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Topic 1

Identifying work tasks

Most workplaces have staff organised in teams to support the achievement of business goals.

There are several different types and structures of teams, each with their own set of characteristics. As a team member, you should be given a clear explanation of your role and responsibilities, and the work tasks you will be required to perform. You will need to be organised and able to prioritise your tasks so they can be completed in a timely fashion.

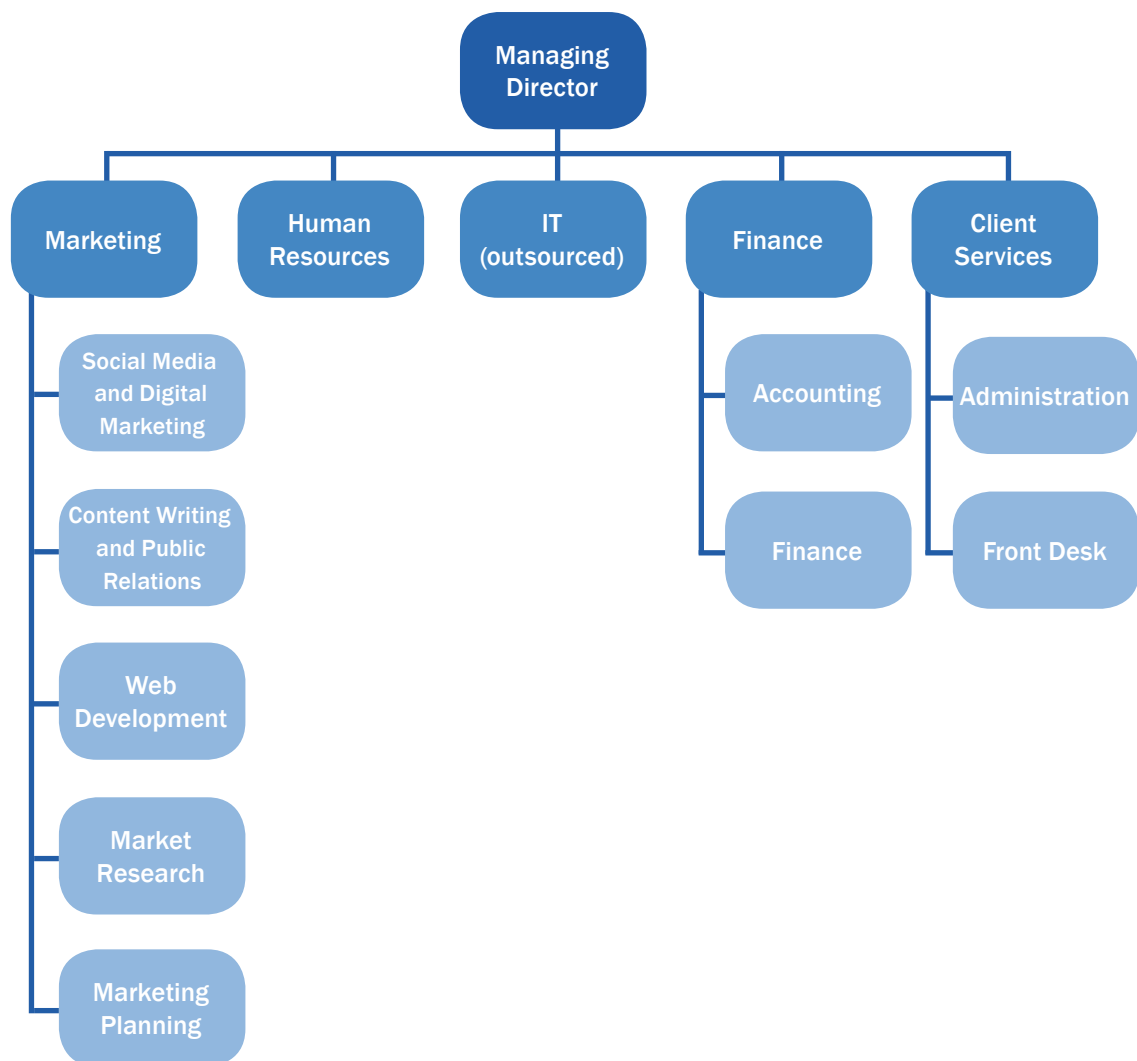
In this topic you will learn about:

- 1A Working in a team
- 1B Prioritising work tasks

Organisational structure

The structure of an organisation outlines the reporting lines and the arrangement of different departments.

Most organisations have a structure that may look similar to a family tree. This example is a simple organisational chart for a marketing company where the teams work in a department of the organisation, such as the web development team.



Organisational culture

Work culture refers to how staff in an organisation behave, what they value and how they conduct business.

Understanding the organisational culture of your workplace is essential to working to the best of your abilities. In some organisations it is a written and formalised statement about the environment the business wants for its employees, such as high performance, collaboration and respect for each other. In a less formal workplace, the work culture is based on unwritten rules that help colleagues bond and carry out their work.

Many aspects of an organisation's environment contribute to the culture, such as leadership styles, values, interactions and relationships, behaviours and attitudes. A company's policies, procedures and codes of conduct provide direction and guidelines for staff so they can operate in a way that reinforces a positive work culture.

An organisational culture includes the elements outlined below.

Artefacts	Values	Assumptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ceremonies and rituals, such as celebrating the birthday of a team member • Awards and symbols, such as a certificate for a job well done • Stories about past events and experiences told by existing employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical beliefs • Type of leadership from the top • Accountability for individual and corporate action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumptions about what the organisational culture is from its employees • Actual behaviours and values that have not emerged or become visible

There are many different types of organisational culture and many are unique to the organisation. Here are four examples.

Market

The organisation is result-driven and focused on achieving its goals.

Hierarchy

The organisation has a very formalised, stable and top-heavy structure with senior management.

Adhocracy

The organisation values an innovative and flexible work environment.

Clan

Employees are very close to each other and feel part of a family.



Topic 2

Contributing effectively to team goals

'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.' This African proverb is relevant to working in a team.

A team works towards achieving common goals. To facilitate this process, you will have to contribute ideas and information to the team, and share your knowledge and skills to increase the chances of success. You will need to support each other in the process.

One way to do this is to be an active participant in team planning discussions. Share your ideas and skills to provide feedback to assist with the planning effort.

In this topic you will learn about:

- 2A Contributing to teamwork
- 2B Sharing knowledge and skills

2A

Contributing to teamwork

Team goals are objectives that the team sets around work performance.

They provide directions both for your work and for the workload of your team. With clear goals there is less chance of confusion about what needs to be done. Goals provide targets and can motivate and inspire collaboration among team members to reach those goals.

Before you can begin to plan your work, consider:

- What goals are you working toward?
- What is your role and what are your responsibilities?

Regardless of the industry you work in or the nature of your responsibilities, you will always have goals and objectives that must be met.



Different types of goals

Often, your work goals will lead towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the organisation as a whole.

Organisational goals can come from the following sources.

Strategic goals

- Broad goals for targets the business hopes to achieve.
- Can include short-term goals (to be achieved within a year) and long-term goals (to be achieved within a five- to 10-year period).

Operational/functional goals of the department

- Each department sets its own operational goals to support the achievement of strategic goals.

3A

Communicating clearly and respectfully

Effective communication is one of the most important skills in an organisation.

It allows companies to be productive and operate successfully. Information must be consistently and accurately relayed up and down the reporting lines within an organisation.

Effective communication within the team is just as important. The way people communicate may need to be adapted to suit the team or individual team members. This will help to ensure a respectful and harmonious work environment.



Types of communication

In every industry or occupation, communication occurs continuously through sharing information by writing, speaking, listening and responding in a variety of settings.

For communication to occur, there needs to be a sender and a receiver. The message will be sent via the voice, email or body language and it is then decoded by the receiver. There can be obstacles that prevent the message from being understood.

Communication can occur in a variety of ways, including:

- in a face-to-face private conversation
- over the phone
- via email
- via videoconferencing
- during a discussion in a meeting
- online
- in a written letter or report.

Each of these is likely to involve one or more of the following forms of communicating.

Verbal

Speaking allows people to interact with one another and articulate ideas quickly. Listening is an essential part of effective communication.

Non-verbal

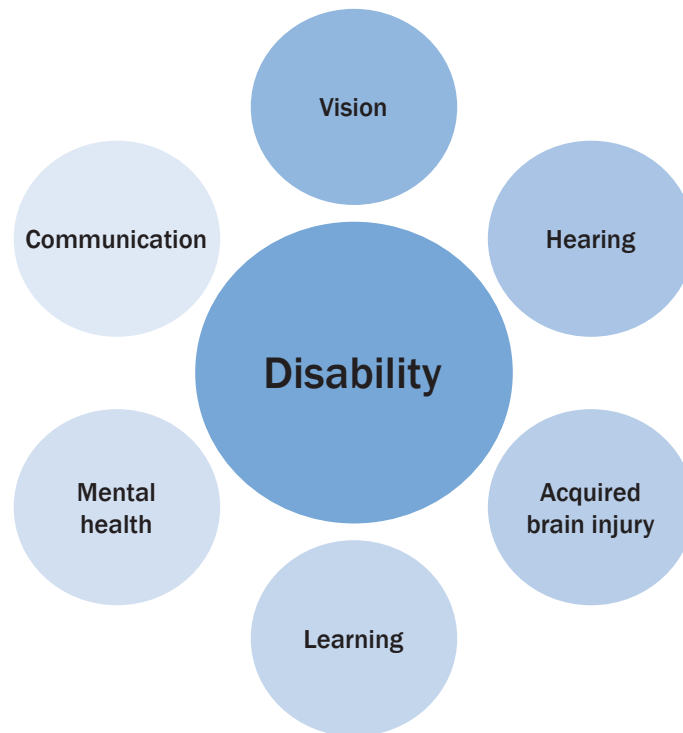
Involves body posture, facial expressions and gestures. When used in conjunction with effective verbal communication, you can add passion to your language. You can also perceive a person's emotional state.

Disability

Every employee is protected against discrimination based on disability.

Workplaces must provide employees who have a disability with an environment that can support them in their work-life activities. Many people in Australian workplaces have physical needs or a disability. For example, individuals may have a physical, sensory or intellectual disability or may experience cognitive impairment due to a disease or condition.

Disabilities may relate to one or more of the following areas.



Some people are unable to hear or verbally communicate. They may use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) strategies, such as using pictures to represent words or sentences, a machine that works with symbols or an electronic device that speaks for them. There are also aids that can assist people to use their computer, including:

- headsticks
- light pointers
- modified or alternate keyboards
- switches activated by pressure, sound or voice
- touch screens
- special software, including voice-to-text software.

The organisation must ensure all staff have appropriate channels to communicate effectively. When speaking with a person with a disability, make sure you focus on the person, not their disability. You can show your support by offering help, but the individual may want to do things on their own and may not want assistance.

Tips for seeking feedback

- Let your team leader or colleagues know you'd like to receive feedback so they have time to prepare.
- Specify the areas on which you would like feedback. You can even have a set of questions pre-prepared.
- Types of questions you could ask include:
 - How do you think I could communicate better?
 - How would you approach this if you were me?
 - Why do you think I struggle with this task?
 - What aspects of my work do you think I could improve on?

Tips for receiving feedback

- Listen actively, paying attention to the person and what they are saying.
- Be appreciative and respectful to the person giving you feedback.
- Ask questions to clarify information.
- Reflect on the feedback you have received and what you can learn from it.

Example

Requesting feedback

Joel has been working at an engineering company for six months. The office is very busy and his boss has little time to assess Joel's progress in the job. Joel has received a number of supportive comments, particularly after solving software problems or locating missing files. However, Joel needs more specific feedback to become more efficient and develop his skills.

He decides to make a form, shown below, giving a list of his tasks, with a column where the level of satisfactory performance for each task can be estimated. He distributes the form to his colleagues. The concrete, easily measurable parameters he has used will allow him to compare his performance and check his progress.

I would appreciate your assistance with providing me feedback about my performance. Please spend a few minutes to complete this form and return it to my desk by Monday 6 September. Please nominate a number from 1–5 next to each task to indicate your level of satisfaction with my work, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

Thank you.

- Joel