documented evidence from sales figures, performance reviews; WHS risk assessments and audits, as well as using tools such as brainstorming and a SWOT analysis.

The planning process

Once the various areas for improvement have been discussed and evaluated, action plans for future initiatives and how to implement them are developed and agreed upon so that successful undertakings are repeated and mistakes are avoided. The following information outlines steps of the planning process and the planning questions that should be addressed.

Critical steps in the planning process

Critical steps include:

- learning from past experiences
- establishing realistic goals, objectives and targets
- listing all the activities that need to take place to achieve your target
- sequencing the activities in order to get the most effective outcomes
- communicating your plan
- implementing your plan
- checking your progress.

Discussion questions for a planning session

At team level, managers should conduct regular debriefing and planning sessions and discuss the following:

- What problem were we trying to solve?
- What goals/targets did we set out to achieve?
- What worked well along the way?
- What could have worked better?
- What should be done differently next time?