

Student workbook

BSBWOR203

Work effectively with others

­

**TAFE NSW would like to pay our respect and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Land, Rivers and Sea. We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Elders, both past and present of all Nations.**

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# Icon legends

| Icons | Descriptions |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Practice activity**  Learning activities are the tasks and exercises that assist you in gaining a clear understanding of the content in this workbook. It is important for you to undertake these activities, as they will enhance your learning.  Activities can be used to prepare you for assessments. Refer to the assessments before you commence so that you are aware which activities will assist you in completing your assessments. |
|  | **Collaboration**  Whether you discuss your learning in an online forum or in a face-to-face environment discussions allow you to create and consolidate new meaningful knowledge. |
|  | **Self-check**  A self-check is an activity that allows you to assess your own learning progress. It is an opportunity to determine the levels of your learning and to identify areas for improvement. |
|  | **Readings (Required and suggested)**  The required reading is referred to throughout this Student workbook. You will need the required text for readings and activities.  The suggested reading is quoted in the Student workbook, however you do not need a copy of this text to complete the learning. The suggested reading provides supplementary information that may assist you in completing the unit. |

# Introduction

Working effectively with others is essential to your success in most if not all job roles you’re likely to be engaged in. This workbook will help you to develop the skills and knowledge you need to work cooperatively with others and deal effectively with issues, problems, and conflict. It’s assumed you’re currently exposed to working with routine tasks and already have a basic knowledge and understanding of working in a team under supervision.

Topic 1

Develop effective  
workplace  
relationships

# Topic 1: Develop effective workplace relationships

## Mission and vision statements

Each organisation has values, goals and objectives. These are put into practice by means of strategies, policies, procedures and so on.

Organisations differ in many ways. There are private organisations both large and small whose main goal is financial gain. There are large government organisations with complex infrastructures, whose purpose is to provide a service to the public, for example, health services, education and law enforcement. There are also community organisations that provide services and facilities to their members. Whatever the organisation, there will be a central purpose to its existence.

### The organisation’s mission

The organisation’s mission is a statement about the organisation’s purpose, that is, why it exists. The way the organisation is structured helps to support this mission.

### A mission statement

A mission statement will explain the organisation’s basic purpose or role. Some things that a mission statement may include are to:

* produce quality products
* be a market leader
* be innovative
* create a qualified leading-edge workforce.

### Examples of mission statements

Here are some examples of mission statements:

*Our mission is to create information technology products that advance knowledge and improve the effectiveness of the organisation and its people.*

*Our mission is to be the insurance partner of choice by fulfilling the goals and aspirations of our customers.*

*Our mission is to enhance the lives of the people of NSW by driving priorities, brokering outcomes and delivering programs and services.*

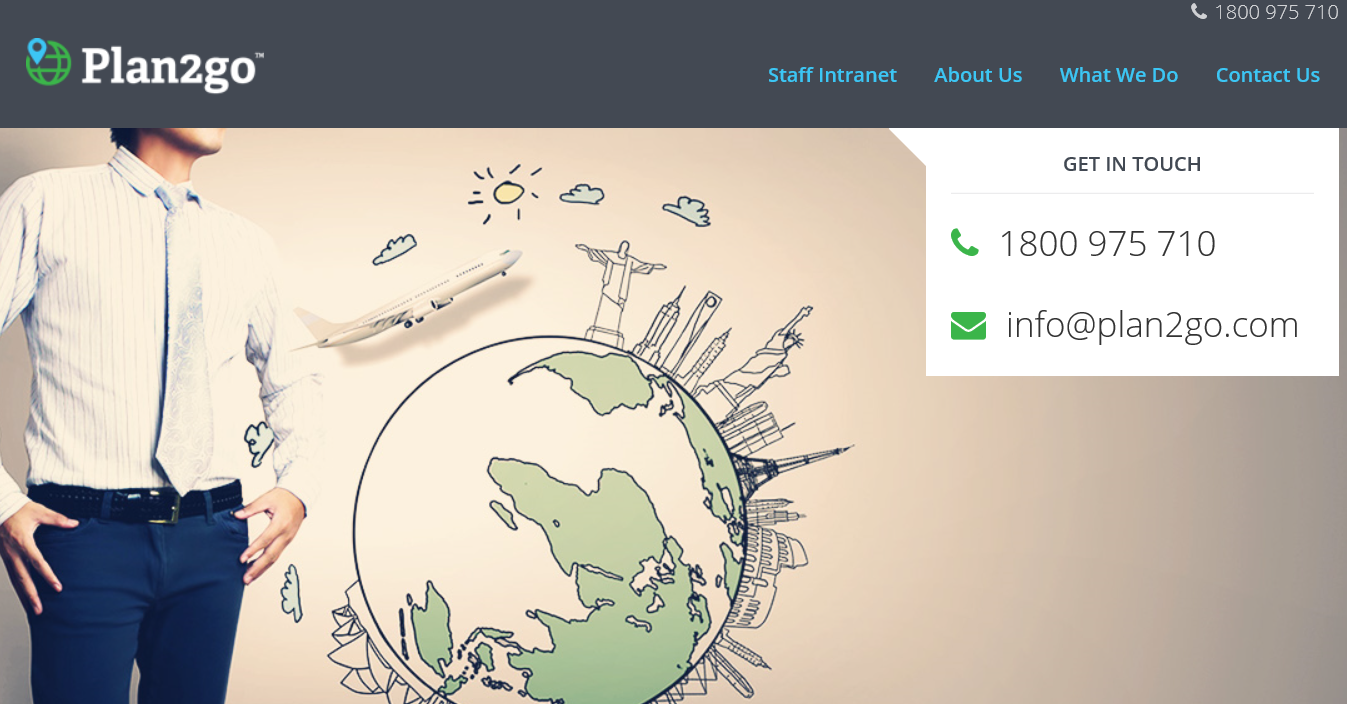
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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 1: Plan2go

*(Time to complete approx. 30 minutes).*

Plan2go is an online, simulated workplace that promotes travel services and develops technology solutions.

* Go the [Plan2go](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/) website and log on with your TAFE username and password. This may work better in **Google Chrome**.
* Navigate to the **Staff Intranet**.
* Click on the different links to become familiar with the website.



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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 2: Mission statement

*(Time to complete approx. 20 minutes).*

Plan2go has a vision and mission statement on their website.

Open the [Vision & Mission](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/about-us/mission-and-goals/) page. Read through the Mission statement. Fill in the missing words:

Plan2go is the place 2go for clients who expect \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to all travel and event needs. We are the place 2go for market leading travel and event \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, enabling corporate travellers and event goers to maximise business opportunities. We are the place 2go for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and we never compromise on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The possibilities are endless when you Plan2go.

## Values and culture

### What do you value?

Everyone has personal values that are guiding principles for how they behave. Do you know your own values? Do you understand what it is you value? Did you know that you also hold personal workplace values?

The organisation you work for has its own set of values. Organisational values are the things that the organisation considers important like honesty, loyalty, fairness, merit-based employment, etc. Those who work within the organisation are expected to behave in a manner that reflects these values.

An organisational culture is then based on such values. Culture refers to the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that define who the organisation is. For example, a culture of openness means that an organisation expects its managers and staff to be open, honest and direct in all of its dealings.

This attitude determines everything that happens in the organisation.

Here is a statement of one organisation’s values:

Our values are to:

* provide equal access to our services
* value our clients
* act with integrity, honesty and accountability, and in a professional way
* respect the value of our people’s work
* communicate consistently and effectively.

This organisation would expect their employees to:

* Teach all their customers with respect and value their business
* Be honest and act in a professional way
* Treat their co-workers with respect and dignity
* Have good communication skills.



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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 3: Values

*(Time to complete approx. 30 minutes).*

1. Plan2go have listed their values in their strategic plan as follows:

*We are unique. We are flexible. We are connected. We are experts. We are responsible.*

If you worked for Plan2go, how do you think they would expect you to act in the workplace?

Table 1: Activity 3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Would you do this? | Yes or No |
| Be the only person who works there | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |
| Be open to new ideas and opportunities | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |
| Operate as an effective team member | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |
| Work long hours without pay | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |
| Be knowledgeable about your job | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |
| Follow the workplace policies and procedures | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |
| Be professional, polite and courteous | 🞏 Yes 🞏 No |

2. Values are something we believe in. **Reflect** on your own values. **Discuss** these with your classmates or facilitator. Make a list of the group’s personal values.

*These could include things like being punctual, respecting other people, helping elderly people, being polite, looking your best in public or being careful with money.*

### Organisational values, goals, and objectives

When you first start work, you should be given a copy of the policies and procedures that relate to your job by your supervisor. These policies outline the rules or guidelines that govern the behaviour of the employees in the organisation. The purpose is to establish a working environment that assists the business in attaining its goals and objectives. Law such as the Anti-discrimination Act and Work Health and Safety requirements may require organisation’s to have specific policies and they are used to increase efficiency and quality as well as to stop confusion over work practices. Procedures are set out in step or point form and provide guidance on how to achieve the policy statement.

In most workplaces, policies and procedures are kept electronically on a computer system or intranet so that employees can access the most up-to-date copy when required. If you have been given a paper copy make sure you have the most recent version.

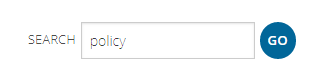
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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 4: Policies

*(Time to complete approx. 30 minutes).*

At Plan2go all policies and procedures are kept on their intranet.

Navigate to the [Staff Intranet](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/intranet/) and the **Document Library**.



Go to the search box and type the word: **policy**

Plan2go has a lot of company policies. Look through the list and locate some that you think relate to their **values and culture**. List them below and bring your notes to class for discussion.

## Organisational goals

Just as you have your own personal and career goals, your organisation sets its own goals for the direction of their business.

Goals are an important part of your personal planning process as they can help you meet and clarify the organisations expectations, they can improve your productivity, enhance your motivation and set targets for personal achievement.

Linking your goals to the goals of the organisation and formalising your goals in a plan is an important part of the annual performance review process. In order to achieve the mission, most organisations set goals which state what should be achieved by some specified time in the future, say in one year’s time. They are different from values because they state specific targets, which in theory, can actually be achieved within the time frame.

Goals can be concerned with profit, a service to customers, employee needs or social responsibilities, and they help to focus the efforts of staff.

Here’s an example of one organisation’s goals, as stated in their annual report:

Our goals are to:

* manage resources effectively
* achieve excellence in service delivery
* be a market leader
* achieve excellence and innovation.

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 5: Strategic plan

*(Time to complete approx. 15 minutes).*

Visit Plan2go and find the eight (8) goals they have listed in their [Strategic Plan](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/assets/document-library/Crew-Folders/Innovation-Crew/Plan2go-strategic-plan-v6.pdf). Write down three of the goals.

## Code of conduct

Did you know most organisations have a code of conduct?

A code of conduct is a written statement that embodies the values and culture of an organisation. It says ‘this is how we expect our staff to behave’ because this is what we hold dear, that is, these are our values and this is our culture.

Many organisations have a code of conduct, but not all do. It will often include information on ethical behaviour, responsibilities, values and expectations of the organisation and its staff.

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 6: Conduct

*(Time to complete approx. 30 minutes).*

Navigate to the Plan2go’s [Code of Conduct](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/intranet/document-library/?term=code+of+conduct).

Every employee has responsibilities including **personal conduct** and **professional conduct**. What are the other two (2) responsibiliites?

1

2

All employees must conduct themselves with care and diligence. This includes working with **confidentiality** and **privacy**.

List three other items which relate to how you conduct yourself.

1

2

3

The Code of Conduct describes the importance of ethical behaviour.In your own words, write a brief description of what you think ethical behavour is.

## Your duties and responsibilities

To work with others you need to have a clear understanding of your role and responsibilities and the responsibilities of those people you work with. When you start a new job you will be given a job description which will outline the specific and general responsibilities of your job role. You should read and understand this important document as it not only outlines your duties but who you report to, the hours you work, salary and entitlements of the position. These duties and responsibilities change as your skills develop and the work group or team evolves over time or when there are changes to the workplace structure.

A workgroup is a group of fulltime or part-time people who work together in the workplace. There may be many different workgroups with people moving between groups or a single workgroup where everyone is required to take on a wide range of tasks. Workgroups are often made up of people with different types of skills but by working together tasks can be achieved.

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 7: Position description

*(Time to complete approx. 20 minutes).*

Navigate to the Plan2go’s [position descriptions](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/intranet/document-library/?cat=6428). Open the description for the **Digital Media Cadet** and answer the following questions.

What department do they work in?

Who do they report to?

How long is the cadetship?

How many hours do they work per week?

How many hours do they spend doing training per week?

Do they have to be enrolled in a college or university course? 🞏 Yes 🞏 No

What do you think they would be doing on a day-to-day basis?

## Organisational charts

If you look at an organisational chart you can identify the different workgroups, for example management team, customer service team. These charts are a useful tool so you know the structure of the organisation and where your role fits into the organisation.

Have a look at Plan2go’s organisational chart. You can see that it is split up into different workgroups called ‘crews’ with each crew having a ‘leader’.

There are clear lines of communication for reporting and working.

Employees know who they report to and their duties. They speak directly to the first-line managers. Middle managers have the authority to direct first line managers and take responsibility for the direction and operations of the organisation. They receive direction for the operating policies of the organisation from the directors in top management.

As an employee of an organisation, you will also have duties and responsibilities over and above the general tasks associated with your role. These extra duties are designed to ensure an effective and safe workplace and promote good workplace relations. Most workplaces have a set of policies and procedures outlining what the organisation expects from its employees.

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 8: Organisational chart

*(Time to complete approx. 20 minutes).*

Navigate to and open the [organisational chart](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/intranet/document-library/?term=org+chart) for Plan2go.

In Activity 7, you should have identified that the **Digital Media Cadet** works in the **Creative Services department** (the orange line).

Who do you think they will be working with? Write down three people or their positions in the Creative Services department:

1

2

3

There are eight departments at Plan2go. Identify and list two of them:

1

2

## Promote cooperation and good relations

In the workplace, you will develop relationships both with people in the organisation and external to the organisation. It is important to communicate effectively as the interaction in these relationships needs to be positive and productive to build trust between the different parties.

To help build and promote good workplace relationships you will need to be flexible and adapt your thinking and behaviour to accommodate the values and beliefs of others. Understanding and knowing the people in your workgroup and their roles and responsibilities will enable you to be a more effective and efficient team member. To support your workgroup you will also need to show respect, commitment, reliability and cooperation in your dealings with other people.

Your attitude at work is important. If you are positive and cooperative you will get along with others and contribute to the overall atmosphere of the workplace. People understand if you have the occasional bad day but if you are negative all the time you may start having problems with others in your workgroup.

Meetings are another way for workgroups to develop positive relationships. They allow everyone to plan, share ideas and resolve issues. You may not agree with everything that is said or final decisions but it is important for you to be prepared to express your own ideas clearly and briefly. By cooperating and working together decisions can be made as a workgroup rather than an individual decision.



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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 9: Workplace relationship

*(Time to complete approx. 15 minutes).*

What do you think are important elements in a personal/family relationship and in a workplace relationship? *Example: trust, communication, cooperation, etc*.

Table 2: Activity 9

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Personal/family relationship | Workplace relationship |
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|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

## Time and resource constraints

As organisations strive to be more efficient and productive with less resources there is extra pressure to achieve workplace goals with fewer workers. In the workplace you need to think about how you use your time and resources wisely to ensure you are an effective member of the work group. If you work for more than one workgroup you need to carefully balance your workload to ensure one group does not dominate and you cannot complete tasks for the other workgroup.

An ability to prioritise tasks, clear communication and time management skills are needed so you don’t get overloaded with work. If you have a problem you need to let others in the workgroup know so the team can meet work objectives and goals.

Good time management will assist you to complete your tasks within the required time frame so you are not holding up others from their tasks. Prioritise your tasks so you do the important ones first. Then as accurately as possible calculate how long the tasks will take you. Most people under estimate rather than over estimate the amount of time a given task will take so add a little more time to your estimate to ensure you meet your deadlines. At times you may not be able to meet a task deadline due to:

* unexpected absences by other workers
* task-time imbalance so it is not possible to complete the task
* information not being given to you due to a hold up
* another urgent task has to be attended to
* meetings or other duties e.g. staff birthday celebrations
* training programs taking workers away from normal duties
* critical incidents such as an accident or evacuation.

Understanding how you spend your time will enable you to better manage your time and with experience you will become more efficient and tasks will take less time.



The most important resources that managers have to plan and manage on a day-to-day basis are people, machines, materials, and working capital. Obviously, if these resources are available in abundance then the tasks can be achieved in a shorter duration. On the other hand, if these resources are severely limited, then the result will be a delay in the task completion time. Depending on the type of resources, the costs of providing an abundance of such resources to accelerate completion time can be very high. As a result there will be times when resources will be in short supply.

To deal with resource constraints you will need to be an effective communicator and use negotiation skills to manage the supply of resources. Discuss with team members possible changes to work practices to reduce the impact on productivity and efficiencies. In some cases organisations may be able to increase the availability of resources or you may have to accept that the current resources are all the organisation can provide. Planning ahead to ensure you have the resources available can be helpful in dealing with resource constraints. If the resource constraints are causing work health and safety issues you are required to report this to the appropriate person in the organisation.

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 10: Time management

*(Time to complete approx. 40 minutes).*

Developing good time managment skills can help you better manage your time, be more productive and reduce your stress levels. So how good are your time management skills?

Take the [MindTools online test](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_88.htm) to calculate your time management score and bring your results for class discussion.

What was your total score? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Scroll down to read your **Score Interpretation**. How well did you do?

Which skill do you need to improve the most (lowest star rating):

🞏 **Goal Setting**—*knowing what you need to achieve.*

🞏 **Prioritization**—*Knowing the order you should be doing things.*

🞏 **Managing Interruptions**—*Not being distracted by other things.*

🞏 **Procrastination**—*Putting stuff off until late.*

🞏 **Scheduling**—*Creating a list or schedule of what you have to do.*

How do you think you could improve this skill?

Navigate to the [10 Common Time Management Mistakes](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/time-management-mistakes.htm) and watch the video (or read the transcript of the video?).

Do you make any time management mistakes? Write one down:

## Workplace feedback

Feedback is an important part of workplace communication. As a member of a workplace it is likely you will be provided with feedback and support that will enable you to further develop your skills as you grow and learn in your job role.

Feedback can provide detailed knowledge of the performance and/or end results of an action. To be constructive, feedback should be aimed at improving the performance of the work team rather than being negative and critical. It should help people to understand what they have done well and what they need to change to improve their work.

In the workplace you will receive constructive feedback about your job. It is valuable for improving the way you do things and helps you look critically not negatively at yourself. When giving feedback about areas that need to be improved try to find something positive to say as this will make them feel better about the changes they need to make.

Some types of feedback in an organisation may include:

* Formal feedback in a performance appraisal. Formal appraisals occur on a regular basis with the first performance appraisal usually taking place three months after an employee starts a job then every six or twelve months thereafter. These appraisals allow for a formal method of feedback which can lead to modification of job description, further training and re-evaluation of performance.
* Informal feedback on performance from supervisors and colleagues making informal comments on a job well done or suggestions of how to complete a task.
* Customers and clients making positive comments and giving praise for good customer service or service delivery.
* Routine organisational methods for monitoring customer service which include customer complaint or satisfaction forms, and surveys which are completed at the end of a task or a job for a customer.
* Personal reflection which involves thinking about what you have done and how you can improve on it for next time.

People are generally concerned about performance appraisals but usually they are a positive, helpful way of learning about the expectations of the organisation, how to do your job better and to plan for the future.



### Individual differences

It is no secret that we are all different and all think differently, however many groups do not use these differences for the good of the group. Difference between individual group members can be the cause of much conflict if we do not recognise and appreciate the differences as a positive rather than a negative. How often have we let ourselves be annoyed by the way that someone does something; they squeeze the toothpaste tube from the middle not the bottom, they pour the milk in the tea cup before the tea…? In most cases these differences are just that, different, rather than right and wrong ways to do things.

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 11: Similarities and differences

*(Time to complete approx. 30 minutes).*

Working in groups of 4 people; find three similarities and three differences between the members of the group. That is three things which you have in common and three things which are different for every group member.

Table 3: Activity 11

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Similarities* | *Differences* |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Which column was easier to fill?

Why do you think that was the case?

Why is it important to acknowledge similarities as well as differences?

What happens if you or your group are not valued or treated fairly because of differences?

Think about groups in our society, which have not been (or are not now) treated fairly because they are different. What are some examples of these groups and what are the impacts of their unfair treatment?

Table 4: Unfair treatment

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Group | Impact of unfair treatment |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 12: Performance appraisal

*(Time to complete approx. 20 minutes).*

Navigate to the [Performance Appraisal Policy](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/intranet/document-library/?term=appraisal) for Plan2go.

Read the Policy Purpose. What are the benefits of the performance appraisal?

Open the [Performance Appraisal Form Administration Officer](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/intranet/document-library/?term=appraisal).

What aspects of the employee’s performance are being reviewed?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

While formal and informal feedback from others is important also consider personal feedback and reflection as this can give you the chance to help yourself do your job better. Take the time to think about the tasks you do well and areas where you can make improvements to your performance.

When you have received constructive feedback it is important to act on it. Consider how you can alter your work attitude and performance to address the feedback. Give yourself a time frame to make changes to work practices. Acknowledging and acting on feedback from others in your workgroup will help build working relationships.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 13: Self reflection

*(Time to complete approx. 20 minutes).*

**Self reflection**: If you were given an appraisal as a student, how do you think you would go?

Topic 2

Contribute to   
workgroup  
activities

# Topic 2: Contribute to work group activities

## Supporting others at work

Cooperation is the act of working with others and acting together to accomplish a job. Effective team players work this way by second nature. Good team players, despite differences they may have with other team members concerning style and perspective, figure out ways to work together to solve problems and get work done. They respond to requests for assistance and take the initiative to offer help.

Team players treat fellow team members with courtesy and consideration—not just some of the time but consistently. In addition, they show understanding and the appropriate support of other team members to help get the job done. They don't place conditions on when they'll provide assistance, when they'll choose to listen, and when they'll share information. Good team players also have a sense of humour and know how to have fun (and all teams can use a bit of both), but they don't have fun at someone else's expense. Quite simply, effective team players deal with other people in a professional manner.

There are many different ways that you support your team members so that you achieve your workgroup goals. These include:

* Use good communication skills—keep in regular contact with your team members, either by having a conversation in person or over the phone or sending emails.
* Work to a high standard—do the best job that you can.
* Offer to help someone—if you have your own work under control and you see that someone is struggling with their workload, offer to help.
* Be easily available—make sure that people can reach you. Don’t hide in the lunch room or under your desk.
* Don’t ignore mistakes—whether they are yours or someone else’s, it’s always best to identify a mistake rather than ignore it.
* Review your work frequently—make sure that you are up-to-date with your tasks and do not fall behind.

### Effective teamwork

The best stragety for effective teamwork in the workplace is:

* **Have clear guidelines** about what your team needs to achieve.
* **Listen to others** in the group. It is always good to get a second (or third) opinion.
* **Cooperate with others**—work with others to get the job done.
* **Share the decision making**. Don’t let one person make all the decisions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 14: True or false

Answer the following questions with **True** or **False**.

Table 5: Activity 14

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | True/False |
| It is not a good idea to have clear guidelines. |  |
| It is important to cooperate with your team members. |  |
| You should always do the best job you can. |  |
| One person should dominate the group. |  |
| You should let other people make all the decisions. |  |
| Supporting each other shows good teamwork. |  |

## Contribute to workgroup goals

The purpose of working in a group or team is to achieve a goal. Let’s look at some of the things you can to do contribute to a group.

* Keep your workplace clean and tidy.
* Be aware of your job role and what you have to do.
* Support your team members.
* Follow your organisational policies and procedures.
* See assistance from your team members if you need help.
* Share information with your group.
* Use good communication skills.

|  |  |
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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 15: Goals

Make a list of all your skills e.g. word processing, good communicator, etc

Then make a list of how you think you would use these skills to meet your team goals eg offer to help others produce their documents, attend meetings, etc.

The first one has been done for you.

Table 6: Activity 15

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Your skills | Team Goals |
| *Good at word processing* | *Produce word processed documents* |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

## Sharing information

The sharing of information through informal conversations or meetings is essential if a workgroup is to be effective. Information can be shared verbally or through written documentations such as emails and reports.

The sharing and updating of information with the workgroup ensures:

* designated goals are met
* professionalism is maintenance
* products and services are promoted
* customer service is improved
* positive workplace relationships are developed.

The information to be shared may include:

* acknowledging satisfactory performance
* acknowledging unsatisfactory performance
* assisting a colleague
* clarifying the organisation’s preferred task completion methods
* encouraging colleagues
* open communication channels.

|  |  |
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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 16: Communication

Match the type of communication method to the type of information you are sharing. Draw a line between the correct answers. The first one has been done for you.

Table 7: Activity 16

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Communication Method | Type of Information |
| Telephone call | Establishing the team goals |
| Formal meeting in a boardroom | Asking a team member for help |
| Email | Knowing the WHS Policy |
| Informal meeting in the kitchen | Sending a meeting request |
| Organisational policy | Making sure your colleague is OK |

## Improvement strategies

It is important that strategies and opportunities for improvement of the workgroup and/or individual are identified and planned in liaison with the workgroup. For workgroups to improve their performance members need to evaluate or assess workgroup and/or individual performance. The evaluation of performance can be achieved through regular team meetings to look at how things can be done better or individuals looking back over work schedules to identify tasks they could do better.

Workgroups may consider a range of strategies or opportunities for improvement including:

* **Supervising, coaching or mentoring** by an experienced colleague to help less experienced workers to improve efficiency and performance.
* **Work shadowing** is partnering with a work colleague for a time period to learn about the attributes of their job.
* **Formal** **Training programs,** external (offsite) or internal (onsite), can result in improvements of performance and efficiency of the workgroup.
* **Informal training** within the workplace by a colleague to improve the performance of the trainee.
* **Performance appraisals** or reviews by your supervisor or employer to identify where improvements can be made to do the job better or the need for further training.
* **Workplace Skills Assessment** to recognise current skills within the workgroup that would benefit the team by choosing the best person for the task.
* **Career and development planning** for the future which can benefit the team.
* **Brainstorming** ideas to solve a problems so that the best alternative is adopted.
* **Personal study** conducted in your own time to improve knowledge and performance.
* **Work experience** or exchange opportunities within the organisation or external allows a worker to see how other areas or places work and can share ideas to improve team performance.

|  |  |
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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 17: Strategies

Choose one of the examples from the above list.

Working in a group, talk about the strategy you have chosen. Why do you think that strategy would improve a workgroup?

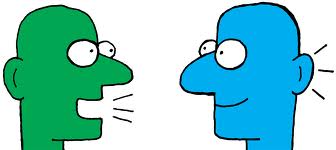
Topic 3

Deal effectively   
with issues,   
problems  
and conflict

# Topic 3: Deal effectively with issues, problems and conflict

## Communication is the key

Communication is the way we transmit information (message) from the source (sender) to the destination/s (receiver/s). Most importantly, for communication to be successful the message must be understood as intended.



Communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication.

In order to get your message across, you must understand what your message is, what audience you are sending it to, and how it will be perceived. Furthermore, you need to consider the circumstances surrounding your communications, such as situational and cultural context.

The receiver will provide you with feedback, verbal and non-verbal reactions to your communicated message. Make sure you pay close attention to the feedback, as it is the only thing that allows you to make sure that the receiver has understood your message. If you find that there has been a misunderstanding, take action to send the message a second time

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 18: Communication survey

Plan2go has a **Communication Survey** that they give to their employees. Open the [Communication Survey](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/intranet/document-library/?cat=8315). List three of the questions that are on the survey:

1

2

3

Look at the preferred methods of communication. Which one do you prefer to use?

🞏 Email 🞏 Intranet 🞏Mail 🞏 Other

Why?

## Understanding body language

Have you heard of the term body language? Body language is the non-verbal signals we communicate to others through our body, facial expression and even our tone. It is an important part of how we communicate and it is helpful that you know how to read the signs.

Many of the non-verbal signals we send are involuntary and subconscious. While it is almost impossible to be totally in control of the messages our bodies deliver, we can influence the way others perceive us by concentrating on a few of the more important indicators.

However, body language in one country may not be the same in another country. For example, if you wave your hand it may mean that you are saying hello. But in a different culture, it could mean “go away”. You need to be aware that Australia has a diverse culture and you should respect individual people, their belief and their culture.

|  |  |
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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 19: Body language

When you are in the workplace, you also need to be aware of non-verbal communication. What do the following types of non-verbal communication indicate?

Table 8: Activity 19

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of communication | Method of communication – What do these indicate? | |
| Facial expression | | Smiling |
|  |
| Frowning |
|  |
| Gestures | | Wave |
|  |
| Thumbs up |
|  |
| Body Language | | Looking at the ground |
|  |
| Standing with hands on hips |
|  |
| Sign & symbols | |  |
|  |
| Involuntary reactions | | Gasping |
|  |
| Crying |
|  |

## What is culture?

We hear the word culture used a lot but what does culture actually mean? Culture has various meanings but it is taken here to include the social understandings, knowledge, values, beliefs and customs in a given society.

A culture refers to a large group of people, although within that group there can be sub-cultures—smaller groups with their own identities within the major culture. For example, these groups could be surfers, bike riders, teenager or lawyers.

You may only think of culture as meaning ‘race’, referring to the country where someone lives or where they were born. But when a large group has similar expectations about values and behaviours then they can be said to share a culture. We are all members of many different cultural groups.

Some examples of what defines some different cultures are:

* the age of the people within a group (old or young)
* whether the people live in the city or country
* whether the people in the group have a particular physical similarity or disability
* whether the people work in the same place (This is sharing workplace culture).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 20: Culture

Think about your own country and culture. Where do you come from and how does that influence you and the way you behave?

Where are you from?

Make a list of things that you do which form part of your culture:

### Cultural differences

Australia is a multicultural society/country, which means there are many different cultures represented in the one country, each with the right to live in the way they feel is right, as long as it fits in with the laws of the country. Although Australia is considered to be a multicultural society, the dominant influence on Australian society remains white Anglo Saxon/Anglo-Celtic culture.

Aboriginal culture, in particular, has not been reflected or represented in our major institutions.

Living in a multicultural society seems like a straightforward thing to do but, in practice, it raises many issues for our society and for our relationships with diverse groups of people, including our relationships in workplaces.

In a multicultural country where workplaces are made up of people from diverse cultures, we can try to educate ourselves about cultural diversity by becoming aware of cultural norms, taboos and customs of the people that we come into contact with through our work. We should also be familiar with any workplace policies and documents related to cultural diversity.

### Stereotypes

Stereotyping is a process where we classify someone according to certain characteristics. We often see in them what we want to see rather than what is really there.

|  |  |
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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 21: Stereotypes

When we think about the cultural stereotypes or labels that are commonly attached to people from Australia, Italy, China, the Middle East and the USA we might come up with the following. Can you think of any others?

Table 9: Activity 21

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Stereotype | Any more? |
| Australia | Casual, sporty |  |
| China | Hard working, diligent |  |
| USA | Loud, big |  |
| Middle East | Conservative |  |
| Italy | Passionate, explosive |  |

### Communicating across cultures

Different cultures communicate in particular ways. These differences are obvious in how they greet others, how they take turns when speaking, how they address each other, what is said and how they express their feelings and react to the feelings of others.

To work effectively and to take into consideration the culture of colleagues and clients, we need to be aware of:

* **Non-verbal communication and culture**—Gestures, movements, tone of voice, eye contact and facial expressions vary in meaning across cultures. In India, for example, shaking the head from side to side is an indication of agreement rather than disagreement which is how we understand it in Australia.
* **Personal space**—Distancing oneself or getting closer to clients may be misinterpreted as coldness or inappropriately intimate or pushy. The gender of the client and worker is also an important factor in how personal space is utilised.
* **Eye contact**—There are many cultural variations of what eye contact means. In some cultures such as Mexican, Japanese, Korean, and many indigenous Australian cultures, avoidance of eye contact means respect. This is sometimes misinterpreted as not listening or being rude.
* **Use of silence**—Different cultures use silences differently. Arabic people often regard silence as a time to collect private thoughts; Russians, Spanish and French might regard silence as indicating a common agreement or shared view; while in Asian cultures silence is often used as a sign of respect.
* **Cultural variation in interpretation of social issues**—People might have a different interpretation of issues such as what constitutes a marriage or a marriage separation. In some cultures a woman may regard herself as not being separated from her husband, even though the husband has left, simply because they are still legally married.
* **Cultural responses to emotions**—Different cultures have different rules about how to respond to emotions. Touching the hand of someone crying might be acceptable in our culture but in others, offering tissues or a glass of water could be adequate.

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 22: Cultural communication

Think of someone you know who comes from a different culture to you. Do they act differently to you in any way?

## Organisations and cultural diversity

The Australian and State governments all have policies about promoting cultural diversity. The Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW promotes multiculturalism, ethnic affairs, cultural diversity, community unity and harmony through many different programs. Many organisations also effectively accommodate cultural differences in the workplace by:

* providing training on cross-cultural issues
* promoting skills in cultural awareness and language
* producing organisational policies and other documents about cultural diversity
* having programs and projects that show respect for people of different cultures
* having a register of people who speak languages other than English
* using flexible arrangements to allow employees to observe religious and cultural holidays.

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| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 23: Diversity

Plan2go has a **workforce diversity policy**. Open the [Workforce diversity policy](http://plan2go.nctafe.edu.au/assets/document-library/Crew-Folders/People-and-Culture-Crew/Workplace-Relations/Workforce-Diversity-Policy.pdf) and answer the following questions:

What is the purpose of the policy?

Who does the policy apply to?

There are four policies that support the Workforce diversity policy. List two of them:

1

2

## Signs and causes of conflict in the workplace

Conflict situations can often get out of hand. The tension between two or more people builds during conflict and they can get angry and frustrated. If you can identify the signs, stages and causes of conflict you will be able to handle these situations much more effectively.

Learning to deal with conflict is a skill that takes a lot of practice and experience.

### Signs of conflict

One of the first signs of conflict is a change in an individual’s behaviour. Conflict can happen in a face-to-face situation, on the phone or even by email or letter. It can be obvious (overt) or not so obvious (covert). Some of the signs of conflict include:

* facial expressions
* body language
* gritting teeth
* stomping or walking heavier than normal
* banging things (eg making a racket when it isn’t necessary)
* skin flushes
* making a fist and even banging it on something
* staring or remaining silent when someone is trying to talk to you.

### Stages of conflict

There are usually three main stages of conflict. They are:

1. **The incident**–the event that caused the conflict.
2. **The confrontation**–admitting the conflict and dealing with the situation.
3. **The outcome**–the result of the confrontation.

### Causes of conflict

There can be many causes of conflict in the workplace. Sometimes conflict can be the result of a mistake you have made. If you don’t deal with the mistake straight away it can cause even greater conflict.

Everyday events can cause conflict–things like fellow workers not fulfilling their work obligations. These are small situations but when they occur on a regular basis they can become much more significant. Other potential causes of conflict in the workplace include:

* poor customer service
* variation in colleagues’ work practices/methods
* cultural misunderstandings
* poor communication
* barriers to communication
* aggressive behaviour
* personal animosity
* Misunderstandings regarding roles and responsibilities.

Some types of conflict can be handled easily while others can take a great deal of effort and time to sort out.

Workplace conflict is not only bad for you but it is bad for business. It can affect staff morale, levels of productivity and result in unhealthy working relationships.

Conflict can be very difficult to deal with and some people will even avoid conflict.

The important thing is how you approach and deal with conflict.

### Dealing with conflict

There are five ways of dealing with conflict;

**Ignoring**—pretend that there is no conflict avoid the person whose behaviour annoys you. Often after some time, there will be a “blow-up” when you cannot ignore it any more.

**Giving in**—clean the kitchen at work every day because everyone else leaves it in a mess, let the other person have their way and pretend it is not important to you. Eventually you will get sick of always giving in.

**Win/Lose**—one person uses power or authority to get their way, there is a clear winner and a clear loser. This is bad for ongoing relationships as the person who loses will eventually hold a grudge and try to undermine the other person.

**Compromise**—No one actually wins, neither party get what they want so often everyone is disgruntled.

**Cooperation**—Working through the problem with a mindset that it is possible to resolve it in a way, which benefits both parties. This is the preferred method for dealing with conflict in the workplace (and in your personal life) as it can leave the relationship stronger and neither party should be disgruntled. It can be time consuming but is generally worthwhile. The next topic will give you some strategies to use to achieve this.



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### Resolving conflict

#### Resolving problems with minimum disruption

Every workplace, and for that matter any relationship between two or more people, will develop conflict at some stage. These problems are often viewed as negatives, when in reality problems or conflicts are simply opportunities for change.

Many problems or conflicts are caused by simple misunderstandings and simply by sitting down and discussing the issue it can be explained and resolved. For a more complex or serious issue, the following steps can assist the resolution of a problem.

##### Step 1 What is the issue?

Work through until the actual issue or problem is identified, often there are several layers of issues that stem from one core problem.

##### Step 2 Who is involved?

List all the people who are involved and what their part in the problem is.

##### Step 3 What are all the solutions?

Brainstorm as many solutions to the problem as you can, sometimes there are several and the first one is not necessarily the best.

##### Step 4 What is the best solution in this instance?

What solves the problem this time may not always work, but which one will you choose and how will you implement it?

When working through a problem, whether you are directly involved or just helping other parties out, it is important to focus on the behaviour not the person. It can be easy to fall into the trap of blaming the person for the problem rather than a particular behaviour or set of circumstances.

Consider the following statements:

“I can’t stand Susan”

“When Susan speaks before I’ve finished, I get frustrated.”

The second statement is focussing on behaviour, rather than Susan as a person, identifying the behaviour helps to narrow down the issue to what really causes the problem.

#### Supporting colleagues to resolve their work difficulties

By following steps similar to those listed above, you can assist colleagues to resolve their work difficulties. As discussed previously it is essential not to become emotionally involved in the process but instead to separate the behaviour or issue from the person.

When trying to help others resolve their difficulties the following process can prove useful.

##### Step 1 Initiate a discussion

Sit down and begin a dialogue with both parties, this will assist you, and them, in determining what the problem is.

##### Step 2 Elicit good information

Get everyone to clearly state their point of view and ensure that others are able to do so too. Ensure that all parties can explain the effect the problem is having on them.

##### Step 3 Understand everyone’s point of view

Listen to everyone’s point of view without becoming upset or trying to justify actions. Try to understand how the other people see the problem. You do not have to agree with what they are saying.

##### Step 4 Problem solve

1. Summarise the problem.

2. Suggest acceptable solutions.

3. Evaluate possible solutions.

##### **Step 5 Decide on a course of** action

Select a course of action and implement it with the agreement of everyone involved.

#### Organisational processes - work performance and conflict

In order for an organisation to be able to manage poor work performance, it first has to determine what work performance is required. This is often initially communicated to an employee in the form of a job description.

Once you are employed by an organisation there should be agreement between yourself and your supervisor as to how your work performance is measured.

Some organisations use Key Performance Indicators (KPI). KPI’s allow an employee and the organisation to determine if work performance is acceptable or below an acceptable standard.

A performance review should determine if an employee is meeting their KPI’s, if they are not then the reasons for the poor performance should be identified, some additional resources or training may be required, or the KPI’s may need to be modified as they were unrealistic in the first place.

The employee and supervisor should discuss what needs to occur in order to achieve peak performance, the employee needs to work hard and ask for help when required, and the supervisor should offer support and encouragement.

#### Achieving resolution in difficult situations

##### Organisational frameworks

Some organisations will have a clear and detailed process which should be followed in order to achieve resolution of a difficult situation. This process will be different should the situation involve staff only, staff and clients or even two different clients.

If these processes exist, they should be stored in a way that is accessible to all staff at all times and be written in a manner that is easy to follow.

Processes should include a format for registering dissatisfaction with a situation, a way of identifying who is most appropriate to assist in the resolution process, a time frame for the process and when outside assistance should be sought.

#### Legislative frameworks

If you are unhappy with the way a difficult situation has been resolved within the workplace, there are external avenues that you can pursue.

There are many dispute resolution options available the first step is often to try to organise an independent arbiter or facilitator to attempt to resolve the situation.

Other options include conciliation or arbitration these alternative dispute resolution approaches should be explored before undertaking an expensive and time-consuming legal case.

If mediation is unsuccessful then a civil court or Fair Work Australia may be of assistance in resolving a situation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Practice activity icon | Practice activity |

## Activity 24: Conflict

The following is an example of a situation that could cause conflict in the workplace. Discuss with your group or facilitator, different strategies you could use to resolve the conflict.

Table 10: Activity 24

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Conflict | Strategy |
| It is Jane’s responsibility to clean the kitchen at the end of the day and turn the dishwasher on. She doesn’t like the job and has stopped doing it. Other staff are getting angry because the kitchen is dirty the following morning and there are no clean cups. |  |

# Summary

Well done on working your way through this resource. You should now have an understanding of strategies to develop effective workplace relationships, contribute to activities in the workplace, and deal with any issues that arise. It is important for us to be aware of our own attitudes and beliefs about cultural diversity as well as to respect individual difference arising from:

* culture
* race
* language
* gender
* age
* religious beliefs
* customs/traditions
* people with special needs.

In Australia we are blessed to have a diverse population. People from diverse cultures communicate in different ways and we need to be aware of these differences in our workplaces. Australian workplaces are encouraged to accommodate cultural differences by developing programs and work practices that view diversity in a positive light.

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