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The submissive communication style

The submissive communication style is about pleasing others and avoiding conflict.

Submissive communicators behave as if other people's needs are more important than their own.

Submissive communicators may:

- be apologetic
- avoid conflict or confrontation
- find it difficult to take responsibility or make decisions
- yield to the preferences of others
- opt out
- feel or behave like a victim
- blame others
- refuse compliments or constructive criticism
- not express their feelings or desires.

The manipulative communication style

The manipulative communication style is calculating, shrewd and scheming. Manipulative communicators are skilled at influencing others to their own advantage.

Manipulative communicators may:

- be cunning
- control others in an insidious ways
- make others feel sorry for them
- use and express artificial feelings
- ask indirectly for their own needs to be met.

Four-style model

In *The Platinum Rule* (Alessandra et al., 1996), the authors suggest a second way to categorise communication styles using a cross-cultural, four-style model.

This model focuses on patterns of observable, external clues that give you a sense of what is going on inside the mind of your client. Once you know that, you can decide how best to respond to them.

According to the model, everyone exhibits one of the following communication styles.

Empathy

Empathic understanding means that you try to understand the client's perspective or internal frame of reference instead of imposing your own views on them. Showing empathy for your clients' emotional states and particular needs facilitates positive, safe and respectful workplace relationships.

Collaboration

Managers should be prepared to work in a collaborative relationship with clients. This demonstrates to the client that you respect their ability to make decisions and choose options that best suit their needs. If you are paternalistic and do not encourage clients to participate in making choices about the services they require, you disempower clients and diminish their self-respect.

Principles of effective communication

Whether you are communicating formally or informally, verbally or in writing, to an individual client or a group of clients in a meeting, the basic principles of communication must be considered to ensure your interaction is effective. Preparation is the key. If you can identify an introduction and plan of action, as well as anticipate outcomes, you enhance your ability to relate to and develop rapport with your clients.

Principles of communication

- Know your audience: plan your communication to suit the listeners' level of understanding.
- Know your purpose: make it clear whether you are delivering specific information, requesting information, or being social.
- Know your topic: be aware and fully informed of all the facts and details.
- Anticipate objections: these may arise due to misunderstandings, so be prepared to answer questions, queries and concerns.
- Present a rounded picture: communicate the benefits to both parties.
- Achieve credibility with your audience: support your statements with evidence (such as statistics or testimonials).
- Follow through on what you say: do not promise what you cannot deliver.
- Communicate one issue at a time: pause, ask questions and provide listeners with an opportunity to ask questions.
- Present information in several ways: ensure each individual understands the information presented.
- Develop a useful way to obtain feedback: obtain feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of your communication.
- Use multiple communication techniques: identify and adhere to your listeners' communication needs and preferences.

Examples of non-verbal communication

Here are some examples of non-verbal signals and cues that you can use to communicate your interest in others.

Active listening

Active listening involves an investment on your part to relate to and understand your client, on both an informational and emotional level.

Active listening is the fastest way to gain important information from your client. After listening to what your client has to say, attempt to send back the most accurate interpretation of what you think you heard the client say; that is, give feedback in your own words to check you received the information correctly. The client is likely to then correct you, or reiterate what you have said, but while simultaneously underlining the essence of their message.

To show you are actively listening to a client use positive reinforcement, smile, make eye contact and use a forward-facing posture.

Eye contact

The way you look at your client can communicate many things, including interest, attraction, hostility or affection. Maintaining eye contact shows honesty and directness about what you are saying. It is not possible to build rapport during face-to-face communication without engaging in eye contact.

Eye contact also maintains the flow of conversation and allows you to gauge the client's response. You can decide if the client is actively interested or not. Be aware that in some cultures eye contact is disrespectful.

Facial expressions

Through the intricacies of facial expressions, you are able to express countless emotions without saying a word. The human face can be extremely expressive and in contrast to some types of non-verbal communication, facial expressions are said to be universal.

Emotions such as happiness, anger, surprise or sadness are identified by characteristic muscle movements that result in smiles, lowered eyes, raised eyebrows or frowns.

To build rapport with your clients, try to pay attention to the signals you are giving, ensuring you do not display any undesirable expressions.

Voice

We communicate with our voices, even when we are not using words. Non-verbal speech sounds such as tone, pitch, volume, rhythm, pace, and inflection provide subtle but powerful clues into our true feelings and what we really mean. In addition to the words actually being spoken, your client is also reading your voice and listening for tones that indicate confidence.

When communicating with your clients, ensure you do not use tones that send negative signals such as anger or sarcasm. Your voice should convey confidence, interest and encouragement.

continued ...

1C

Identify and act on potential barriers to effective client communication

As a manager, it is essential that you identify and act on any potential barriers to effective client communication. Legislative and organisational guidelines must be adhered to whenever you engage in communication processes with your clients.

Your clients may be people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. As a manager, you must embrace the issues, concerns and needs relating to the individual differences of your clients. You must also ensure that any clients coming from diverse backgrounds feel fully integrated into the cultural dynamics, direction and decision-making structures of the professional relationship.

Individual differences

As a team leader, you must adopt new ways of engaging with the changing demographics and diversity needs of your clients. It is not enough to rely on the well-intended organisational approaches to diversity that has had, at best, a limiting impact in the past. You must create new and innovative ways of approaching diversity that are specific to the needs of your clients, creating opportunities to grow the relationship in the future.

Everyone should feel valued regardless of their individual differences and feel confident to work alongside one another in effective workplace relationships.

Here are a number of individual differences.

1

Ability, aptitude or disability

Your clients may have a basic education or be highly qualified. They may have a physical or cognitive disability. Some people may be suited to a particular job role more than others based on their skills, ambition and aptitude.

2

Age

Your clients may be people of all ages, from young people straight from high school to mature-aged people in their sixties or seventies.

3

Culture

Your clients may come from many different countries and may wish to retain their customs and beliefs. They may have a different work ethic to you or others within your organisation.

4

Ethnicity

Your clients may have different languages, cultures, beliefs and ways of dressing.

Physical distractions

Physical distractions relate to the environment in which you and your client are interacting. For example, if the environment is too noisy – either from internal or external sources – the information you are trying to present may be lost, misunderstood or not fully received.

Consider moving to a quieter and more suitable place to ensure you can give the client your full attention, and receive the same from them.



Additional communication barriers

Here are some additional potential barriers to effective communication with clients.

Technological

Technological barriers occur when the equipment necessary for you to successfully interact with your client malfunctions, is not available, is not used properly or is not compatible with other equipment being utilised. Interruptions to information technology can cause information to be lost or distorted. Practise using any electronic equipment and ensure it is available before meeting with your client.

Geographical

Geographical issues such as differing time zones, formations or weather conditions can create misunderstanding of deadlines or meeting times, or discrepancies in anticipated delivery times. Try to anticipate (if possible) any geographical barriers that will impede successful client communication. You should make arrangements to work around these barriers, or reschedule your communication to a time when the issues will not be present.

Logistical

Logistical barriers relate to the management of the flow of goods and services between your organisation and your client. Limited hours of operation, a lack of 'contact us' forms or pages on your website, or not enough reply paid cards or envelopes in mailouts can wreak havoc on your ability to engage in proper communication strategies. Your client may have difficulty providing you with feedback if ineffective mechanisms have been put in place.

Organisational

Organisational barriers relate to communication systems and processes in place within your organisation. You must ensure that all client contact information is gathered and recorded correctly in an electronic database. Calendars should be organised so that appointments with clients do not need to be changed or cancelled. By developing a client management strategy within your organisation, you can avoid confusing your client and causing breakdowns in the working relationship.

Customs and etiquette

Most cultures have particular forms of etiquette that are strictly adhered to within their own community. For example, in some cultures touching is not acceptable and would be considered offensive or rude. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture people have protocols for referring to an individual who has died.

You should make sure you are aware of and respect different customs and etiquette when working with people from other cultures.

Relationships

Some cultures have clearly defined roles for males and females and for different family members. You should ensure you understand the cultural obligations of different cultures and avoid transgressions where possible. To gain an understanding, you should ask someone within the culture or contact an appropriate cultural liaison officer or ethno-specific service that can give you appropriate information and/or training.

Research other cultures

Find out as much as you can about the cultures of the clients you work with by:

- conducting research using the internet
- visiting your local library
- joining a local cultural group
- asking a person from a local culture about their country's traditions and beliefs
- viewing relevant videos.

Follow organisational policies and procedures

Many organisations have formalised policies and procedures in place that operate as guidelines for all staff when interacting with clients.

All staff are obliged to work within certain boundaries and adhere to the standards, policies and procedures set by your organisation. Examples may include policies and procedures on how to greet or approach a client, the method of responding to client enquiries, sales methods and techniques, or the method for handling client complaints.

Organisations formalise client policies and procedures to ensure staff:

- treat clients consistently to a desired standard
- act in a certain manner every time when dealing with clients
- know what steps to take in all situations, particularly when clients are unhappy or have complaints
- deliver service in a manner consistent with the organisation's overall goals and objectives, particularly in knowing who is responsible for certain products or services
- comply with legal policies, guidelines and requirements.

Topic 2

Establish client relationship management strategies

Client relationship management is about the principles, practices and guidelines that an organisation follows when interacting with its clients. It is a management philosophy for best achieving your business objectives through identifying and satisfying your clients' needs, preferences and expectations. Client relationship management encompasses not only direct client interactions, such as sales or service related processes, but also the forecasting and analysis of client behaviours and trends, which ultimately serve to enhance the client's overall experience.

Organisations establish a variety of client relationship management strategies, most of which involve the use of technology to organise, automate and synchronise information relating to its interactions with current and future clients.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Develop client loyalty objectives focusing on the development of long-term business partnerships
- 2B Assess client profile information to determine approach
- 2C Develop client loyalty strategies to attract and retain clients in accordance with the business strategy
- 2D Identify and apply client care and client service standards

Long-term business partnerships

A strategic business partnership is a relationship that is mutually beneficial to both parties. When this stage of client loyalty is achieved, an understanding of profitability for the various parties is clearly described.

Business partnerships may be long-term formal legal commitments, or short-term joint ventures to test market concepts. Either way, a good strategic partnership achieves performance outcomes that exceed the result derived from either one of the individual parts, such as an increased profile in the industry, increased marketing opportunities or better market share.

Carefully review your clients to determine which relationships would immediately benefit if developed into a long-term business partnership.

Here are some tips on developing long-term business partnerships.

Vision and mission

Create a shared vision and mission

While each party may have different motives in forming the partnership, the overall objectives and methods need to be the same. Discuss your organisation's vision and mission with your partners. Put them in writing and use this as a reference for all partnership decision-making. Identify what motivates each of you.

Needs and expectations

Ensure each partner's needs and expectations are addressed

Each party to a business partnership has their own reasons for being in the partnership. If the underlying expectations of each partner are not met, the relationship can become tense. Share your expectations and find out what your partner needs and expects in the business relationship. Have a plan for when personal or business circumstances change so that expectations can be readdressed.

Identify strengths

Identify and utilise the strengths of each partner

It is easy to overlook the strengths of each individual in the partnership. While obvious strengths will be quickly realised, there may be some underlying strengths that impact on the long-term commitment, motivation and success of the partnership. Discuss and make note of you and your partner's personal strengths and discuss how these apply to the success of the business.

Client loyalty objectives

It is critical that you do your research and are very clear from the outset about what your key client loyalty objectives are going to be, both in the short- and long-term. You should know what you want to achieve and ensure objectives are aligned with your organisation's strategic plan. Identifying business growth objectives will greatly assist you in selecting the most appropriate CRM strategy.

Organisational processes

A CRM strategy looks holistically and consistently at the organisational processes and systems that deal with clients, including marketing, sales, ordering, client care, technical support and business intelligence. It should span all interaction channels, including your call centre, retail branches and outlets, web and mobile self-service, and service partners.

Before you implement any CRM strategy, ensure a data collection policy is in place that protects the security of client information.

Client loyalty strategies

The foundation of your CRM strategy should consider the range of capabilities your organisation has. Your business processes, technology, and human resources will all form part of the client experience. Identify critical business dates or milestones. The introduction of new products or services, limited offers or discounts, or the launch of loyalty programs will allow you to determine critical timing when developing CRM strategies.

CRM strategy

Conducting a thorough analysis and evaluation of client data will help you develop the best CRM approach for your organisation. It will also help you decide whether or not you require expert advice in the development of your CRM strategy.

A comprehensive CRM strategy includes business objectives, data strategy and analytics, communications planning, channel strategy, content strategy, technology, continuous improvement and metrics. Once a CRM strategy has been chosen, you should ensure that ongoing processes are in place to monitor, measure and improve the CRM system.

Wider organisational goals should be considered as these will guide you in addressing the components of your CRM strategy. The goals of a client-centric business may be to find, attract and win new clients, or nurture and retain those the business already has. Becoming client-focused and client-driven means running all aspects of the business to satisfy the clients by addressing their requirements for products, and by providing high quality, responsive client service.

2C

Develop client loyalty strategies to attract and retain clients in accordance with the business strategy

Once you have identified your client loyalty objectives and created a business client profile, you can develop a loyalty program that encourages client relationships beyond the initial purchase.

First, develop a set of client loyalty strategies to attract new clients, retain existing clients, and build long-term business partnerships. Client loyalty strategies help organisations stand out from their competitors by showing how their clients are the primary focus of their business.

Once a client has joined a client loyalty program and the relationship is established, you can develop new opportunities to communicate with the client about other products and services and ways to enhance those in existence.



Client loyalty strategies

A client loyalty strategy is a tailored marketing plan that rewards clients for their participation and brand loyalty. Client loyalty strategies are a means of growing your business in a more deliberate way.

However, without proper research or foresight, a loyalty strategy can be cumbersome, costly and ultimately a liability. It is essential that client loyalty strategies align with business objectives and client information to ensure programs are designed and implemented in a way that will capture meaningful data.

Here are steps you could follow to develop a client loyalty strategy.

Build a strategy plan

All components of your client loyalty strategy should be carefully and clearly considered, such as timing, cost, branding, value-proposition, attractive incentives and rewards, loyalty currency and marketing channels.

The development stage is a good time to consider what other information you may want to capture about your client base. Loyalty programs are a great opportunity to gain insight into client behaviour.

Embrace a loyalty mindset

For client loyalty programs to work, senior management must be willing to drive the strategies and train and motivate team members to implement the program effectively. Each department within your organisation must fully understand, support and embrace the loyalty strategy selected.

An organisation-wide loyalty mindset offers the highest possible success rate to impact your company's bottom line.

Order processing and delivery times

Apply the standards set for the time frame within which client orders must be processed. This defines the total time allowable between when the client places an order until the time the client receives the product or service.

For example: All client orders must be delivered within 10 business days from the time the order was placed.

Client accessibility

Make sure clients can contact the organisation by a variety of methods.

For example: The organisation may state that it can receive queries from clients via an internet homepage, an email address for client enquiries, a business phone number, a fax number, or a postal address.

Business hours

Make sure clients can contact the organisation during the hours it is open for business, as well as the hours during which clients can contact it. In some organisations, such as banks, the business may only be open to staff from 8.00 am and open for customers from 9.30 am.

Separation of responsibility between departments

Know which person, team or department is responsible for which areas of client service. This is particularly important for larger organisations where collaboration between people or departments is required when serving clients.

For example: A customer service charter may state which person, team or department is responsible for processing client orders, or for resolving client complaints and disputes.

Pricing policy

Apply the organisation's overall pricing policy. This is usually done broadly in terms of where the business prices itself in the market (high-end versus low-end) and may include a commitment to guarantee the lowest cost or to match or beat competitors' offerings. Be aware of what staff can and cannot offer a client.

Refunds, returns and exchanges policy

Be aware of the circumstances under which the organisation allows clients to return or exchange items and under what conditions refunds will be issued.

Follow the procedures that clearly specify aspects such as:

- the time frame in which products can be returned
- any purchase amount limits that apply
- staff/manager approval requirements
- presentation of receipt conditions.

Measure actual performance

In the cycle of continuous improvement, performance measurement plays an important role in identifying and tracking progress against organisational goals, finding opportunities for improvement, and comparing performance against both internal and external service standards.

You can measure and monitor actual performance against service standards by recording and acting on client feedback and complaints; regularly reviewing the terms and effectiveness of your client service charter; and reporting on performance in your organisation's annual report.

Performance measures must be meaningful, unambiguous and widely understood; owned and managed by the terms within the organisation; based on a high level of data integrity such that collection is embedded within normal procedures; be able to drive service improvement; and linked to critical goals and key drivers of the organisation.

Key steps for measuring actual performance against client service standards

1. Establish key client service objectives and convert into the desired standards of performance
2. Develop metrics to compare the desired service performance with the actual achieved standards
3. Design a data collection/reporting process
4. Identify gaps in service performance
5. Initiate improvement actions
6. Perform calculations to determine time frames for taking action

Perform a client service audit

Organisations often keep abreast of client satisfaction with their service performance by conducting regular client service audits that examine and check procedures, practices and records to ensure they meet certain standards.

A client service audit reviews the organisation's client service performance by analysing the business from the client's perspective. It is a holistic process and involves time and resources in gathering information from all aspects of the organisation's client service performance.

Observe staff in action interacting with clients, gathering and analysing information from client feedback and complaint forms, conducting surveys, issuing questionnaires and asking third parties to comment on service levels.

Client service audits review:

- the quality of current client service
- what clients most complain about
- how well staff work as a team
- how client service can be improved
- how the organisation's service compares with that of its competitors
- how easily an organisation's clients are able to use its systems.

Surveys

Surveys are used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data for the organisation on its client service performance. Unlike feedback forms, which are used continually, a survey is commissioned as a project to target a defined population of respondents (your existing or potential clients) and obtain their thoughts, opinions and attitudes on a range of issues related to the organisation and client service in general.

Surveys can be used as a once-off or intermittently over a certain period of time, such as annually or every six months. Consider surveying lapsed clients to determine their reasons for ceasing to do business with your organisation.

Survey questions are structured and standardised so every respondent answers questions in the same way. This reduces bias and ensures the feedback the organisation receives is more reliable and valid. Surveys are an efficient way to collect feedback from a large number of existing or potential clients.

Surveys can be:

- research-administered surveys where the questions are administered or read to the respondent by the researcher
- self-administered questionnaires where the respondent administers the questions to themselves in their own time
- online surveys where the client is sent a questionnaire either by email, via a link to the company's website, or after chatting online with a client service representative.

Interviews

An organisation may spend time interviewing an existing client. Client interviews may be performed in person at the organisation's premises or on the telephone. Having a representative of the organisation conduct the interview enables better control over the feedback process, as the interviewer can guide and assist the client through the interview process. Interviews also allow the organisation to drill down on particular issues and explore them in depth.



A disadvantage of using client interviews is that they are narrow in focus as they only elicit feedback from one or a few clients whose responses may not apply to the general client base. Clients may also be led by interviewers in providing responses or be reluctant to provide critical feedback due to the presence of the interviewer.

Focus groups

A focus group brings together a group of clients to seek their attitudes and opinions regarding an organisation and its client service. They are an effective way to obtain feedback from the client's perspective as clients can explore issues the organisation may not have considered.

A facilitator guides the group through a series of questions, keeps them on track, allows them freedom when answering questions and interacting with one another, and writes down or records their responses.

Ask questions**Ask questions to understand the problem**

Once the client has calmed down, ask questions to ensure you have all the facts. Summarise the information and check it with the client. Keep checking and questioning until you understand the full extent of the complaint. Keep confirming your understanding.

Establish client needs**Establish what the client needs**

In many instances clients will clearly verbalise what they believe is the solution to their problem. This can be a sensitive area, particularly if their request is beyond your authority or control. If the request is beyond your control, call a manager. The client will then be assured that the complaint is being handled by the organisation.

If the request is not clear, keep asking the client how they want to resolve the problem. Question them in a manner that is not intrusive. Some clients may not want anything; they just want to let the organisation know about the problem. Always express your appreciation if you receive this type of information.

Stay positive**Demonstrate a 'can do' approach to agree on an action**

Never say 'We can't do that', say 'We can do ...'.

Agree on a plan of action and follow through. Be specific: explain to the client when it will occur, by whom and how. This approach instils confidence in the client that something is being done.

Take action**Take immediate action and follow up**

It is crucial that you take action immediately. Your priority is to assist the client. If by chance the agreed plan of action changes, contact the client immediately and negotiate a new plan. It is important to remember that in most instances, the client wants to be listened to and supported.

Once the issue is resolved, contact the client to ensure the issue was handled satisfactorily. Thank the client for alerting you to the problem. Perhaps it has provided the organisation with an opportunity to avoid it happening again by improving its systems and processes.

Motivate clients

Motivating clients to respond to your requests for feedback is often difficult, possibly because they do not believe their complaints will be taken seriously. Also, many clients only contact the organisation if they are upset and have a complaint to make, and many clients have not got time to complete a feedback form or survey. Encourage responses by offering a prize or discounts. It is often a good idea to publish results in your newsletter or website and list any improvements you are making.

Identify the need for improvement

As a result of monitoring client satisfaction, you should be able to identify any developing problems with the potential for negative impacts. This information will support new strategies to resolve satisfaction issues and improve client relationships.

Changes you identify might be made immediately or in the future after other processes have been put in place. It may be that you identify several changes, both in the short- and long-term, that need to be implemented in succession and that, together, will address the issues you have identified.

Some changes may be small things that can be implemented quickly and without large expense, while others may take longer to organise and involve several approval steps, including budgetary sign-off, before they can be enacted.

Improvements to client relationships may include:

- decreasing the time taken to respond to client queries
- ensuring staff have sound product and service knowledge
- making the complaints process easier
- being more accessible
- improving the interpersonal skills of staff
- increasing the amount of contact with clients
- making the website more attractive and engaging.

Report on improvement areas

When identifying a need for changes to client service delivery there are several people and groups you may need to report to, such as client service representatives, senior management, other departments within your organisation, committees, clients, suppliers, contractors or external organisations. Once you have identified the changes that need to take place, this must be reported to and discussed with one or more of these groups or individuals, depending on the nature of your organisation.

The methods of reporting to each of these groups or individuals may vary and include formal presentations, staff meetings or training sessions, along with the development of policy and procedures manuals, press releases, client information sessions, updates on the company website, emails, company memos, promotional handouts or other forms specific to your organisation.

Example: implement strategies to improve client relationships

Here is a table that provides an example of an in-depth implementation strategy.

Change or improvement being made	Implementing the change or improvement
Implementing new software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase software. • Consult with other managers and specialists. • Organise installation dates and training sessions. • Inform team members as to why new software is being purchased. • Tell team members when it will be implemented and when they will need to attend training. • Install software and run training sessions. • Provide team members with new procedures and documentation. • Assist team members as they adjust to the new system.
Changing the client service budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform team members of cutbacks to the client services budget and what this will mean; for example, fewer gift vouchers. • Explain why the budget changes are happening. • Invite group discussion so the new budget's impact is understood and any challenges can be discussed and resolved. • Explain any new procedures and rules. • Ask for team member cooperation and thank them. • Explain how performance will be monitored.
Changes to products or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform team members of new product changes. • Provide team members with training and support materials. • Explain to team members when they are expected to know the new information and why. • Explain the assistance team members will receive. • Review team member knowledge of new product or service specifications within a set time. • Provide follow-up training and assistance if necessary.



Positive behaviours

- Communicate openly and constructively
- Listen actively
- Practise self-awareness
- Display empathy
- Be supportive
- Explore the needs of others
- Create opportunities for feedback
- Be flexible
- Be consistent
- Be reliable
- Remain positive and practical



Negative behaviours

- Poor communication
- Not listening to others
- Lack of self-awareness
- Competitiveness
- Confusion about expectations
- Lack of trust
- Lack of feedback
- Lack of flexibility
- Inequality
- Inaccessibility
- Being reactive rather than proactive

Example: allocate time to develop business contacts

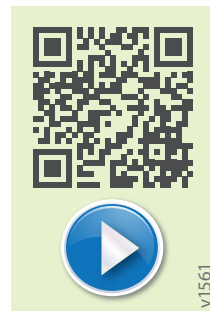
Riley is one of three project managers at a building and construction company. The company has recently been struggling to gain any new business. With a downturn in the economy, many commercial building and construction projects have been cancelled or postponed. Riley's company is suffering financially and, as a result, he has had to let a number of staff go, including the two other project managers.

Riley is now the sole project manager and has been busy supervising the company's remaining projects.

Riley is invited to a one-day construction industry networking function. He doesn't want to go but is persuaded by a colleague to attend the function to reconnect with some of the company's important business contacts who will also be attending.

Riley allocates time in his work schedule to prepare for and attend the networking function.

On the day of the function, Riley talks with some other building and construction consultants during morning tea time. Through the informal chat he finds out about a number of upcoming tenders for new projects that haven't yet been formally announced or advertised. This information gives Riley and his company an advantage over their competitors as they can anticipate and be well-prepared for upcoming project opportunities that could bring significant financial benefits to the organisation.



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Lobby groups

Lobby groups can be formally organised professional associations or informal groups of people with a common cause or interest.

Your own industry may have an association that also acts as a lobby group, protecting the interests of its members, and the industry at large, from negative influences and problems.

Examples include Women in Insurance and the Newcomers Network (for migrants and other visitors to Australia)



Government agencies

Government agencies such as Austrade or AusIndustry, as well as other inter-agency groups, may be able to provide you with useful contacts, networking opportunities, money (in the form of grants), information, support and advice for helping your business grow.

Government agencies may support organisations in a particular industry or region and, as a result, often have excellent networks of their own – which you can tap into.

Professional development activities

There are a range of professional development activities that you can take part in, depending on your organisation or industry. Professional development is the process of obtaining the skills, qualifications and experience that allow you to make progress in your career.

There is a range of activities that can contribute to your continuing professional development, available either within or external to your organisation. While these activities go towards developing your own professional acumen, they also provide a unique opportunity to network with business contacts that have similar professional goals to yours.

Professional development activities could include:

- attendance and involvement in department, division, staff or other specially designated meetings
- on-the-job coaching or mentoring
- serving as a conference leader or trainer
- accepting formal presentation opportunities
- extending professional experience by transferring to another office or a different role for a specified period
- taking part in internal or external training programs
- working one-on-one with a specialist or expert staff member
- planned reading in specialised fields, such as technical books, trade journals, or management literature
- participating in personal development workshops
- personal counselling by a trained professional.

4C

Establish communication channels to provide and exchange information and ideas with the network

Exchanging information and ideas about new networks is an important part of the networking process and should be included in workplace discussion and planning. Work colleagues can provide feedback and ideas for how your contacts can offer support. Combine the information you have collected with material others have gathered to create a resource used for a range of purposes to benefit the team and the organisation.

Establish clear communication channels to effectively exchange information and ideas about new networks and provide, seek and verify information to existing networks.

Use appropriate communication strategies when developing new business contacts and networks and tailor any presentations to the needs of your intended audience.



Exchange information and ideas

By sharing network information you are making yourself available to receive new ideas, connections and information that you perhaps didn't directly seek out – one of the beneficial by-products of networking.

The type of information exchanged through networking may include changes or trends in your industry, changing client requirements, information on competitors' activities, or professional or personal support.

Here are some examples of the ways information can be shared.

Information can be shared:

- in a short written report
- informally, at a meeting
- as part of an oral presentation
- by entering details into an electronic database
- in conversation at a function.

Provide, seek and verify information

Networking can provide you with information about changes or trends in your industry, changing client requirements, competitors' activities, other useful business contacts and professional or personal support.

Be proactive when networking by meeting individuals in the group who can offer you access to potential clients and by seeking further networking opportunities. You also have the opportunity to distribute information that motivates others to seek your products or services.

Act quickly and efficiently on any referrals you are given. Remember, when people give you the names of others to contact, your actions are a reflection on them. Make sure you do not act in a way that reflects negatively on the person referring you.