
Contents

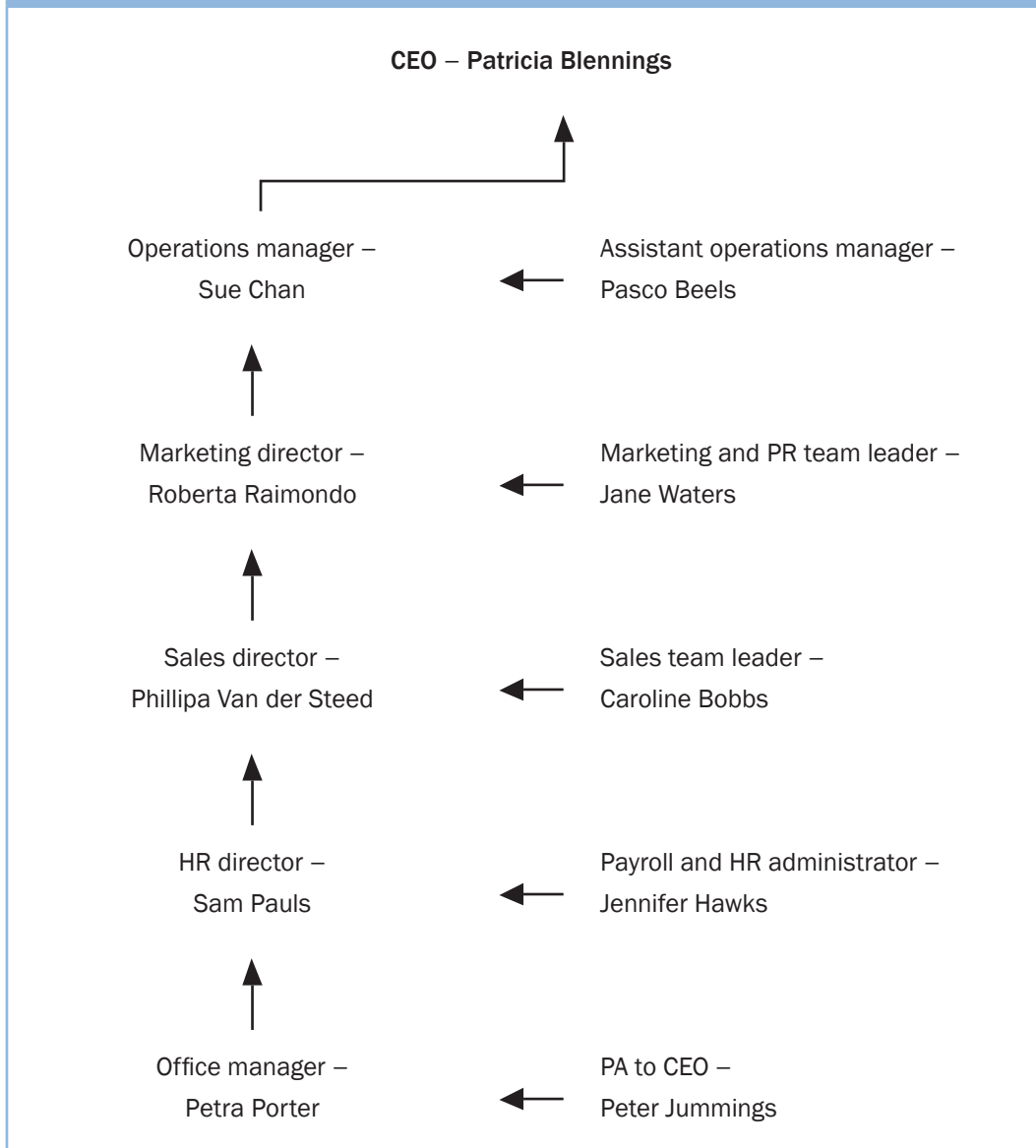
Before you begin	vii
Topic 1: Develop effective workplace relationships	1
1A Identify own responsibilities and duties and undertake activities in a positive manner	2
1B Consider time and resource constraints in fulfilling work requirements	21
1C Encourage, acknowledge and act on constructive feedback	31
Summary	39
Learning checkpoint 1: Develop effective workplace relationships	40
Topic 2: Contribute to work group activities	45
2A Provide support to team members to ensure goals are met	46
2B Make a constructive contribution to goals and tasks	55
2C Share information to ensure goals are met	58
2D Identify and plan opportunities for improving the work group	64
Summary	69
Learning checkpoint 2: Contribute to work group activities	70
Topic 3: Deal effectively with issues, problems and conflict	75
3A Respect differences in personal values and beliefs	76
3B Identify differences in communication styles and respond appropriately	79
3C Identify issues, problems and conflict in the workplace	86
3D Seek assistance when difficulties arise	94
Summary	99
Learning checkpoint 3: Deal effectively with issues, problems and conflicts	100

Organisational chart



You may have a personnel or organisational chart, often available from the human resources department, which illustrates graphically the position titles and the names of the staff who hold those positions in your organisation. These charts are a useful tool when you are first learning the names of the people with whom you work. It is also a useful tool for knowing who to contact for a specific query or problem.

Example: organisational chart showing the relationship of personnel



Follow sustainable work practices

Sustainable work practices help protect the natural environment. To minimise the impact of their operations, many workplaces have introduced processes to reduce, reuse or recycle materials; for example, buying products in bulk, seeking products with less packaging and recycling used office equipment, waste paper, bottles and cartons.



A range of legislation has been passed to ensure workplaces meet environmental standards. These include the *Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000* (Cth), *Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005* (Cth) and the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007* (Cth).

While you do not need to know this legislation in detail, you must be aware of, and comply with, any procedures based on this legislation that have been introduced for staff to follow, such as using less paper, switching off lights when not needed, recycling waste and placing used printer cartridges in a box for collection.

Where to find policies and procedures

In some workplaces, policies and procedures are kept on a computer system so that employees can access the most up-to-date copy whenever they need to. You will probably need a login name and password to access this information. Your login and password will usually be given to you at an induction session or when you first begin work in your workplace. If you have been given a paper copy of the policies and procedures of your workplace, check that it is the most recent copy.

Policies and procedures may cover such things as:

- first aid
- purchasing of materials and resources
- dress code
- use of work vehicles
- reimbursement of costs (e.g. for a conference or training activity)
- use of the organisation's internet and email systems for private use
- confidentiality of documents and work materials
- professional development and training
- equal opportunity
- annual, personal, long-service, maternity and paternity leave arrangements
- quality assurance and continuous improvement strategies.

Promote good workplace relations

You need to develop relationships with lots of different people in the workplace. They may be people in your workplace or they may be from outside the organisation. Regardless of who you are dealing with, you should ensure the interaction is positive and productive. Building good working relationships takes time; you need to build trust and show reliability and flexibility. You also need to practise skills such as participating in meetings, communicating clearly and cooperating as part of a work group.

You can help promote good workplace relations by:

- listening carefully to other people
- taking notes of important information so you can refer to them later
- thinking about how you can work towards the goals of your organisation
- being flexible and adaptable
- concentrating on your work tasks
- thinking about how you can contribute to a situation and share your ideas with others
- communicating clearly with other people.

Work effectively in groups

There are many ways to promote good working relations. Interacting with others requires you to be flexible and able to adapt your thinking and your behaviour to accommodate the values and behaviours of others. Working effectively with others in a group requires a different set of skills from working alone. Understanding some of the differences and opportunities of working in groups allows you to be a more effective and efficient team member.

Areas to consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding group structure and responsibilities• Working in different groups• Demonstrating a positive manner at work• Using a positive manner in group meetings• Cooperating with others in a group

Understand group structure and responsibilities

Different members of your team – peers, work colleagues or team members – may have different roles and responsibilities depending on their particular skills and the needs of the group. You need to understand what each person's roles and responsibilities are and how you can best work with them. The more you understand how others work and what they require from you, the better you will be able to do your job.

Use a positive manner in group meetings

Meetings are an important way for team members to communicate and solve any difficulties. They also help develop positive relationships within a work team, as everyone has a chance to share ideas, talk about issues and plan for future goals and tasks. Groups may meet regularly for a variety of reasons, including those shown below.



Your responsibility in group meetings

You need to be prepared before you attend a meeting. You may like to jot down some ideas for discussion. Listen to everyone's viewpoint. Be prepared to contribute your ideas and suggestions. This is part of being an effective member of the work group. You may not agree with everything that is said, but put forward your own ideas clearly and briefly. It is important that everyone has a chance to express their views and be heard, and that united decisions are made about issues discussed during the meeting. By cooperating and working together, decisions become a product of the work group as a whole, rather than of an individual.

Cooperate with others in a group

For a work group to be effective, all members must be able to work together. Groups are more likely to reach their goals when the group has good group dynamics. Group dynamics is the way the members work and interact. Good group dynamics can make a big difference to the success of the work group.

Meet deadlines

If you do not meet a deadline, identify what happened and why. It may not be your fault. For example, you may have been unable to complete a letter because your supervisor did not give you the information in time, or because another group leader asked you to do an urgent task. On the other hand, you may have been disorganised, or you spent longer than you thought you would on another task.

Types of time constraints

Time constraints have an obvious impact on your ability to do your job. They can occur in a variety of areas and for a variety of reasons.

Below are some time constraints to consider.

Unexpected absences by other workers

You may need to take on additional duties to cover their absence.
You may normally rely on this person to assist you with your tasks.
The team as a whole may feel more stressed and overworked because of the absence.

Meetings

Meetings can run overtime and reduce the time available for other tasks.
Meetings often involve actions that need to be taken and reported on at the next meeting.

Deadlines

Deadlines that are too short may not leave enough time for the task to be completed adequately.
Deadlines may link to other tasks or projects and have a flow-on effect from one task to another.

Task-time imbalance

If the time estimated for a task is inadequate, it is not possible for the task to be completed before a deadline unless extra work is completed, extra personnel assigned or extra time allowed.

Possible implications of the loss of a particular resource

Often resources are only noticed and appreciated when they are no longer there. It is easy to take people as well as objects for granted in a workplace. It is only once they are gone that we realise how important they were, and what the impact of their loss is. A good supply of quality resources makes a difference to an organisation and its workers. Resources should always be valued and every attempt made to preserve them.

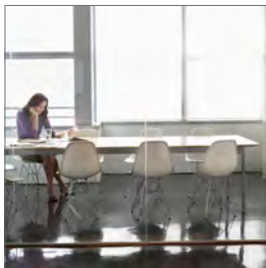
The following information outlines the possible implications of the loss of a particular resource in the workplace.

Possible implications of the loss of a particular resource in the workplace



- Calls cannot be received.
- Customers become frustrated.
- Business cannot be conducted over the phone.
- Increased demand for other systems such as emails and mobiles.

Adjustable chairs replaced with non-adjustable chairs



- Workers are less comfortable.
- Increased risk of RSI, eye strain, muscle strain, general fatigue.
- Increased chance of workers making WHS claims for injury.
- Worker morale is decreased.
- Work productivity drops.

Kitchen assistant quits over a pay dispute and is not replaced



- Pile-up of dirty dishes in the kitchen.
- Worker morale decreases as tea and coffee supplies are no longer easily available for a fast, refreshing break.
- New systems need to be introduced for washing cups, emptying the dishwasher, buying supplies and catering for special events.
- Workers become frustrated and sad at the loss of a well-liked and valued member of staff.

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1C

Encourage, acknowledge and act on constructive feedback

Feedback is an important part of workplace communication. Feedback lets you know how well you have done a particular task, or whether there are things you should change about the way you do your job. In your workplace, there will be times when you need to give feedback and times when you will receive it.

There are two main types of feedback, which are described below.

Knowledge of results

This type of feedback only tells a person about the end result of their actions; for example, 'The new client has agreed to use our agency'.

Knowledge of performance

A more detailed form of feedback, this tells a person about the nature of their actual performance and relates specifically to their actions and behaviour; for example, 'Your presentation was informative, direct and clear. The client understood you easily'.

Effective feedback

Feedback should always relate to actions, behaviours and outcomes rather than people themselves. If you give someone feedback, think about their feelings and emotions, and avoid saying things that might make them feel inadequate or upset.

To be constructive and helpful, feedback should always be aimed at improving the performance of the work team rather than being negative and critical. If feedback is purely negative without giving any information about what needs to change or how, then it is not constructive. Feedback should help people understand what they have done well and what they need to change to do their work better next time.

If you need to give someone in your work team feedback about an area they need to improve, find something positive to say at the same time. This will make them feel better about the changes they need to make. They will be less likely to be upset by the feedback you give them.

Example: formal feedback in a performance appraisal

Beth receives the following written comments on her performance appraisal:

'Beth has worked hard at learning our new filing system. She is able to correctly store, note and locate documents within the system, and can maintain accurate and detailed records in excess of the skills required of her position.'

Beth attended a training course this year to update her skills in database management. She has put this knowledge to good use and has spent time showing other staff how to use the database more effectively. This contribution has been noted by management and is appreciated.

Beth has shown a high level of skill in supporting other staff, and has indicated an interest in the training area at a later date. She would do well to consolidate her skills in administration first before moving to a new challenge.'



Informal feedback on performance

If at any stage you would like feedback on your performance, speak to your supervisor. If you need to clarify the feedback you are getting, ask questions until you ensure that you understand which parts of your tasks you have done well and how you can improve other aspects.

You can often learn a lot about your performance by having an informal chat with your team leader or another more experienced colleague. If you have found a task difficult to do, or you have just completed an unfamiliar task, ask for some feedback. Tell your team leader or colleague that you would like to be able to improve how you do your job. They will appreciate your efforts to learn more about your performance, and you will have gained some valuable information. Make a note of the comments so you can keep improving your work skills. Informal feedback sessions occur at no set time – unlike formal performance appraisals – and generally no notes are written on your file.

Advantages of informal feedback:

- It is a quick and easy way to share ideas.
- It provides a relaxed environment to discuss issues and opportunities.
- It allows for immediate feedback, which enables workers to improve their work skills sooner.
- It provides an environment for trust and rapport to prosper.

Topic 2

Contribute to work group activities

As a member of the work group, you have an important contribution to make. You need to work with other members of the team to make sure your team can achieve its goals. The way you work with other members of the team will change depending on the situation and the tasks you are working on. Part of your role will involve working with other members of the group to identify and plan opportunities and ways that you can work together to ensure tasks are completed in the most effective and efficient manner.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Provide support to team members to ensure goals are met
- 2B Make a constructive contribution to goals and tasks
- 2C Share information to ensure goals are met
- 2D Identify and plan opportunities for improving the work group

Provide encouragement

Everyone works better when they receive encouragement from time to time. Encouragement tells others they are on the right track. It also helps people feel better about situations where things have not gone according to plan. Encouragement is a friendly, team-focused way of supporting your colleagues when you think they could use a bit of a boost.

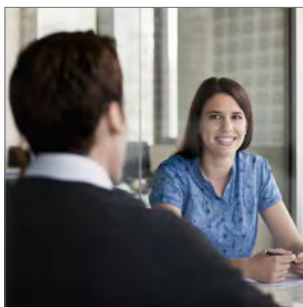
Example: support a team member by offering encouragement

You notice that a colleague has been having some problems dealing with a difficult customer. You wait until your colleague has finished. Then you spend a few minutes talking with your colleague about the difficulties they have been having. You offer some encouragement and a few suggestions that may help them to deal more easily with difficult customers in the future.

Give feedback

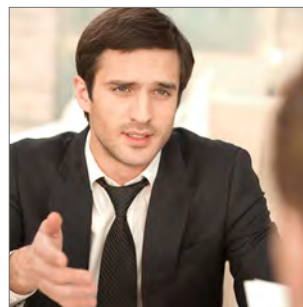
Feedback is an important way of supporting your colleagues by making sure they understand when they have completed a task well and when they have not. Giving and receiving feedback is an important part of being in a work team. If you notice that someone is not sure whether they are doing the right thing or not, feedback can be useful.

It is important that any feedback you give is constructive and helpful. Feedback should not make someone feel that your comments are directed at them personally. Feedback should focus on the task rather than the person.



Positive feedback

Positive feedback encourages someone to continue doing a task in the same way, or it lets them know that what they are succeeding.



Negative feedback

Negative feedback tells someone that they should change what they are doing, or alter their approach in some way.

Questions to ask

- Does my supervisor know and approve of me doing this task?
- Do I have the knowledge and skills to do it correctly?
- Do I understand any occupational health and safety issues that may apply?
- Does it give me a chance to learn some new skills?
- Will it help my work team achieve its goals?
- Can I rearrange my own tasks to accommodate this task?
- If I do this task, will I upset the dynamics of our work team?

Practice task 4

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

Case study

Van Lin has just begun working for a computer software company. He is working hard to make a good impression. He wants his supervisor to think he can do his job well, and that he is a good team member. He has read the company's policies and procedures manual, and has started to learn about the forms he needs to use for ordering new equipment and sending out invoices. He is finding his daily tasks are taking him a while to do, but he is trying to be as efficient as he can be and to use his time well.

One of his colleagues, Veronica, has worked for the company for several years. Veronica is responsible for packaging and dispatching customer orders on a daily basis, processing the invoices and entering the information onto a database. Veronica does not like packing the boxes in the warehouse because she finds it too cold. She sometimes asks Van Lin to do this task for her while she does the invoices.

Van Lin helps Veronica out a few times, but then he starts to get behind in his own work. One day he finds Veronica sitting in the office reading a magazine because she has finished her work already. He is cross because he knows that after doing her packing task, he still has to do his own jobs as well. He does not know whether his supervisor will be upset that he has not finished his own work, or angry that Veronica is taking advantage of him. He is not sure what to do.

1. What are Veronica's duties?

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Listen carefully

Listen carefully to what others contribute at the meeting. Meetings are not about winning or losing points or arguments; they are about working out what is best for the whole team.

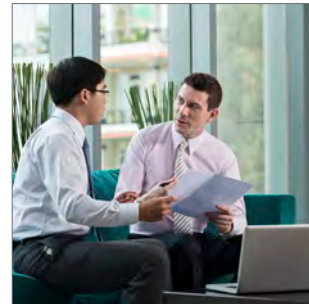
Clarify completion methods

An important professional issue for organisations is ensuring tasks are always completed in the same way, and in line with requirements. A manual may be used to explain how to do certain tasks, or how to set out documents.

There may be templates to use for documents such as letters or reports that are written frequently; a system of checking documents before they are sent out; and operating instructions explaining, step by step, how to complete certain tasks.

You may need to check with your supervisor or a more-experienced colleague about how your organisation performs certain tasks. You may be asked to do a task you have not done before, or you may simply need a reminder about what is expected in your workplace.

Alternatively, you may have someone new in your work team and you need to offer them some help. Make a list of important information that people in your work team need to remember. Sharing information like this will make sure everyone works in a similar way.



Example: use procedures in the workplace

Marjorie is not sure about her workplace requirements for writing a letter. She checks in the online manual and finds a procedure headed 'letters'. She reads that procedure and learns that, in her workplace, she must remember the following when she writes a letter:

- Use letterhead paper.
- Use plain English writing style.
- Place the date in the top left-hand corner.
- Include the name, title and address of the recipient under the date.
- Use a subject line (headed Re:) to indicate to the reader what the letter is about.
- Include sender's name and position title at the bottom of the letter.
- Allow sufficient space to sign the letter.

2D

Identify and plan opportunities for improving the work group

After working in a group, it is useful for members to discuss how well the team worked towards its goal. Evaluating or assessing performance helps everybody to think about what was done well or how things could be done better next time. If the group does not evaluate its performance, it is less likely to improve and will never find out how it performed.

Groups evaluate their performance in a number of ways. Regular team meetings are useful for reporting on progress and identifying how well the group is working within its time lines. Adjustments to tasks may be necessary. More informal monitoring and evaluation takes place on a daily basis as the team members discuss their work and whether everything is going according to plan.

Evaluate performance as a group

Sometimes groups go back over their work schedule to identify the things they did well. This involves going through the tasks they identified at the start to see which ones met the goal they were trying to achieve. They also look to see which tasks did not go so well. The group then thinks of ways to do these tasks better next time.

When a group evaluates its performance, it should look at:

- whether the group achieved its goals and, if not, why not
- how the group worked together
- which tasks were completed well
- which tasks were difficult to complete, and why
- whether the group had the right resources
- whether tasks were allocated to group members appropriately
- whether the team updated its work schedule to reflect any changes to the group's priorities.

Evaluate individual performance in a group

A group can evaluate its performance at any stage. The more a group looks back over its performance, the better it will be able to plan for the next stage.

When a group is evaluating its performance, each member should think about whether:

- they could have done their own tasks more efficiently if the tasks had been planned differently
- they had (or had learned) the skills to complete the tasks they were allocated
- the tasks the group identified at the start achieved the team's goals
- the overall performance of the group could improve, and how this could be achieved.

4**Personal study**

You may have identified a career path or specific skills you require. Many employers grant leave with or without pay, or provide a training bonus, to enable people to complete learning programs. These are conducted in the learner's own time but may involve some office hours. Personal study is a great way to meet your individual career goals as well as to contribute to the goals of your workplace. If you have a clear idea of where you want to go with your career, you can work at developing the skills and knowledge you need to make sure you get there.

5**Work experience**

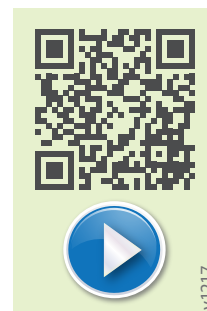
Work experience is a valuable way of gaining new skills. By working within an organisation, you have the opportunity to watch and learn from others around you. You may take part in work experience as part of a training course, or perhaps as an exchange within your workplace with a worker from another area or department. When you have completed a period of work experience, make sure you take the time to think back and reflect on what you have learned. Write some notes about the new skills and experiences you have gained and note down any other useful information.

6**Workplace skills assessment**

You and your group might conduct a skills assessment to identify areas in which you need further training. You can use your position description that outlines the skills required, or a copy of your industry's competency standards that describe the skills and knowledge needed for particular tasks.

Example: recognition of current competence

Max wants to demonstrate that he already has the skills needed for a computer course. He looks in his folio of previous work. He finds that he has examples of several pieces of completed work that demonstrate he has the skills that are to be covered during the course. He photocopies the information and presents it to the training organisation. He is awarded a certificate and a statement of results that shows his recognition of current competence in using the computer software that is covered in the course.



Volume

Some speakers are much louder in volume than others.

Accent

Some accents are more difficult to understand than others. Often this is to do with experience, and once you have listened to an accent for a while you will be able to understand it more readily.

Gesture

Sometimes people use many hand gestures when they speak. This is particularly seen in some European cultures.

Emotion

Some groups of people are more likely to have highly emotive ways of speaking. They laugh and cry easily, and are very demonstrative when they communicate.

Personal space

Some people tend to stand very close to others when they speak to them, while others prefer a much bigger distance between them and the person they are speaking to.

Speed of speech

Some speakers are naturally much faster at speaking than others. If someone speaks much more quickly than you are used to, it may take a while to tune in to their speech patterns so you can understand them.

Tips for communicating with someone with a disability

- Limit background noise and other distractions.
- Face towards the person, but still show respect for their personal space.
- Use the communication method they prefer to use.
- Don't avoid the communication entirely just because it is hard or different.
- Maintain eye contact and normal conversational habits of your own as you would in any other conversation.
- Don't finish a sentence for the person; wait for them to finish speaking themselves before you interrupt or speak yourself.
- Use nods, smiles and nonverbal indicators to show you understand.
- Don't pretend you understand if you don't.
- Never make a joke of someone you can't understand, or assume they are speaking that way for a laugh or because they are drunk or affected by drugs.

Written material

Most workplaces have brochures, catalogues and other documents that are written in English. Although commonly used, they can be a source of problems for workers and customers who do not speak English as a first language. Written material should be reviewed from time to time to check how easily a non-English speaker understands it. In some cases, it may be appropriate to have the material translated. This is particularly important for workplace forms, procedures and policies, as many of these are essential to the safe and effective operation of the workplace. A worker who cannot read the WHS policy may be in danger of a workplace accident because they do not have access to the same information as their colleagues. The employer may be at risk of a claim of failing to provide a safe workplace, as important information was not available to a worker from a different linguistic background.

To help make written material more accessible:

- use simple terms and plain English
- avoid jargon and colloquialisms
- avoid long sentences
- explain important terms in a separate section
- use pictures, diagrams and graphics
- use captions near pictures
- ask someone who has limited English skills to check the material for readability before it is printed.

Personality clashes

Sometimes there are people in workplaces who just cannot get along with each other. Sometimes these clashes are due to differences in age, gender, cultural background or social grouping. Sometimes it is just because they are incompatible. Below are some negative outcomes that can be the result of personality clashes.



- Constant disagreements
- Put-downs and negative comments
- A focus on negatives rather than positives
- A personality-based approach rather than one based on solutions
- Requests for transfers to other areas or departments
- Deliberate sabotage of activities and tasks
- Complaints made formally or informally about each other
- Unprofessional conduct

Example: incompatibility in the workplace

Mark and Phil do not get along. They disagree in meetings and always find fault with each other's work. They dislike being in each other's company and try to sit apart when they are in the same room. Their supervisor is trying to get them to work together harmoniously. She decides to set them a task where they work together with no input from any other team members. Unfortunately, her experiment fails, as Mark quickly comes to her to complain about Phil not doing his share of the task and Phil is unhappy about Mark's discriminatory behaviour during a meeting.

3D

Seek assistance when difficulties arise

Developing effective workplace relationships includes learning how to work cooperatively with your manager, supervisor and colleagues either individually or within a group. If you are comfortable and confident enough to discuss ideas and suggestions with work colleagues, you should be able to approach them when a difficulty arises or you encounter a problem you cannot solve yourself. If you have difficulties at work, use a step-by-step problem-solving approach to try to fix the problem. Otherwise, you may need to change your plans or renegotiate your responsibilities.

If a problem arises, stop and think about what the problem is and how you can go about fixing it. A useful strategy to make sure things get fixed is to focus on the solution rather than the problem. There is always time later to talk about why things went wrong, but first you should try to get things back on track.

Difficulties that may need manager or supervisor input:

- Equipment breakdowns, such as computer crashes
- Not enough resources such as a shortage of computers or stationery
- Being given extra responsibilities due to a change in the group's goals
- Something being mislaid
- Being unable to contact somebody you need to talk to
- Lack of time to complete the task before the deadline
- A need to change your plans

A five-step approach to solve difficulties at work

Use this five-step approach to solve a problem at work where you need to ask someone for assistance.

Five-step approach in problem solving

1. Recognise that there is a problem.
2. Consider what needs to happen to fix the problem.
3. Ask someone to help you with a solution.
4. Carry out the solution as a team.
5. Talk about what went wrong and what could be done to make sure it does not happen again.