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**SWOT analysis**

A SWOT analysis is a summarised view of an organisation's current position, specifically relating to its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

**Long-term objectives**

Long-term business objectives are the measurable targets to be achieved within a certain time frame, usually within three to five years.

**Short-term goals**

Short-term goals convert an organisation's long-term objectives into specific performance targets spanning across a one- to two-year period.

**Action plans**

Action plans are specific statements explaining how short-term goals will be achieved. Action plans will be contained in an organisation's operational plans and are usually executed by work teams or individual employees within one to two years.

**Scorecard**

Depending on the type of organisation, scorecards may be used to report the data analysing specific key performance indicators (KPIs) and measure an organisation's performance against monthly, bi-annual or annual targets.

**Financial position**

An assessment of an organisation's financial position will be based on historical records and future projections. It can be used to help plan and predict future workplace relations strategies and enables the effective management of workplace relations budget requirements and the organisation's overall financial performance.

## Industrial action

Industrial action is taken by employers or employees to settle a workplace dispute about conditions of employment. Industrial action includes any worker activity that restricts or delays work.

Under workplace relations legislation, industrial action can be legally taken when bargaining for a new registered agreement is unsuccessful. This is known as protected industrial action. For industrial action to be protected by law, existing agreements must have passed nominal expiry dates, parties must have genuinely tried to reach an agreement, and industrial action notice requirements must be met.

Industrial action has a significant impact on workplace relations performance as the downtime causes productivity and profitability levels to decrease. Workplace relations professionals must ensure that identified workplace relations issues are resolved to avoid industrial action and achieve strategic and operational objectives. Workplace relations strategies and policies developed should reduce or minimise the workplace relations performance gaps over the short to medium term (for example, 12 months to five years).

Industrial action may include:

- work bans – where employees decide not to perform certain work activities
- strike actions – a work cessation caused by the mass refusal of employees to work
- go-slow campaigns – where employees deliberately reduce the rate of production
- work-to-rule – where employees do no more than the minimum required by the rules of their contract or job description
- picketing – where workers physically strike outside a workplace
- stop-work meetings – where authorised meetings of employees occur without loss of pay
- lockouts by employers – where employers close worksites or premises and refuse entry to employees to work
- secondary boycotts – where unions put indirect industrial pressure on employers
- no work as directed, no pay – where employers refuse to pay employees if they do not perform the work they have been contracted or directed to do
- stand-downs – the suspension of employees without pay.

## Measure workplace relations performance

Developing and implementing a strong workplace relations strategy involves creating an environment that delivers what employees need now and in the future, to be satisfied and productive in their roles. To understand the existing capacity and performance levels of the workforce, organisations will need to set specific targets that measure workplace relations performance.

The performance standards, benchmarks or KPIs used to measure workplace relations performance should be decided on prior to the development of workplace relations strategies and policies to ensure performance standards are objective.

Performance standards should be clearly communicated to all employees, such as in job descriptions, performance management meetings, or other organisational communication strategies. Performance standards should be written in plain English using language and concepts appropriate to cultural differences.

## Example: analyse existing employee relations performance

Holly is the HR manager at Stringent Retail Operations Ltd and is responsible for analysing and measuring workplace relations performance across the organisation. Three years ago, Stringent Retail experienced a sudden increase in new customers. Although the increase brought in additional revenue, the demanding workload began having negative effects on employees.

An employee survey discovered that more than 60 per cent of the workforce reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress as a direct result of difficulties in trying to achieve a work-life balance. During the past twelve months, Stringent Retail has experienced its highest absenteeism rate with an average of ten sick days taken per employee. This resulted in lost productivity and decreased employee satisfaction levels.

Holly uses the following equations to calculate the number of days absent for employees in a 12 month period for the following reasons:



**Total paid and unpaid sick days (all employees) ÷ number of employees in the 12 month period = average number of sick days taken per employee**

**Total paid/unpaid days for leave for other reasons (all employees) ÷ number of employees in the 12 month period = average number of days taken for leave reasons per employee other than sick leave**

**Total number of employees that took leave (5–20 days) sick leave ÷ number of employees in the 12 month period = percentage of sick leave usage (5–20 days).**

Holly groups the percentage of sick leave usage into categories of 0 days, 1–5 days, 5–20 days and 20+ days. She includes both paid and unpaid sick leave in her results.

Recognising the negative impact on business, Holly sends a survey out to employees asking them to address their workplace relations performance issues. Based on the feedback received, and the employee absenteeism calculations made, Holly introduces a number of policies such as flexi-time, reduced hours and reduced overtime, as part of the organisation's commitment towards a healthier and more balanced workplace.

A recent follow-up survey recorded increased levels of employee satisfaction and engagement and a 25 per cent reduction in the absenteeism rate.

### Analysing risks

Workplace relations professionals must determine the likelihood and potential impact of a risk. The likelihood of the risk occurring may be very likely, likely or unlikely. Some organisations may use different words such as 'expected' instead of 'very likely', 'probable' for 'likely' and 'improbable' for 'unlikely'. The consequences of the risk may be major, moderate or minor. Other rating terms commonly used are 'disastrous', 'severe', 'extreme', 'minimal' and 'negligible'.

## Evaluate risks

A risk assessment matrix can be used to evaluate a risk, where likelihood and impact is identified, to determine the level of the risk where these intersect on the matrix. High risks become the priorities for treatment, and may require the development of contingency plans. Moderate risks will need attention. Some low-level risks may be seen as a low priority because they can be resolved through routine procedures or practices. Workplace relations professionals must consider the likelihood and impact of any workplace relations service options and use a matrix like the one shown below to estimate the level of risk.

LIKELIHOOD	VERY LIKELY	Acceptable risk Medium	Unacceptable risk High	Unacceptable risk Extreme
	LIKELY	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Medium	Unacceptable risk High
	UNLIKELY	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Low	Acceptable risk Medium
IMPACT		MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR

## Treat risks

The objective of the risk management process is to eliminate or avoid the risk where possible.

Here are the five options for managing risks.

### Avoid the risk

Options to avoid risk include the following:

- do not become involved in activities that lead to the possibility of the risk eventuating
- outsource risk-related tasks to contractors or specialist providers
- discontinue practices that may realise the risk.

### Bargaining disputes

Bargaining disputes arise for a number of reasons but particularly where one party does not bargain in good faith. If a bargaining dispute exists and it cannot be resolved between the bargaining representatives, one or more of the representatives may apply to the FWC for assistance in resolving the dispute.

The FWC may issue a bargaining order in relation to the proposed agreement that will include:

- actions that the FWC requires to be taken
- actions that are not to be taken
- other matters that the FWC considers necessary to promote fair and efficient bargaining.

### Unable to reach agreement

Where parties are unable to reach agreement on the terms and conditions of a proposed enterprise agreement, a bargaining representative can make an application to the FWC for assistance.

The FWC can make a workplace determination, prescribing the terms and conditions for those employees to whom it applies. If there is a serious and sustained contravention of a bargaining order that has significantly undermines the bargaining process, the FWC can make a serious breach declaration.

Employees have the right to initiate industrial action when bargaining for a proposed enterprise agreement. The Fair Work Act prescribes strict rules that govern industrial action, including the rights, responsibilities and obligations of employers, employees and their organisations.

(Source: Fair Work Ombudsman, 2015)

## Employment contracts

An employment contract is an agreement between an employer and employee that outlines the terms and conditions of employment that are not covered by an award or enterprise agreement.

Employment contracts can be in writing or verbal. An employment contract cannot provide for less than the legal minimum set out in the NES, awards, enterprise agreements or other applicable registered agreements.

The rule is that employment contracts cannot make employees worse off than their minimum legal entitlements.



Employment contracts may include:

- duties and responsibilities of the employee
- codes of conduct that must be followed
- relevant organisational policies and procedures
- the grounds on which termination can occur without notice
- the period of notice that must be provided when an employee is terminated
- details relating to performance appraisal processes
- remuneration and benefits.

## Workers compensation

Workers compensation is a form of insurance payment made to eligible employees who have been injured at work or become sick as a result of their work.

All organisations in Australia are legally required to have workers' insurance in place. Workers compensation focuses on prevention and rehabilitation. Compensation can be paid due to a work-related injury, illness, fatality or, in some cases, property or environmental damage.

Legislation in each state and territory requires all Australian employers to take out a workers compensation insurance policy within a specified time frame after employing people. If a policy is not taken out, penalties may apply.

Employer responsibilities relating to workers compensation includes:

- ensuring employees understand and have access to workers compensation systems
- ensuring employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities under workers compensation legislation
- ensuring compliant reporting and record keeping of workplace incidents, accidents, injuries and damage
- providing official claim forms available to all employees
- processing all reports accurately and promptly
- ensuring that the system is managed by qualified personnel.

## Keep up to date

It is paramount that workplace relations professionals stay up to date with legislation and workplace regulations. This is done by subscribing to a variety of platforms. The following websites offer access to social media, such as Twitter, as a means to remain aware of changes that the organisation may need to address in the workplace.

To remain aware of legislative change, you might access the following:

- A search of the Australian Government website ABLIS (<https://ablis.business.gov.au/pages/home.aspx>) provides a detailed description of licenses and legal requirements for business in Australia based on industry.
- The Fair Work Ombudsman ([www.fairwork.gov.au/](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/)) and the Fair Work Commission ([www.fwc.gov.au/](http://www.fwc.gov.au/)) provide extensive information on an organisation's obligations under workplace relations legislation, including agreements and pay rates. A news and information section on the Fair Work Ombudsman's website highlights recent changes to legislation.
- The Australian Human Resources Institute's website (<http://www.hri.com.au/>) provides information on the impact of changes on HR practice. Consider also some the networking and workshop opportunities provided by the Institute to keep up to date on developments.



### Training

To ensure an organisation achieves its strategic and workplace relations objectives, it must provide employees with training and development opportunities. Employees should be encouraged to complete training programs and be offered incentives or rewards for doing so.

### Planning

Careful planning is required to effectively deal with and manage any workplace relations issues that arise within an organisation. Workplace relations policies should identify who is responsible for workplace relations implementation and contingency planning, and the types of specialists or external sources that can be accessed to provide professional advice. Workplace relations policies should be in place to effectively handle employee grievances and industrial conflict.

## Specifications of workplace relations strategies and policies

Workplace relations professionals should ensure that any workplace relations strategies or policies developed cover the following specifications.

Workplace relations strategy/policy specifications		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirmation of managerial support</li><li>• Required resources</li><li>• Documentation requirements</li><li>• Workplace relations compliance measures</li><li>• Risk assessment</li><li>• Strategy/policy implementation plan</li><li>• Dispute resolution procedures</li><li>• Strategy/policy monitoring and review process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific workplace relations objectives</li><li>• Timeline for action</li><li>• Communication plan</li><li>• Identification of relevant workplace relations issues</li><li>• Risk treatment plan</li><li>• Workplace relations performance measures</li><li>• Cost-benefit analysis techniques, ratios and formulas</li><li>• Mechanisms for obtaining employee feedback</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actions to be taken</li><li>• Responsibilities of relevant personnel</li><li>• Workplace relations legal and other obligations</li><li>• Identification of potential workplace relations risks</li><li>• Measures to eliminate or minimise workplace relations risks</li><li>• Grievance handling procedures</li><li>• System to ensure strategy/policy is being implemented</li><li>• Procedures for taking corrective action</li></ul>



### Investigative skills

Workplace relations professionals should possess investigative skills that enable them to research, analyse, verify and reconcile workplace relations issues in their organisation. Workplace relations professionals must be able to collect relevant data from a variety of sources and collate the information in a way that can be easily understood by others.

Investigative skills include:

- determining issues in dispute
- research
- data analysis
- drawing conclusions
- selecting appropriate courses of action
- making effective and timely decisions.

## Negotiation skills

In workplace relations, negotiation is the process of coming to terms and conditions of employment and, in doing so, getting the best deal possible. Negotiation involves bargaining, which means reaching the most advantageous position in discussion with another party, through a process of offer and counter-offer.

Negotiation takes place when two parties meet to reach an agreement on a proposition which one party has put to another. For example, in pay negotiation, trade union representatives making a claim will define the target they would like to achieve, the minimum they will accept, and the opening claim they believe is mostly likely to achieve their target. The employer will define the target settlements they would like to achieve, the maximum they are prepared to concede, and the opening offer that will provide them with sufficient room to move to reach their target.

To prepare for and effectively negotiate workplace relations issues, workplace relations professionals should possess particular skills. Negotiation and bargaining skills are shown here.

### Analytical ability

The capacity to assess the factors affecting the negotiating positions and strategies of both parties

### Empathy

Developing and using emotional intelligence by putting oneself in the other party's shoes

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## Topic 2

# Implement employee relations policies and plans

The ideal workplace relations situation is a positive organisational culture that actively supports the development of its workforce. To successfully implement workplace relations plans, strategies and policies, the management team must have the cooperation and support of employees.

Workplace relations professionals can select from a variety of methods to ensure effective implementation of workplace relations plans, strategies and policies. Such methods include developing an implementation plan that turns strategies into actions in order to accomplish specific objectives. They also cover analysing the risks involved in implementing the strategies, and developing contingency plans to respond to these. Another method is providing employees with opportunities to access training and development programs that support workplace relations plans, strategies and policies.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Develop an employee relations implementation plan
- 2B Arrange training and development to support the employee relations plan
- 2C Undertake employee relations activities to agree on changes required by the implementation plan
- 2D Document procedures for addressing grievances and conflict
- 2E Communicate key issues about procedures for addressing grievances
- 2F Review employee relations policies and plans

## 2B

## Arrange training and development to support the employee relations plan

It is essential that the workplace relations implementation plan provides employees with the opportunity to access training and development that allows them to more easily adapt to the new policies.

The effectiveness of training and development is enhanced when training activities are preceded by comprehensive analysis. This allows workplace relations professionals to demonstrate how training and development contributes to the objectives contained in the workplace relations implementation plan.

Training and support initiatives should be as cost-effective as any other functional activity within the organisation.



### Assess training needs

The identification of training needs, and the translation of those needs into training objectives, provides direction and purpose for learning and development activities.

A training needs analysis (TNA) is a process used to assess employee capabilities against required competencies. A successful TNA will establish what is needed, by whom, when and where, to ensure training objectives can be determined.

It is counter-productive to offer training to employees who do not need it, or to offer the wrong kind of support. A TNA will ensure that training resources are used effectively.

A TNA addresses the following questions:

- What training support is needed and why?
- Where is training needed?
- Who needs training?
- How will training be provided?
- How much will training cost?
- What will be the impact on the organisation?

### Conduct a training needs analysis

Workplace relations professionals should conduct a training needs analysis (TNA) to measure the knowledge and skills currently held by employees responsible for implementing workplace relations plans, strategies and policies. Learning and development activities should be specifically designed to target any identified knowledge or skills gaps.

The components of a training needs analysis are shown below.

#### Training needs analysis

##### 1

##### **Determine desired outcomes**

Clarify training goals and expected outcomes. Training goals should align with service level and organisational objectives.

... continued

<b>5. Trainer's knowledge</b> How well did the trainer know the materials?	1 Minimally	2	3 Satisfactorily	4	5 Expertly
<b>6. Trainer's instructional ability</b> Apart from the trainer's knowledge of the subject, how well did they impart understanding?	1 Poor	2	3 Satisfactory	4	5 Excellent
<b>7. Participant interest</b> How much interest did the training program generate?	1 None	2	3 Some	4	5 A great deal
<b>8. Training value</b> What value will this program be to you in your job?	1 Useless	2	3 Somewhat helpful	4	5 Highly valuable
<b>9. Facilities</b> How would you rate the facilities?	1 Unsatisfactory	2	3 Satisfactory	4	5 Excellent
<b>10. Resources</b> How would you rate the training and assessment resources/materials?	1 Useless	2	3 Somewhat helpful	4	5 Highly valuable
<b>11. Overall</b> How would you rate this training program?	1 Unsatisfactory	2	3 Satisfactory	4	5 Excellent
<b>General comments:</b>					
What did you most enjoy about this training program?					
What did you enjoy the least about this training program?					
What suggestions would you make to improve this training program?					

continued ...

## Right to representation

All employees should be advised of their right to seek advice or support from trade unions, health and safety representatives, colleagues, government agencies, external consultants, legal advisors and other specialists in making their grievance.

The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) requires that a dispute resolution clause in an enterprise agreement must:

- set out a procedure that requires or allows the FWC or some other independent person to settle the dispute
- allow for the representation of employees covered by the agreement when there is a dispute (for example, by another employee or union representative).

The Fair Work Regulations 2009 contain a model dispute resolution clause that can be used to develop a dispute resolution term in an enterprise agreement.

Employers must fully recognise a union for the purposes of collective bargaining when pay and conditions of employment are jointly agreed between an employer and a trade union. Partial recognition occurs when employers restrict trade unions to representing their members on issues arising from employment.



## Dispute resolution referrals

Where a workplace issue cannot be resolved through internal grievance resolution procedures, the matter then becomes an industrial dispute about matters pertaining to the employment relationship and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) procedures are sought.

The aim of dispute resolution is to resolve differences between an employer and a trade union. The aim of collective bargaining is to reach agreement, preferably to the satisfaction of both parties. Dispute resolution or conflict management procedures provide for various stages of 'failure to agree' and often include a clause providing for some form of dispute resolution in the event of the procedure being exhausted.

The FWC may settle a dispute via mediation or conciliation, or by making a recommendation or expressing an opinion. Where it is agreed by the parties, the FWC may also deal with the matter by arbitration and make a binding decision regarding the dispute.

The FWC may only deal with disputes if an application has been made to the FWC by a party to the dispute.



## Develop grievance resolution procedures

A fair and balanced grievance resolution process is important for the effective operation of any business. The purpose of grievance resolution procedures is to provide a framework in which employment issues can be discussed, decisions can be reviewed, all relevant facts can be gathered and a fair, equitable and reasonable outcome achieved.

... continued

<b>Objectives</b>
<p>The objectives of this communications plan are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raise awareness of the organisation's grievance resolution procedures</li> <li>• raise awareness of the legal rights and obligations of all stakeholders in resolving workplace conflict</li> <li>• change attitudes in regard to workplace grievances and conflict</li> <li>• promote positive working relationships and a consultative workplace environment</li> <li>• gain the support of stakeholders in implementing grievance resolution procedures</li> <li>• educate stakeholders on workplace grievance resolution.</li> </ul>
<b>Target audience</b>
<p>The target audience includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all employees across the organisation, including permanent and fixed-term, full-time, part-time and casual workers, and employees who are currently on leave of any kind</li> <li>• specific business units across the organisation</li> <li>• other stakeholders such as suppliers, contractors and clients.</li> </ul>
<b>Key messages</b>
<p>As part of the organisation's legal and ethical responsibility to deal with all workplace grievances and disputes, the employer commits to implementing effective, accessible grievance resolution procedures for employees and other workplace participants that conveys the organisation's commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking all workplace grievances and complaints seriously</li> <li>• preventing the escalation of grievances and complaints by maintaining positive working relationships</li> <li>• ensuring that grievances and complaints are dealt with consistently and in a timely manner</li> <li>• reducing the likelihood of external agency involvement which can be time-consuming, costly and damaging to the organisation's reputation</li> <li>• alerting the organisation to patterns of unacceptable conduct and highlighting the need for prevention strategies in particular areas</li> <li>• reducing the risk of an employer being held liable under employment or other legislation, including anti-discrimination and EEO</li> <li>• helping to minimise the harm suffered by the individual making the grievance or complaint</li> <li>• reducing the organisation's risk of being held to have treated the alleged respondent unfairly, such as an unfair dismissal claim.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication methods</b>
<p>The grievance resolution procedures will be communicated via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a written policy and procedures document made available via the intranet</li> <li>• induction program</li> <li>• ongoing workplace training</li> <li>• on the company's website.</li> </ul>

continued ...

## Workplace relations scorecard surveys

HR/workplace relations scorecard surveys measure the performance of workplace relations service providers in delivering a wide range of services and advice. Workplace relations scorecard surveys determine how well workplace relations are aligned with organisational objectives and identify what the organisation needs to do to enhance employee satisfaction levels and workplace relations performance.

Workplace relations scorecards should include 'hard' measurements, such as employee turnover rates, number of training courses available or employee absenteeism levels. Workplace relations scorecards should also include a range of 'soft' measurement data that can only be gathered by asking employees about their opinions and suggestions on workplace relations plans and initiatives.

Conducting anonymous online workplace relations scorecard surveys is a useful, efficient and cost-effective way of gathering information and insight into the effectiveness of workplace relations strategies, policies and services. The assessment identifies the strengths of workplace relations services and areas in which the organisation needs to make improvements.

### The benefits of using workplace relations scorecard surveys

- Reinforces distinction between technical workplace relations (outcomes focused on workplace relations efficiency) and strategic workplace relations (outcomes that achieve organisational objectives)
- Focuses on leading indicators that drive the implementation of the organisation's business objectives
- Assesses the contribution of workplace relations personnel to strategic implementation and bottom line impact
- Promotes flexibility and change

## Interviews

Interviews allow workplace relations professionals to obtain employee feedback by directly asking a respondent questions, while clarifying any questions or answers at the same time.

Interviews can be carried out face-to-face, over the telephone or through an online discussion forum. In highly controlled interviews, questions should be designed to elicit short specific responses. In less controlled interviews, questions can be designed to elicit detailed answers and encourage discussion about associated issues.

The person being interviewed must give permission for their answers to be recorded and should be provided with a copy of the interview to confirm their answers are true and correct.



## Focus groups

Focus groups can be useful in uncovering information and suggestions that employees may be reluctant to disclose. The focus group interview is loosely structured and designed to encourage free-flowing discussion.



## Summary

1. To successfully implement workplace relations plans, strategies and policies, the management team must have the cooperation and support of employees.
2. An implementation plan is a formal management tool used to illustrate, in detail, the critical steps necessary to implement workplace relations strategies and policies, measure a group of strategies and policies, or assist organisations to manage and monitor implementation effectively.
3. The effectiveness of training and development is enhanced when training activities are preceded by comprehensive analysis. This allows workplace relations professionals to demonstrate how training and development contributes to the objectives contained in the workplace relations implementation plan.
4. Workplace relations professionals are responsible for consulting with employee representatives, employer organisations, government agencies and external consultants to renegotiate agreements or make necessary changes to workplace relations strategies and policies.
5. Grievances and disputes may be resolved by procedures provided for in a collective agreement, an employment contract, or by other mechanisms established by an employer.
6. A communications plan will deal with what information an organisation wants to provide to its employees, how it wants to provide it, to whom, and in what time frame. Provision should also be made for employees to provide feedback, ask questions or express concerns about the information conveyed.
7. The workplace relations policies and procedures review process should centre on gathering and analysing the opinions, queries, suggestions and concerns of employees implementing workplace relations strategies in the organisation.



**Verbal communication**

When speaking, be patient, polite and use suitable industry terminology, avoiding jargon or colloquial language.

**Build rapport**

Build rapport by showing empathy, interest and understanding in your conversations.

**Language differences**

Accommodate for language differences by obtaining a translator or using technology to translate business communications.

**Group perceptions**

When interacting with a person who is part of a group, be aware of your susceptibility to stereotype, as this could lead to false or negative assumptions about the individual.

**Negatively biased tendencies**

Be aware of negatively biased tendencies you may have and make a conscious effort to learn more about a particular group.

**Seek different perspectives**

Where appropriate, seek input from people representing diverse groups or perspectives during decision-making processes.

**Request feedback**

Request feedback as to any potential patterns of preference you may be displaying in your communication technique.

### Alleviate workplace stress

Workplace stress refers to the adverse reactions or responses that occur when the demands of a job do not match the resources, needs or abilities of employees. While some level of stress is expected in the workplace, unnecessary or excessive stress has the potential to hinder a person's productivity or ability to perform in their role. Managers should learn to identify and alleviate any potential workplace stressors that could escalate into workplace conflict or disputes. Managers can alleviate workplace stress by using an open and honest communication style, maintaining an open door policy, identifying and addressing negative attitude or behaviours, taking steps to improve work practices, or delegating responsibilities among team members.

### Example: identify and/or eliminate, sources of conflict or grievance

Ahmed has just been promoted to project manager in a large oil and gas company. The team Ahmed manages is responsible for planning and executing a high-cost natural gas project in North-Western Australia. Ahmed is in constant communication with his team members and carefully monitors their responsibilities and work tasks to ensure they maintain reasonable workloads. Ahmed maintains an open door policy and encourages his team members to approach him with any potential issues or concerns they may have relating to the project, or to work practices.



To maintain positive working relationships, Ahmed arranges weekly team meetings off-site at a local coffee shop, for team members to debrief and discuss how they can help each other to achieve team goals. Ahmed finds that during these meetings, team members often discuss issues they have identified as being potentially damaging to the team's success.

Working together, Ahmed and his team members develop strategies they could implement to eliminate threats to productivity, before they arise. Team members also discuss and support each other to change or alter work practices accordingly. One of Ahmed's team members, Maria, has suddenly taken extended leave to care for an immediate family who is suffering a severe illness. Ahmed immediately meets with his team members to equally distribute Maria's responsibilities between them, until she returns to work.

### Practice task 13

1. Describe two types of workplace conflict.

*continued ...*

**3**

**Yielding – lose-win**

Lose-win strategies result in situations in which one party is dissatisfied and the other is satisfied. One party withdraws or makes a number of concessions while the other party wins.

Conceding a point that is not vital to you but is important to the other party is valuable in ongoing negotiations.

**4**

**Compromising – lose-lose**

Lose-lose strategies result in situations where the objectives of both parties are too rigid, or when both parties are unable to compromise, problem-solve, or are unaware of the opportunity to do so.

Both parties forgoing their idea outcomes, settling for an outcome that is moderately satisfying to each participant.

**5**

**Inaction**

Buying time to think about the proposal, gathering more information or deciding on next tactics.

## Negotiation approaches

As well as selecting a strategy, managers and workplace relations professionals should consider how they will approach the issue being negotiated. There are three key approaches to negotiations: hard, soft and principled negotiation. Many experts consider the third option – principled – to be best practice.

Negotiation approaches are described below.

**The hard approach**

The hard approach involves contending by using extremely competitive bargaining techniques.

**The soft approach**

The soft approach involved yielding, where one party tries hard to meet the interests of the other party and forgoes their own interests.

### Schedules

Schedules may be used by managers and workplace relations professionals to determine how much time they have to implement workplace relations agreements and record the activities that need to be carried out. Tasks are prioritised and sequenced in a logical order for completion.

### Flow charts

A flow chart is a useful tool for visually demonstrating how workplace relations agreements should be implemented in the workplace. Each step in the implementation process is summarised into boxes or circles and linked with arrows to identify the order in which tasks should be completed. There are a number of computer applications and programs that managers and workplace relations professionals can use to develop flow charts.

## Example: implement agreements

This example illustrates an action plan used to implement an agreement relating to workplace diversity.

<b>Plan title</b>	Workplace diversity action plan
<b>Aim:</b>	To create a workplace that encourages and supports equity and fairness and eliminates all forms of discrimination, harassment and bullying.
<b>Objectives:</b>	The objective of this agreement is to integrate workplace diversity principles into the performance management process.
<b>Legal environment:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i> (Cth)</li><li>• <i>Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Act 2009</i> (Cth)</li><li>• <i>Age Discrimination Act 2004</i> (Cth)</li><li>• <i>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986</i> (Cth)</li><li>• <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (Cth)</li><li>• <i>Fair Work Act 2009</i> (Cth)</li></ul>
<b>Manager:</b>	John Smith

*continued ...*