SA CAMPUS

Skills Programme: Workplace Essential Skills (NQF 4)

Learner guide

Learner information

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About the learner guide

Welcome to the learner guide for the Skills Programme: Workplace Essential Skills with curriculum code SP-211009 (NQF 4) - 20 credits. This guide is an essential resource designed to transfer theoretical knowledge effectively and engagingly, aligning with the Knowledge Modules of this qualification.

Each guide is structured to enhance the learner's understanding and skills, providing a solid foundation for their occupational competence. The content is comprehensive, practical, and relevant to current industry demands.

The learner guide follows a modular format, allowing learners to progress through the content systematically. The learner guide is followed by the practical module ensuring a well-rounded and complete learning experience.

Outcomes

This learner guide provides a comprehensive overview of the module. It is designed to improve the skills and knowledge of learners, and thus enabling them to effectively and efficiently complete specific tasks. Through this learner guide, you will develop proficiency in the following knowledge areas:

- Identify responsibilities in the workplace environment of an employer and employee
- Understand and apply work ethics, norms and values
- Identify safety and legal provisions relating to the work and responsibilities of an employer and employee
- Perform tasks in a number of critical workplace competencies.

TOPIC 1: The workplace environment and responsibilities of an employer and employee

What is a good workplace environment?

"Positive" work environments can be defined as those workplaces where there is trust, cooperation, safety, risk-taking support, accountability, and equity. There are some abstract concepts when thinking about a positive work environment. You want to strive for shared purpose, values, and trust.

What does the phrase, work environment, mean?

A work environment refers to the elements that comprise the setting in which employees work and impact workers. While some items that comprise it are obvious, such as the wall treatment or the number of indoor plants, others are more obtuse, such as company politics or a co-worker whose personality traits do not suit the company culture. Professionals working in both full-time and part-time positions are significantly impacted by their office environment because they have to perform their duties inside it. Usually, workers are required to adapt to this workplace feature.

For example, the walls of your office are painted in pale green, which is a colour you dislike. This wall treatment is a part of the work environment. In this scenario, you can avoid looking at them when you're taking a short break from your computer screen. Similarly, the company to which you're applying may have a policy of using group interviews to reduce recruitment costs. This policy is a part of the work environment, but you dislike it. In this scenario, you will have to complete the group interview if you want the job.

Elements of a work environment

A work environment is usually comprised of a collection of diverse elements in relation to corporate conditions and job-specific conditions, such as:

Corporate conditions

There are several corporate conditions in a workplace that contribute to its environment, such as:

- Employer's programs for employees: This part of the work environment relates to the initiatives implemented by an employer to promote training, recreation, and engagement of workers. These activities impact employees and contribute to their morale, skills, engagement, and productivity.
- Physical features: Items such as the building in which the company operates, its architecture, its size, the colour of its walls, the layout of work areas, the furniture and its arrangement, office equipment and its placement, the flooring, the amount of light in the space, indoor plants, cleanliness, and facilities impact the performance of job duties and are an element of the work environment.
- Leadership style: The leadership style preferred by an organization is an important feature of the work environment because it influences how people work and how supervisors and subordinates collaborate.
- Company policies and protocols: These are a key element of the work environment as they can affect employee behaviour, how work is performed, and the manner in which workers interact. Promoting positive feedback on employees and encouraging worker involvement in the recruitment process are examples of this element of the environment.
- Company values: The values of the employer typically influence company policies and protocols, programs for employees, and leadership styles, all of which contribute to the work environment. Consequently, corporate values are an important element of the work environment.
- Employee opinions: The reactions of workers to corporate conditions, such as employer's programs and workplace architecture, become another important condition that contributes to the work environment because these responses reflect their motivation, satisfaction, and engagement, which will affect their productivity over time.

- Social behaviours: Most workplaces include people who are tasked with working together to achieve common objectives, and the resulting team dynamics influence the work environment. Similarly, politics among workers, supervisors, and senior management can alter the office atmosphere by impacting an employee's ease of performing job duties, morale, and productivity. In certain cases, redundant social features can imperil a healthy work environment and increase the difficulty of working in it.

Job-specific conditions

There are several conditions that are specific to occupations and impact the office environment, including:

- Job benefits: This element of the work environment relates to the main benefits in the worker's employment contract, such as salary, health insurance, dental insurance, and terms for leave. Invariably, these benefits will directly impact an employee's motivation, loyalty to the organization, performance of job duties, and contribution to organizational productivity.
- Job conditions: Each occupation has unique characteristics in relation to working hours, flexibility of scheduling work, level of oversight, terms of employment, and employee compliance with safety legislation. These conditions contribute to the work environment,
- Job satisfaction: The average satisfaction of workers contributes to the work environment because it impacts employee morale, influences team morale, and creates a job condition.

Types of successful work environments

There are different types of successful work environments, including:

- Team-based work environment

In a team-based environment, the workplace is structured to support teamwork and reward the success of team players. Key benefits of working in this setting can include sharing responsibilities with a group of people, developing strong professional bonds with co-workers, and developing teamwork skills.

- Individual-focused work environment

In an individual focused environment, workers are given the freedom to choose a working style that suits their productivity. Key benefits can include having the freedom to work independently, work from home, choose flexible hours, bring pets to work, and customize one's workspace.

- Fast-paced work environment

Extroverts can find a fast-paced environment rewarding. Workers in this setting must adapt quickly to environmental changes, multitask, and achieve targets. Key benefits can include working in an exciting atmosphere, enjoying rapid environmental changes, and connecting with co-workers who have similar personalities.

- Communication-focused

In a communication-focused work environment, various key elements of the company, such as the layout of the building interior and company policies, target establishing and maintaining dialogue between employees. Key benefits of this type of work environment can include a cooperative atmosphere in which workers help each other, mutual-feedback for managers and followers, a lack of workplace conflicts, and improved teamwork

- Sceptical

In a sceptical environment, employees are encouraged to ask questions and challenge ideas. Key benefits of this setting can include fostering innovation, motivating workers, promoting employee engagement, increasing productivity due to the contributions of engaged workers, and avoiding the pitfalls of groupthink.

- Artistic

An artistic environment supports creativity and innovation through the layout of the work space and company policies in areas such as dress code, working hours, and rewards for high performers. Key benefits can include increasing employee motivation, boosting creativity and innovation, enhancing employee satisfaction, reducing turnover, and cutting recruitment costs.

Why is it important to have a positive work environment?

It's important to have a positive work environment for many reasons, including:

- It can involve better conditions for workers, which can improve loyalty and build the corporate brand.
- It can increase employee satisfaction, motivation, and engagement.
- It can increase the productivity of workers who are eager to contribute to the company.
- It can avoid creating conditions in which the workers are dissatisfied or demotivated.
- It can make it easier to identify issues in the environment, such as an adversarial worker who reduces morale.
- It can include managers who use positive reinforcement to build employee satisfaction and engagement.
- It can include workers who treat others with respect and empathy.
- It can avoid distractions that prevent workers from performing their job responsibilities.
- It can support communication between workers from different occupations and levels of the company.
- It can generate many opportunities for professional growth through items such as internal promotions or training programs.

- It can encourage positive thinking among workers through employer programs, visual details in the physical setting, and worker-friendly policies.
- It can promote a work-life balance for both supervisors and subordinates.

Characteristics of a positive work environment

You can identify a positive work environment with the following characteristics:

- It acknowledges the contribution of employees through job benefits and opportunities for job growth.
- It encourages the participation of employees in company operations.
- It fosters employee contribution to decision-making, such as through peer interviewing.
- It rewards productive employees.
- It supports the individuality of workers, and promotes individual working styles.
- It's built to encourage communication between employees.
- Managers prefer a democratic leadership style or situational leadership.
- It values mutual feedback between managers and subordinates.
- It holds individuals accountable for their work.
- It supports teams by promoting collaboration between staff members.
- It encourages an environment in which workers can learn from their mistakes.
- It's structured to identify and correct negative office politics that reduce organizational performance.
- It supports a healthy work-life balance for all employees.

Duties of employers

For example, the employer must:

- Make sure that work areas, machinery and equipment are kept in a safe condition.
- Organise ways of working safely.
- Provide information, instruction, training and supervision of employees so they can work safely.
- Make sure that employees are aware of potential hazards.
- Provide protective clothing and equipment where hazards can't be avoided.
- Consult and co-operate with health and safety representatives and other employees at the workplace.
- Inform employees about hazards in the workplace, and improve their understanding of safe work procedures (the information does not always have to be written - it can be spoken, or in the form of videos and tapes.)
- Provide new employees with specialised induction training to help them become familiar with their new work environment, procedures, equipment and materials so they can do their job safely. Induction should be much more than having a chat with your supervisor, completing a few forms and being introduced to your workmates.
- Provide information about hazards and the actions taken to control workplace risks (including the use of personal protective equipment where necessary).
- Provide supervision to ensure that employees are not exposed to hazards. Supervision should include regular checks to make sure health and safety instructions are being followed.
- Consult with employees to identify and control hazards in workplaces. Employees who are experienced in a job will usually know what can go wrong, and why.
- Consult with employees and health and safety representatives on health and safety matters.

- Make sure equipment and materials are used, stored, transported and disposed of safely.

The employee's duties:

Services: An employee must make his/her services available to the employer within an agreed period of time. The actual services rendered will often be specifically described within the employment contract and the job specifications and requirements, however, oftentimes an employee's services will include those duties that aren't specifically described but are within the best interest of the business.

Competence: An employee must act in accordance with their skills for which they were hired for. When undertaking to exercise that skill, an employee must do so with due diligence, and if not, that employee will be considered incompetent for the job.

Good Faith: So much of the employer-employee relationship is based on the moral character of the employee. That relationship is built on honesty and moral conduct. An employee must act in accordance with what is in the best interests of the business instead of that of his/her own interests and for that reason misappropriation, misconduct and dishonesty cannot be tolerated.

Subordination: This is an employee's obligation to obey the employer's commands. These commands, however, must be lawful and morally sound. An employee shouldn't accept an order that makes him/her go against their moral character.

The employers duties:

- Remuneration: As discussed above, an employee will provide the employer with services in exchange for remuneration. This give and take relationship will continue in accordance with the employment contract and only in very rare circumstances will remuneration be withheld which will usually be due to a breach of the employment contract. However, even after summarily dismissing

an employee an employer needs to follow the correct procedure according to the Code of Good Practice, Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Labour Relations Act.

- Safe working environment: An employer must provide a reasonably safe working environment for his/her employees and according to Common law, the employer is delict ally liable for any damages and injuries of an on-site or work-related accident.
- Provisions for leave: According to the Labour Relations Act as well as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act an employer must grant his/her employee with vocational leave, family responsibility leaves and sick leave (this will, however, vary from contract to contract between the parties).

An employment contract is an agreement between two parties (employer and employee) who hold themselves liable for the obligations as discussed, described and agreed to within that contract or agreement.

Main responsibilities of employees

Employees have responsibilities towards their employers, even if they work part time or don't have a written contract with their employers.

These are the main responsibilities of employees:

- To personally do the work they were hired to do.
- To do their work carefully and seriously (in some cases, they could be fired or disciplined if they're often late for work, or if they're absent too often or for no good reason).
- To avoid putting themselves or others in danger.
- To follow their employer's instructions (there are some exceptions. For example, if an employer asks an employee to do something dangerous or illegal, the employee doesn't have to follow these instructions.

- To be loyal and honest.

When employees don't respect their responsibilities?

If employees don't respect their responsibilities, the employer is allowed to take certain actions:

- Discipline employees, such as giving a written warning, or suspending them.
- Take other action against employees, such as giving a letter evaluating their performance, or demoting them (that is, giving them a lower job).
- Fire employees if they do something very serious, such as stealing from the office.
- Take employees to court to make them pay an amount of money (for example, if the employee quits without telling the employer in advance, or if the employee quits before the date in the employment contract).
- Take employees to court to stop them from doing things that are harmful to the business.

Employers' responsibilities towards employees

These are the main ones:

- Employers must give their employees a place to work and make sure they have access to it. They must give them the tools, equipment and other things they need to do their work.
- Employers must pay their employees the salary and benefits they agreed to, including vacation, paid holidays and other types of holidays.
- Employers must make sure that working conditions protect their employees' physical and psychological health and safety.

- In some cases, employers must give their employees written notice that their contracts are ending or that they are being laid off. Note that employers can pay employees a sum of money instead of giving the notice.
- Employers must treat their employees with respect. They must make sure their employees are not harassed or discriminated against.
- Employers must take steps when they know, or reasonably should know, that employees are exposed to domestic, family or sexual violence in the workplace. They must do this whether the employee is working in the office or working from home.

Topic 2: Employment

What is employment?

Employment is a paid mutual work arrangement between a recruiter and an employee. This term applies to an individual who is hired for a salary or compensation to initiate work or tasks for an organization. Although the employees can negotiate certain items in an employment agreement, the terms and conditions that are included and are mostly determined by the employer. This agreement could also be ended by the recruiter or the employee.

What does employment mean?

Employment most generally means the state of having a paid job—of being employed. To employ someone is to pay them to work. An employer provides employment to employees. Employment can also refer to the act of employing people, as in We're working to increase our employment of women.

Employment is a relationship between two parties regulating the provision of paid labour services. Usually based on a contract, one party, the employer, which might be a corporation, a not-for-profit organization, a co-operative, or any other entity, pays the other, the employee, in return for carrying out assigned work. Employees work in return for wages, which can be paid on the basis of an hourly rate, by piecework or an annual salary, depending on the type of work an employee does, the prevailing conditions of the sector and the bargaining power between the parties. Employees in some sectors may receive gratuities, bonus payments or stock options. In some types of employment, employees may receive benefits in addition to payment. Benefits may include health insurance, housing, disability insurance.

What are the latest basic conditions of employment act South Africa?

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997 gives effect to the right to fair labour practices referred to in section 23(1) of the Constitution by establishing and

making provision for the regulation of basic conditions of employment; and thereby to comply with the obligations of the Republic as a member state.

Time and compensation of employment

Employment agreements may vary, as they involve different time commitments and compensation plans.

For example, employment can be:

An hourly part-time job that is paid for a certain amount for each hour they worked.

Full-time employment in which individuals receive a salary and benefits from an employer for performing the tasks or work assigned to then that is required by a particular position

On the flexibility of an employee work schedule or it is required of the employee to work a 40-hour week with an hour for lunch or breakfast and two 10-minute breaks, one in the morning after coming to the office and one in the afternoon post-lunch as it is required by law.

As long as the employer meets their agreement to pay an employee and to pay on time and the employee wishes to continue the work assigned by the organization, the work relationship between employer and employee will continue.

Types of employment

- Part-time employees

Part-time employees work for a 'part' of the day, usually in shifts and their work hours are less than that of those employed full time. The laws can change depending upon the employee position. Part-time employees are in a parallel position to full-time employees when it comes to employment protection legislation, although in some exceptions a part-time employee would need to work at a set minimum number of hours for a set period of time before actually getting a full-time job.

- Fixed-term employees

Many more individuals are now employed on a fixed-term basis (or on specific purpose contracts). Employees that are working on repeated fixed-term contracts can be considered under the unfair dismissal's legislation, although they need to have at least one year of continuous service before they could actually bring the claim under the

Specified purpose contracts are the contracts which are entered into a competition in order to complete a special assignment or for a special purpose. The provisions that come under the unfair dismissals and protection of workers legislation apply equally to specified purpose contracts.

- Casual employees

There is no technical definition of casual employees in recruitment law as of now but in reality, casual workers are dependent on, to do work as required without having fixed hours or attendance tracking for them. However, these workers are also employees, for employment rights purposes.

Some legislation will also apply, for example, the right to receive a payslip while in other instances where a set period of employment is much required it will be doubtful that a casual employee will have adequate service to qualify, for example, 2 years of service is required in order to be authorised to statutory redundancy.

Work and workplace environment

It is the employer's responsibility to create positions in order to meet company objectives. The employer, therefore, has to have a note of all the aspects of an employee's work, such as his/her work location, hours, resources, responsibilities and wages. To add more to that, directness, the degree of input and autonomy, and that an employee experience on the job is the by-product of a recruiter's skill of management and employment.

Workplace cultures range from tyrannical with a strongly centralised chain of command to an employee-centric workspace in which employees have the right to input and make

decisions. Each specific person who wants to secure a long-lasting job has the task to find out an environment that gives them the satisfaction, autonomy and empowerment.

If an employee has a strong disagreement with an employer in the private sector, the employee has several other options as well. They can bring problems to their manager or go to human resources or also could talk to upper management, or give notice. However, we should think carefully before choosing one of these options. In professional life, impersonal manner should consider how to resolve the disagreement to ensure a positive and good outcome.

Topic 3: The organisation of work

What is the organisation of work?

Work organisation is about the division of labour, the coordination and control of work: how work is divided into job tasks, bundling of tasks into jobs and assignments, interdependencies between workers, and how work is coordinated and controlled in order to fulfil the goals of the organisation.

What is the importance of work organization?

Organizing and planning help you get your work done accurately, avoiding costly mistakes. Organizing your work and planning ahead helps you be more efficient and productive. Being well-organized and developing effective plans also allows you to achieve important goals and objectives.

What is workplace organization?

Workplace organization is a system companies can use to organize their offices. This system allows managers to build structural processes to sort and organize files, documents, storage and other factors of the workplace to reduce waste, increase efficiencies and enhance productivity levels. There are five key elements to workplace organization that employees can follow to ensure the office remains organized and orderly, including:

- Sort: To make sure all documents, tools and supplies are easy to retrieve, you must sort, label and relocate them on a daily basis.
- Straighten: You can ensure all employees put items and files in the correct places by using guidelines, visual aids and labels to remind team members of where certain objects belong within the office to prevent items from being misplaced, damaged, lost or stolen.

- Shine: Cleaning the office keeps the work environment healthy and safe to operate in because it saves employees from having to breathe in dust particles or tripping over obstacles obstructing their paths.
- Standardize: Establishing workplace organization standards, regulations and policies holds everyone accountable for keeping the workplace clean, efficient and safe.
- Sustain: Consider implementing internal auditing systems to ensure all work processes stay efficient and properly managed. Regular evaluate any processes set in place and ask for feedback from employees on ways to improve current processes.

Why is workplace organization important?

Workplace organization is important because it keeps all employees and documents safe at all times. You can use workplace organization on both digital files and in the physical space with documents, machines, tools and other materials. With workplace organization, employees can quickly find and retrieve tools when needed, which saves time on searching for these tools in various areas of the office.

Implementing an effective workplace organization strategy also keeps documents safe and secure by maintaining a structured and protected filing system. This ensures only authorized parties can access important company data, which decreases the risk of losing important files and negatively impacting company data.

Examples of workplace organization

As you implement new workplace organization structures, communicate these to employees to ensure all items are in the right places. Common examples of workplace organization include:

- Establish a desktop filing system

To keep you efficient as your complete tasks throughout the workday, clean your desktop by removing clutter. Occasionally spend time going through all of the documents on your desktop and archiving any unimportant files. If you have other documents or files randomly scattered on your computer, create different folders and sort them into clearly labelled folders. This makes your information easy to retrieve when you're working and need to quickly reference important information for an assignment.

Review each folder and file to determine which ones are important or contain confidential company information. Move these files into password-protected folders and share them only with employees who have permission to view them. This ensures all of the company's data remains secure and reduces the chances of company information or secrets leaking to unauthorized parties.

- Pin applications and notes to your taskbar

There may be applications that you use frequently throughout the workday. Rather than repeatedly searching for them on your computer, pin them to the taskbar on your desktop. This makes it easy for you to quickly click on and open an application, which allows you to save time and increase your productivity as you work on other tasks.

- Bookmark important pages

Similar to your applications, if you have webpages, you regularly visit during the workday, bookmark them on your browser to easily retrieve them, when needed. This can save you time from typing the website into a search engine every time. Instead, you can quickly click on the link in your bookmark bar and it'll immediately take you to your desired page. If you have several bookmarks, sort them into a clearly labelled folder to more efficiently retrieve these websites when needed.

- Follow a file naming structure

To ensure you and all employees within the organization properly store and retrieve files, you should establish a system that educates all employees on how to correctly sort and name these files and folders. For instance, you can instruct all employees to save their

files as "year, month, day filename." This makes it clear what each of the files will contain so that employees can quickly retrieve them without wasting significant time searching for them.

- Purchase additional storage

You may have several documents taking up too much room on your desktop or in your filing cabinets that you're unable to archive. Consider investing in additional storage solutions to keep and retrieve all your files without taking up too much space that it slows down your system or overly clutters your computers. Cloud storage solutions can help you easily access your files when needed from almost any device.

Other features you can do with cloud-based storage is sharing folders with others, creating central space for others to access your files and preventing any bottlenecking from happening when searching for certain documents.

- Implement organizational procedures and policies

Creating organizational procedures helps all employees remain informed and updated on how and where to upload, retrieve and sort their documents. You can also introduce software systems or tools that everyone must use to keep everything in one centralized location. Many companies adopt and implement company intranet systems for all employees to share, access and view various files.

Describe each of the three major types of organizational structure

Several factors determine the type of organizational structure that a company uses: revenues, number of employees, diversity of products, types of customers and geographical spread. Smaller companies have more informal cultures while larger corporations are more formal and bureaucratic.

Three forms of organizations describe the organizational structures that are used by most companies today: functional, departmental and matrix. Each of these forms has advantages and disadvantages that owners must consider before deciding which one to implement for their business.

- Functional departmentalization

The most common organizational structure is the functional or departmental form. In this structure, all of the employees of a specific function are brought together to form a department. Examples of these individual departments are sales, accounting, marketing, finance, research and production.

A functional structure has a firm hierarchy; each department has a separate management staff and upward reporting lines of authority. A department manager may report up one level to a vice-president who might be in charge of several departments, such as finance, marketing and IT. This vice-president could then report to the CEO of the company.

Functional organizations are effective for large corporations with homogeneous product lines. Smaller companies need structures that are more creative and can adapt more quickly to changes in the marketplace. Employees in small organizations may be responsible for several functions at the same time.

Advantages: A significant advantage of a functional structure is the focus and concentration of a group of specialists on their particular skills. Putting all of the company's marketing personnel together in one department allows them to more easily share ideas to improve their expertise and become more efficient. Training is more focused on the functional area.

The chain of command is clear in a functional structure. Each person knows the limits of his decision authority and when to pass the issue to a supervisor.

The opportunity for promotion is usually clearer in the departments. Junior positions can aspire to higher levels with more training and experience.

Disadvantages: A disadvantage of the departmental structure is the limitation to communication between employees in different departments. While the managers of each department may talk with each other, employees are more isolated from each other and don't have naturally open avenues of communication.

Another problem with a functional structure is the possibility that employees will only see the company's operations through the lens of their own occupations. They develop

"tunnel vision," which prohibits them from seeing the strategic direction of the business and the viewpoints of people in other departments. Employees with this narrow focus have difficulty grasping the views and perspectives of other departments. This is also known as the "silo" effect.

Recent attempts have been made to solve this communication problem by creating teams with members from different departments.

- Divisional structures

A divisional structure organizes a company's activities into geographical, products, markets or service groups. As example, a company might have one division to handle sales in the United States and another for European sales. Or a division to manage blue widgets and another to handle green gizmos.

Each division would have a complete set of functional departments. Thus, the green gizmos division would have its own departments for sales, purchasing, accounting, finance, engineering and so forth. Companies with numerous products, markets or regions prefer to organize their businesses into divisions.

Advantages: Accountability is clear with divisional structures. Each one operates separately and is responsible for managing its activities. The results, good or bad, are easily identified.

A divisional structure works best when quick decisions are needed to react to rapidly changing market conditions. Local managers are in a better position to respond sooner to competitive threats rather than having to pass information up a chain of command and wait for a decision to come back down.

Employees in divisions develop their own unique cultures. For example, personnel in a division set up for retail customers become more closely attuned to the needs of their market demographics and can tailor their activities to those wants.

Disadvantages: Divisions cost more to set up and operate. When a corporation has numerous divisions, the total number of employees will likely be higher compared to an organization aligned into functional departments. The same functions when spread

across several divisions will not be as productive and efficient as when they are concentrated in a single department.

Companies with separate divisions may lose the benefits of economies of scale. Take purchasing, for example. A corporation might get better discounts for office supplies when purchasing large quantities for all divisions together rather than placing smaller orders at the division level.

Inter-divisional rivalries can become a problem when division managers don't have incentives to work together. Managers may even work against other divisions to gain an advantage since they have clear accountability for the results of their own division and don't care about the performance of the corporation as a whole.

- Matrix

Companies that are creating and launching new products or initiating different marketing campaigns will form matrix structures to manage the projects.

A matrix organizational structure attempts to gain the benefits of functional organizations by combining specialized skills into a project grid. Matrix organizations are designed to foster cooperation between functional silos so that similar activities can be managed more efficiently to achieve a common goal.

Matrices have two chains of command: one for the project and another for the functional skills which are brought into the project. Project managers have authority horizontally across the departments. At the same time, employees still report to the department heads for their function.

Advantages: When a matrix organization is created, it has a clear objective. It may be to introduce a new product or design a new marketing campaign for another demographic. A matrix can be dissolved once its mission is complete.

A matrix project organization structure pulls together the employees with the particular skills and knowledge required for the project. This gives the employees the ability to work with co-workers from other disciplines as teams. Together, they communicate better and share more innovative concepts that are isolated by the silos of departmental and functional organizations.

Disadvantages: Matrix structures are more complex. Lines of authority run vertically and horizontally with employees working for two bosses. Employees can often receive conflicting directives from project and functional managers, creating stress and confusion when setting priorities.

Managers for matrix projects need special talents. Since they don't have singular authority, they must be able to compromise and negotiate. They need to have tolerance for conflict and be able to handle difficult situations.

Deciding on the best organizational structure for your company is critical to success. It requires thought and analysis about which structure will work at the moment and if it can be adapted to remain effective with growth. Making changes in organizational structure can be painful for management and employees, so it is important to get it right at the beginning. Describe how the firm is organized now and look to see which form would make the most sense.

Consider the following ways to stay organized at work:

1. Set goals

Achievable goals can help you stay focused and productive. When you set specific goals with steps and a timeline, you can organize your work into more manageable tasks. Create both long and short-term goals and add milestones to your calendar to make sure you stay on task.

2. Track progress

To make sure you achieve your goals in the time you allotted, try to track your progress. Tracking progress can also help you identify when you're most productive. For example, you might notice you accomplish more at the start of the week or in the morning. With this information, you can decide when to work on your most important tasks.

Some approaches to tracking your progress include logging in time you worked, tallying hours used toward a project, and blocking out periods of your day when your complete tasks.

3. Use an agenda

An agenda is an excellent tool to evaluate your work organization and productivity. When using a planner, write down specific events and their details throughout the days, weeks, and months. This strategy keeps you aware of what meetings and due dates you have coming up in your schedule. As a result, you're more likely to meet your goals and remember specific events.

There are many types of agendas. Some agendas have a space for every day, while others are weekly or monthly. Think about what kind of planner would best suit you and your work. If you work on your computer often, consider using a digital plan to add events to specific dates.

4. Create to-do lists

To-do lists are simple yet highly effective lists to help maintain productivity throughout the day. Use to-do lists to write down important tasks you want to accomplish. Try to organize your work based on urgency. For example, you can add what you need to complete by the end of the day at the top of your list and what can wait until the next day toward the bottom.

Consider writing your to-do lists on a sticky note or in a notebook. When using this approach, think of ways to organize your to-do list. For example, use coloured pens to distinguish between items, such as a blue pen to designate a team meeting and a red pen to label urgent responsibilities.

5. Practice accountability

When you hold yourself accountable, you reflect on your to-do list, evaluate your progress toward goals and identify ways to improve your performance. Regularly check in with yourself to determine your progress and find areas where you can approve. You

can also develop a system of accountability with your co-workers by holding regular check-ins with each other.

6. Limit distractions

It is much easier to concentrate on work for extended periods in an organized workspace. When you limit distractions, you maintain your focus on your current task. Limit distractions by keeping your space organized and straightforward. Keep common distractions, like your phone, in your desk or a different room.

7. Incorporate a timer

Keep track of how much time you spend on different tasks to see areas where you can better use your time. When you start and end a task, start and end your timer. Consider using time-keeping applications to see how much time you spend on specific tasks. At the end of the week, reflect on your use of time and be more productive. For example, you could try limiting the amount of time you spend checking your emails if you notice you don't have much time to complete other priority tasks.

8. Keep a clean environment

In an organized office, you find supplies and materials efficiently, which makes your workflow more consistent. Keeping a clean environment includes putting items back where they belong, disinfecting your desk with cleaning wipes, and opening your windows for fresh air. A clean environment is a comfortable one, which makes staying productive easier.

Decluttering your workspace is a crucial part of staying clean and organized. Once a week or month, take stock of your workspace and remove any items that you don't use daily. Throw away any outdated to-do lists, and file away completed work.

9. Use labels

Labels are a practical approach to organizing your files. Clearly label each file, and arrange them in a way that makes the most sense to you. For example, you could manage your files in alphabetical order or by year.

Use this approach for digital files, too. Clearly labelled files and folders on your computer are much easier to locate without having to search for them for a long time.

10. Sort your email

Many professionals use email to communicate with each other, and as a result, you might find your email inbox full of emails. Sorting your emails avoids clutter in your inbox and helps you find essential emails faster.

Create digital folders in your email to sort all your messages. Folders categorize your emails in the appropriate place. Labelling emails remind you to reply to senders and keep essential emails in one place.

11. Take breaks

Breaks are an important way to keep focus and stay productive. Breaks keep you motivated because you avoid over-working yourself in a short period. As a result, you can often work for longer. During your break, go on a short walk, or get a snack. Make sure you take your break away from your workspace to reset your focus completely.

Topic 4: Concepts related to the employee's performance of work

What is employee performance?

Put simply, employee performance is how a member of staff fulfils the duties of their role, completes required tasks and behaves in the workplace. Measurements of performance include the quality, quantity and efficiency of work.

What is the concept of performance?

Performance could be defined simply in terms of the achievement of quantified objectives. But performance is not only a matter of what people achieve but also how they are achieving it. A high-performance result comes from appropriate behaviour and the effective use of required knowledge, skills and competencies

How is performance measured?

Every role is different so the metrics used to measure employee performance will ultimately depend on the type of business the company and employees operate in.

But in general, the main ways to gauge performance are:

- Quality of work

Standard of work produced is a key indicator of performance. Are employees putting in maximum effort to ensure high-quality results? Are performance objectives being met? Quality of work provides the basis to analyse all other elements of their performance.

- Speed and efficiency

Looking at how much employees accomplish in an average week, month or quarter, how does this match up to your expectations? Are deadlines met, vastly improved on, or is time wasted? Are corners being cut to produce work quickly? Efficiency is the result of maximum output at least cost so this is vital to be aware of within your company.

- Trust and consistency

Ask yourself if you trust your employees to do all their work to a high standard and deliver it on time. Do they work independently or do you feel that you often have to step in? Do they consistently display company values? Are they punctual and present to the expected standard? High-performing employees can be trusted with autonomy and continue to produce strong results without much supervision.

How to evaluate employee performance

Performance reviews can be daunting, for both employees and managers – but they're a necessary starting point.

Without proper evaluation of an individual employee's performance, you may waste valuable time and effort implementing improvement plans that don't begin to tackle the real problem. Take time during this stage to ensure that you get a complete and well-rounded review of the individual's performance to provide a solid foundation for improvement plans.

Here are some popular ways to evaluate employee performance:

- 360-degree feedback

As the name suggests, this method takes a look at feedback, opinions and assessments from a circle of people. This includes team members, supervisors and others, that the employee works within the company. By going beyond what the direct manager sees, you're instead shown a well-rounded view of performance. Look for any similarities in the 360-degree feedback from the different areas, as this will identify areas for further improvement.

- Objective-based performance

With this method, managers and employees work together to develop performance goals and set clear deadlines for completion. When employees are involved in the process of creating their objectives, they can see how their individual goals contribute to larger company goals. This creates more understanding of what needs to be done and why it's important.

This method also helps to increase engagement and motivation for the employee while making it very easy to define success and failure for the employer.

- A twist on the SWOT

Many will already be familiar with a SWOT analysis, but for performance evaluation, it's best to swap 'weakness' with 'areas for development'. Think of 'opportunities' as future opportunities for the growth of your employees and their development within the company, too.

Starting with strengths allows managers, but also importantly, employees themselves to say what they feel they are good at – helping to indicate where employees might like to develop further. This method can also be a great way to find out if the employee feels that anything about the business is holding them back, or if they feel they are lacking important resources, for example.

By mapping out these different areas of performance, both the manager and employee can work together to create a plan for development.

- Ranked performance on scales

A traditional method is using numbered scales, such as 1 to 5 or 1 to 10, to rank an employee's performance in specific areas. These scales are commonly used as they're easy to understand for both employees and managers, allow for easy comparison between team members, take little administration and can be adapted to any business needs. Managers or HR can set the criteria to be ranked – often including behaviours, aptitude or projects completed.

- Self-evaluation

In this method, the employee judges their own performance against questions set by the employer. This method is most useful when used alongside a verbal performance review. Although some employees may find it difficult to know where they stand, when you can spot the difference between what the employee thinks of their own performance, and what you think – you will find some interesting points to discuss in the meeting. This method also helps employees to understand what the performance review will look at, which can ease any anxieties.

How to improve staff performance and productivity

Next, you need to take the findings from the evaluation and create an improvement plan which works to fill any opportunities or areas of development that have been presented.

9 effective steps to improve employee performance

1. Investigate why the employee isn't meeting expectations

The list of reasons why an employee isn't performing as expected can be endless. If you don't get to the bottom of these, it's almost impossible to take the right steps to improve it.

Start with an open and frank discussion and find out if the employee feels anything is affecting their ability to perform. It could be that they feel the business is holding them back from reaching their full potential, they could be lacking resources, don't feel aligned with company goals or aren't receiving the proper guidance or training.

It's also possible that factors affecting work may be unrelated to work itself. Personal reasons such as an employee may be going through a time of poor mental wellbeing or experiencing issues in their personal life can also impact performance.

2. Discuss both the highs and lows

Performance reviews shouldn't just be focused on what's not going well – even though improvement is your end goal.

Focusing just on areas for improvement could knock your employees' confidence and could lead to resentment if they feel that their hard work in other areas is going unnoticed. Be sure to let your employees know what they're doing well and point out any stand-out moments in performance since their last review, as well as the areas for development.

When you recognise their hard work, employees will know that they're a valued member of the team and will continue to put this effort into their work. Nevertheless, when you do discuss challenges and areas for development, you have to be clear about any problems. The easy road would be to 'soften the blow', but by not being clear on what

the problem is exactly, you'll make any problems worse in the long term and the relationship could become more hostile.

Make sure that the employee leaves the conversation with a clear understanding of their strengths, any areas for development and the steps that should be taken to get there.

3. Provide consistent feedback as they progress

The most efficient way to improve employee performance is to provide regular feedback. By frequently feeding back, you can help employees stay on track as they work to improve, rather than any issues being saved for a more formal review. By then, the effects of poor performance may have been detrimental to the team or business.

Frequent feedback helps employees to become more comfortable with receiving feedback in general. It can also stop any negative connotations that people associate with receiving feedback. That's because frequent feedback is more likely to be a mix of positive and constructive comments, which can help to keep employees engaged and encouraged rather than disheartened.

It's important for performance improvement that employees know where they stand and how they're progressing. They'll then be more aware of how they're doing and what steps need to be taken to improve further.

4. Create a positive workplace culture

A positive workplace culture helps to pave the way for higher engagement, greater motivation and better performance.

Review elements such as how aligned employees are with the company vision and mission, the employee benefits offered and how the business operates – for example, the work environment and elements like flexibility or holiday policies.

The workplace culture should give employees the stage to perform to the best of their abilities. A strong, high-performance workplace culture allows employees to be focused and engaged without any negativities distracting them and with the support of a positive workplace to drive them forward.

The simplest way to find out if your workplace culture is right for your employees is to ask them! Use a confidential survey tool to ask your employees what they think about how your business operates. As this is a confidential platform, your employees will feel free to be honest about anything that they would like to see improved.

Not only can this help you to make changes to anything in the business that may be affecting performance, you can also show your employees that you value them by making changes based on their suggestions. This helps to make your people feel valued but also improve engagement levels.

5. Prioritise learning and development

Often, poor performance can be attributed to a skill or knowledge gap. By creating a focus on learning and development, employees are reminded of best practice, not to mention gaining new skills while taking valuable steps along their career path.

Work with employees to create individual L&D plans as, when you give employees a say in how and what they learn, they stay engaged and it helps to bring extra motivation.

6. Set measurable and realistic goals

To help drive performance improvement, an employee needs to know what's being measured. This way they can monitor their own performance and, in turn, work to improve this. If goals aren't measurable, employees are left guessing about whether they're improving and they might feel that their results are subjective to their manager's opinions.

Secondly, goals must also be realistic. Of course, you want to aim big, but anything that feels too unachievable could overwhelm employees and add to burnout. On the other hand, goals that are too easy will not provide any motivation. Be sure to find the right balance right.

You also need to ensure that it's clear when you expect these goals to be completed by. Set two dates, one to come back and see how things are progressing, and another for an expected completion date.

7. Regularly recognise great work and improvement

When you recognise and reward good work, you let employees know that their effort, hard work and improvement is noticed.

One error that leaders often make is spending a lot of time focusing on under-performance and not focusing enough time on the great work that is going on every day.

By creating a process which allows for regular recognition of hard work, you keep high performers engaged and motivated, whilst also providing an example of what great work looks like for those who might be currently missing the mark. Our recognition platform is a great way to make reward and recognition a part of your day-to-day routine and celebrate hard work and improvement.

8. Maximise job satisfaction

Often, employees only want to put in what they're getting out of a role. If they feel they aren't getting paid enough, aren't getting the benefits that they could be getting elsewhere, or feel like their workplace is lacking in resources - they may not try as hard to perform. Take a look at rival employers to ensure you are offering the right benefits to keep your staff happy, engaged and productive.

9. Act when you don't see improvement

If you've worked with your employee to set clear goals, expectations and a plan for improvement, and they still aren't working to make a change – you have to act on this.

If you don't, employees will feel that it's fine to underperform or have to be micromanaged. This is also demotivating for those who are performing well. As if they feel that poor performance receives no consequences, they'll wonder why they are putting effort in.

Address the issue and lack of improvement with a written or verbal warning. By marking how important this issue really is with a warning, it can help employees to take more notice as they are shown the severity of the situation.

The performance management process is often linked with other organizational systems such as:

- Strategic planning. Many long-term workforce planning models use performance management measurements to assess the "quality" of the workforce and whether the organization is attracting and retaining talented workers.
- Total compensation. Most organizations use performance measurements as the basis for pay-for-performance compensation processes.
- Individual and team development. An individual development plan (IDP, also known as a career development plan) is often used in conjunction with the performance review process as a final documented step to assist employees in goal setting and individual development that will serve to advance their career and promotional opportunities.
- Succession planning. Performance data over time are vital inputs for long-term planning for future organizational leadership.
- HR technology systems. Many organizations use software applications to manage the processes associated with goal setting, performance review and performance improvement plans.

Communication

Organizations can prevent or remedy many performance problems by ensuring that two-way conversations occur between managers and employees, resulting in a complete understanding of what is required, when it is required and how everyone's contribution measures up. Everyone benefits when:

- The employee knows exactly where he or she stands in relation to achieving goals and reaching performance milestones that contribute to career development, promotions and more.
- The manager gains insights into the motivations of the people working for him or her through the required conversations.

- The organization retains motivated employees who understand their role and the roles of others in contributing to the overall success of the organization.

Elements of performance management

Effective performance management systems typically include the following three broad elements: goal setting, performance review and a performance improvement process. Employers may use a multitude of options in the execution of the performance management process, but an effective system will incorporate the three basic elements in some form.

- Element one: goal setting

Goal setting is a process of establishing objectives to be achieved over a period of time. It is the performance criteria an employee will be evaluated against. Performance goals for individual employees should ideally align with organizational goals.

Common types of goals include the following:

- Job description goals. Goals may be based on the achievement of a pre-established set of job duties from the description. These goals are expected to be accomplished continuously until the job description changes. Examples might be financial, customer oriented, or process- or system-oriented goals.
- Project goals. Goals may be based on achievement of a project objective. These goals may be set for a single year and changed as projects are completed. Job description and project goals are "what" needs to be accomplished.
- Behavioural goals. Goals may be based on certain behaviours. These goals are expected to be accomplished continuously. Behavioural goals are "how" things need to be accomplished.
- Stretch goals. Goals that are especially challenging to reach are sometimes referred to as stretch goals. Stretch goals are usually used to expand the knowledge, skills and abilities of high-potential employees

In addition to focusing only on a few major goals during a single year, the goals should be SMART:

- Specific, clear and understandable.
- Measurable, verifiable and results-oriented.
- Attainable, yet sufficiently challenging.
- Relevant to the mission of the department or organization.
- Time-bound with a schedule and specific milestones.

Finally, effective goals should be participative. Both manager and individual should be involved in the development of goals to ensure understanding and commitment. Goals should be documented, available for review, managed on a continuous basis and acknowledged. Goals should be flexible enough to account for changing conditions.

- Element two: performance review

Performance review is the process of assessing an employee's progress toward goals. Strengths and weaknesses of all employees are recorded regularly so that the organization can make informed and accurate decisions regarding an employee's contribution, career development, training needs, promotional opportunities, pay increases and other topics. Performance review and evaluation involve the objective and subjective consideration of how to measure and evaluate employee performance results.

Recommendations for an effective performance review process include:

- A feedback process that is continuous and timely throughout the review period so that employees know how they are doing and what is expected.
- A dialogue that includes performance feedback measured against clear and specific goals and expectations established at the outset of the performance management cycle.
- A process for acknowledging the outcomes of the performance review process that is documented between the manager and the employee.

- A two-way individual conversation between the manager and the employee (preferably face-to-face) at least once a year.

Common types of performance review systems

Regardless of the type or format of the selected method to review an employee's behavioural and work expectations, clear definitions of each level of performance must be provided. Ratters should be provided with examples of behaviours, skills, measurements and other performance factors to assist them in evaluating an employee. Several types of performance review systems are in common use. Each system has its benefits and drawbacks.

- Ranking. Ranking systems list all employees in a designated group from highest to lowest in order of performance. The primary drawback is that quantifying the differences in individual performance is difficult and may involve drawing very narrow—if not meaningless—distinctions.
- Forced distribution. The ratings of employees in a particular group are disbursed along a bell curve, with the supervisor allocating a certain percentage of the ratings within the group to each performance level on the scale. The actual distribution of employee performance may not resemble a bell curve, so supervisors may be forced to include some employees at either end of the scale when they would otherwise place them somewhere in the middle.
- 360-degree feedback. This process collects information from the employee's supervisor, colleagues and subordinates about an individual's work-related behaviour and its impact. Other names for this approach include multirotor feedback, multisource feedback or group review. This form of appraisal is widely favoured for employee development purposes.
- Competency-based. This type of system focuses on performance as measured against specified competencies (as opposed to specific tasks or behaviours) that are identified for each position.

- Management by objectives. Management by objectives (MBO) is a process through which goals are set collaboratively for the organization, various departments and each individual member. Employees are evaluated annually based on how well they have achieved the results specified by the goals. MBO is particularly applicable to nonroutine jobs, such as those of managers, project leaders and individual contributors.
- Graphic rating scales. Graphic rating scale (GRS) appraisals list several factors, including general behaviours and characteristics (e.g., attendance, dependability, quality of work, quantity of work and relationships with people) on which a supervisor rates an employee. The rating is usually based on a scale of three to five gradations (e.g., unsatisfactory, marginal, satisfactory, highly satisfactory and outstanding). This type of system allows the ratter to determine the performance of an employee along a continuum. Because of its simplicity, GRS tends to be one of the most frequently used forms of performance appraisal.
- Behaviourally anchored rating scales. Behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARSs) attempt to assess employee behaviour rather than specific characteristics. The appraisal tool generally contains a set of specific behaviours that represent gradations of performance and are used as common reference points, called "anchors," for rating employees on various job dimensions. Developing a BARS assessment tool is time-consuming and expensive because it is based on extensive job analysis and the collection of critical incidents for each specific job.

Common performance rating errors

Regardless of the review system used, a variety of common ratter errors exist. HR should take the lead to train managers on recognizing and ameliorating their effect on the system. Common errors include:

- Lack of differentiation. Because ratters often lack the confidence to defend their ratings or are reluctant to pass judgment, they may rate everyone pretty much the same. This approach can take the form of leniency (everyone gets high

ratings), severity (everyone gets low ratings) or a universal feeling that everyone is doing just fine (and everyone gets rated in the middle). A reluctance to differentiate can often be attributed to poor training or the failure of an organization to clarify that performance-based judgments are a critical part of the managerial role.

- Recency effect. When managers are not diligent in continuously measuring performance, providing feedback and documenting results, they often cannot remember the earlier part of the performance period. As a result, they weigh the most recent events too heavily.
- Halo/horns effect. The "halo" and "horns" effects occur when an employee is highly competent or incompetent in one area, respectively, and the supervisor rates the employee correspondingly high or low in all areas.
- Personal bias/favouritism. Some managers may allow their impressions of employees or their personal feelings about them to dominate the performance rating process.
- Inaccurate information/preparation. Managers sometimes fail to take the time to solicit relevant information about the employee's actual performance from those who work most directly with the employee, resulting in an inaccurate assessment.
- Element three: performance improvement plans

The use of a performance improvement plan (PIP) can range from employees who may be new to a role or who are unclear on performance expectations to employees who are regularly falling short of meeting performance expectations and whose performance may necessitate the beginning of a progressive discipline process regarding the performance level.

The document used to guide the process is a critical tool as it helps facilitate performance discussions, records areas of concern and ways to correct them, and serves as legal and decision-making documentation. The format of the PIP will vary by employer and should include the following components:

- Employee information.
- Relevant dates.
- Description of performance discrepancy/gap.
- Description of expected performance.
- Description of actual performance.
- Description of consequences.
- Plan of action.
- Signatures of the manager and the employee.
- Evaluation of plan of action and overall performance improvement plan

Common problems

Many of the problems commonly associated with performance management systems are similar to those that beset any other organizational initiative, but with potentially much greater consequences.

- Lack of top management support

If senior management does not send a message to managers and supervisors that the process of rating employee performance is a valuable use of their time, they are likely either to fail to commit the time or simply to fill out the forms but not engage in the important discussions with their employees. Unless senior management actively participates in the process and takes primary responsibility for it, managers and employees will remain unsure of its value.

- Perception of the process as time-consuming "busywork"

Without an organizational commitment to the process and a clear understanding of how it contributes strategically to the organization's successful performance, managers will view it as "busywork" of little value and a waste of time.

- Failure to communicate clear and specific goals and expectations

A manager's specific expectations must be clear for an employee to be able to implement an agreed-on goal. Goals can direct attention, increase persistence and motivate the development of strategies or plans to attain those goals. Clarifying and discussing the performance goals for the coming year is a valuable use of a manager's time and will help avoid miscommunication and surprises. Follow-up communications can be used to reinforce specific goals and to serve as reminders to employees about their progress.

- Lack of consistency

In most organizations, some managers are perceived as "tough" and others as "easy." This inconsistency may result in varied interpretations of an organization's performance rating scale as applied to employees in different groups. Therefore, HR should train managers in using the rating system so that inconsistencies do not occur. Despite training and the best of intentions, differences in the interpretation and application of the rating scale are almost inevitable.

Characteristics of Performance Management

The key characteristics of performance management can be understood by following points which are given below:

- Important organizational tool in order to clarify performance objectives, standards, critical dimensions, and competencies required to enhance individual performance.
- Works best in the situation when an employee's work is planned properly and goals for achievement are communicated to them very clearly.
- Emphasizes the development of capability and capacity of employees to perform consistently.
- It is a 'systematic' and 'holistic' approach to identify critical dimensions of performance so that organizational objectives can be achieved.

- Performance management helps in integrating the whole process with other critical organizational systems including leadership development, succession planning, and talent management efforts.
- Performance management is a multidimensional concept and includes inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes.
- It transforms organizational objectives and strategy into a measurable action plan by getting the right information, people, time, format for the accomplishment of organizational objectives.

Principles of performance management

Some of the major principles of performance management are as follows:

- Performance management is considered as a process, not as an event because it follows good management practice in which continual coaching, feedback and communication are integral to success.
- It is primarily used as a communication tool to ensure mutual understanding of work responsibilities, priorities and performance expectations among both the partners in the organization
- The elements for discussion and evaluation should be job specific – not generalized personality traits and the major duties and responsibilities of the specific job should be defined and communicated as the first step in the process.
- The performance standards for each major duty/responsibility should be defined very clearly and communicated for fulfilling the expectation.
- Employee involvement is encouraged at every level in identifying major duties and defining performance standards.
- The purpose is to establish a history such that evaluations are fair and meaningful.

- The documentation of the performance management process is necessary as often as needed to record the continuum of dialogue between supervisor and employee.
- If an organization includes formal rating, they should reflect the incumbent's actual performance in relation to the performance standard for accomplishing the objectives.
- The evaluation of supervisor is a must on the successful administration of the plan and ongoing performance management responsibilities.

Critical elements of an efficient performance management system

Performance management is an integral part of running a business. It is a tool by which you measure whether your employees are performing the way they should be. Unfortunately, most employees have a problem with reviews because of the focus on the past and not the present.

Some also feel that there is an element of bias. So often, there is a level of negativity around the whole exercise. It is, therefore, critical that a company has an efficient performance management system, which should have some aspects including:

1. Fairness and accuracy

You will achieve balance and accuracy if you look at an employee from multiple perspectives. Take into consideration the skill, capability, and job context.

2. Efficiency

Get rid of any performance management system that takes too much time to implement. It may end up detracting people from performing.

3. Performance elevation

Do not focus on minimal expectations; focus more on how your employees can reach their upper potential. By linking the employee's performance to the objectives and initiatives of the company, you give them a chance to prove themselves.

4. Guide on compensation

A performance management system should guide on compensation. It should, however, not be the main reason why you implemented within your organization. Many companies base their decision on whether to raise an individual's wages depending on the performance review. Yet if you do not do the review properly, it could lead to the situation where some people stagnate through no fault of their own.

5. Incorporate feedback from multiple data sources

Multiple data sources will eliminate the issue of bias. If the HR manager solely bases his review on his perception of an individual, then it will not be a fair review. He should collect additional information from other sources such as peers, subordinates, suppliers, and even other managers.

6. It should be a basis for coaching skills development

The performance review should coach individuals on relevant skills. It should also be the basis of giving feedback, clarifying outcomes, and understanding specific action steps.

7. Set expectations

Every organization has specific goals that each employee needs to meet. The performance management system must clearly specify what they are, actionable steps, and the time frame.

8. Allow for monitoring

The employees should be able to track their performance. It helps build a feeling of ownership because they're in charge of their development. The employer also needs the right tools to ensure that everything is going according to plan.

9. Basis for improvement

Every time an employee meets set goals; the employer should encourage them to move a step farther. The performance management measures and identifies the potential of the employee and provides the relevant resources to help them grow.

10. Allows for rating

A sound performance management system should allow you to rate employees continuously. In this way, you can provide real-time feedback, thus allowing the employee to make relevant changes in how they work.

11. Ongoing communication

An organization needs to have a culture of open communication. It will provide a forum for discussing goals, coaching, learning opportunities, among others. A sound performance system must incorporate this is one of the critical elements.

12. Surveys

Conducting surveys will help you gain an insight into what is happening within your organization. Pay attention to the level of employee engagement because it will have a direct impact on output. You also get to see the areas needing improvement.

Incorporate these twelve critical elements we have highlighted above in your performance management system. You will see a perception change towards the reviews when employees see that the performance management process is fair, balanced, and for the greater good of the entire organization.

Performance-management programs

Although performance-management software packages exist, templates are generally customized for a specific company. Effective performance-management programs, however, contain certain universal elements, such as:

- Aligning employees' activities with the company's mission and goals. Employees should understand how their goals contribute to the company's overall achievements.
- Developing specific job-performance outcomes. What goods or services does my job produce? What effect should my work have on the company? How should I interact with clients, colleagues, and supervisors? What procedures does my job entail?

- Creating measurable performance-based expectations. Employees should give input into how success is measured. Expectations include results—the goods and services an employee produces; actions—the processes an employee uses to make a product or perform a service; and behaviours—the demeanour and values an employee demonstrates at work.
- Defining job-development plans. Supervisors and employees together should define a job's duties. Employees should have a say in what types of new things they learn and how they can use their knowledge to the company's benefit.
- Meeting regularly. Instead of waiting for an annual appraisal, managers and employees should engage actively year-round to evaluate progress.

Importance of employee performance in business organizations

Business owners need employees that are able to get the job done, because employee performance is critical to the overall success of the company. Business leaders need to understand the key benefits of employee performance so that they can develop consistent and objective methods for evaluating employees. Doing so helps determine strengths, weaknesses and potential managerial gaps in the business organization. Although performance evaluations are never fun, they help business leaders determine performance levels for each employee.

Successful employees achieve goals

One of the most important factors in employee performance is to achieve goals. Successful employees meet deadlines, make sales and build the brand via positive customer interactions. When employees do not perform effectively, consumers feel that the company is apathetic to their needs, and will seek help elsewhere. Employees who perform effectively get things done properly the first time. Imagine if the person who created customer reports was always late in completing them. The client services department would always be waiting, looking unprofessional, and perhaps incompetent.

Create a positive work environment

When people are doing their jobs effectively, morale in the office gets a boost. Employees who aren't motivated to get the job done as indicated, can bring down an entire department. It is important to foster a positive, energetic work environment. Cultivate a positive work environment by rewarding high-performing employees with incentives and group recognition during meetings. High-performing offices also attract quality talent in recruiting, because the office feels alive and that it's working toward goals.

Measure employee growth

Using employee evaluations on a consistent basis helps employees see their growth, so that they can feel good about making progress over time. It also helps them set new goals, keeping the energy in the office high. Rewarding high-performing employees often motivates these employees to exceed their efforts from what it was during the previous period. It's one thing to have effective employees doing a great job; it's better to cultivate that strength so that it grows into something bigger and that benefits the entire department or company. Watching employees grow shows the potential they have for advancement and leadership.

Establish team trends

When your employees are not performing well, it negatively affects productivity and ultimately, the bottom line. Don't make the mistake of thinking that poor performance indicates a poor employee. Look for common trends in which groups of employees are succeeding and where there are deficiencies. Smart managers evaluate the deficiencies to see if it is a talent issue or a management and development issue. This can affect team training strategies, as well as future recruiting strategies.

Ultimately, good employees are productive, which creates great working environments and increases.

TOPIC 5: Employer organisations

What is an employer's organisation in South Africa?

Simply put, a South African employers' organisation is legally registered with the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) with a mandate to represent its (business) members at labour-related forums such as the Labour Court, CCMA and bargaining councils.

An employers' organization or employers' association is a collective organization of manufacturers, retailers, or other employers of wage labour. Employers' organizations seek to coordinate the behaviour of their member companies in matters of mutual interest, such as during negotiations with trade unions or government bodies. Employers' organizations operate like trade unions and promote the economic and social interests of its member organisations.

Department of employment and labour

What is the purpose of the department of employment and labour?

Promoting labour standards and fundamental rights at work. Providing adequate social safety nets to protect vulnerable workers sound labour relations. Eliminating inequality and discrimination in the workplace. Enhancing occupational health and safety awareness and compliance in the workplace.

The core mandate of the Department of Employment and Labour is to regulate the South African labour market for sustainable economic development through appropriate legislation and regulations, inspection, compliance monitoring and enforcement, protection of human rights, provision of employment services, promotion of equity, social and income protection and social dialogue.

This mandate however is in the process of being reviewed in accordance with the added responsibility of Employment. The Ministry therefore needs to embark on a reconfiguration process, which will then inform the Department's strategic thrust and focus. This in turn will help consolidate the roles and responsibilities to be allocated to the Minister and Deputy Minister.

Labour court

What does Labour Court do?

The Labour Court has exclusive jurisdiction to determine matters arising from the BCEA regardless of the stage at which the proceedings are at. In limited instances namely, the determination of any matter concerning a contract of employment, the Labour Court shares jurisdiction with the civil courts

The Labour Court is a South African court that handles labour law cases, that is, disputes arising from the relationship between employer, employee and trade union. The court was established by the Labour Relations Act, 1995, and has a status similar to that of a division of the High Court. It has its seat in Johannesburg and branches in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Durban.

Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration CCMA

What does CCMA do?

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), was established as an independent, apolitical dispute resolution body in terms of the Labour Relations Act (LRA). CCMA processes aim to promote fair labour practices and resolve labour disputes in the workplace

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), was established as an independent, apolitical dispute resolution body in terms of the Labour Relations Act (LRA). CCMA processes aim to promote fair labour practices and resolve labour disputes in the workplace. An employee can refer a dispute to the CCMA on the basis of dismissal, wages and working conditions, unfair labour practice, workplace changes and discrimination. Most cases referred to the CCMA relate to unfair dismissal.

When can the employee approach the CCMA?

- In the case of alleged unfair dismissal, the dispute must be referred to the CCMA within 30 days after the date of dismissal.
- If a dispute relates to unfair labour practice, it must be referred to the CCMA within 90 days after the unfair incident, or within 90 days after the employee becomes aware of the unfair labour practice.
- If the dispute relates to discrimination, it must be referred to the CCMA within six days for conciliation and if it cannot be resolved, be referred to the Labour Court.

CCMA processes: the three basics

- Conciliation: This is an informal process where a commissioner is appointed to meet with the parties to a dispute within 30 days after the referral and explore ways to resolve the dispute by mutual agreement. Separate meetings between the commissioner and each party may also be held. If the case is settled, a settlement agreement is signed and the dispute is resolved.
- Arbitration: This is a hearing process where the parties have the opportunity to state their case. During the process, oral evidence is presented as well as any other forms of evidence in support of a party's case. Thereafter the commissioner will issue an arbitration award within 14 days. An arbitration award is binding and the equivalent of a court ruling.
- Conciliation/Arbitration ("Con/Arb"): This is an ongoing process where conciliation and arbitration follow directly after each other on the same day. If conciliation (settlement) is not reached, arbitration will take place on the same day. Both the employer and employee can object to the ongoing process on the same day.

However, the ongoing process is mandatory in matters concerning:

- Dismissal for any reason relating to a probation period;
- Any unfair labour practice relating to a probation period;

- The failure of any payment in respect of the national minimum wage.

Who can represent an employer at the CCMA?

CCMA processes can be intimidating and it is a good idea to get expert advice. An employer can be represented by any employee/director of the business, or by an office bearer/official of a registered employers' organisation (such as the LWO). The only time when a legal practitioner, such as e.g., an attorney, will be allowed during the proceedings, is when:

- The commissioner and all the other parties agree to it.
- The commissioner concludes that it is unreasonable to expect a party to handle the dispute without legal representation.
- The LWO is registered as an employers' organisation with the Department of Employment and Labour and automatically has the right to represent LWO members in forums such as the CCMA, Bargaining Councils and the Labour Court.

Bargaining councils.

What is the main purpose of bargaining council?

Generally, the principal aim and function of a bargaining council as a collective bargaining and conciliation body, is to maintain labour peace in the sector, over which it exercises jurisdiction, by means of collective agreements in respect of conditions of employment.

A bargaining council is a body that is established by one or more employers' organisations and one or more trade unions. It must be registered under the Labour Relations Act for a particular industry. This means that there are restrictions on what kind of dispute specific bargaining councils may hear.

Bargaining councils, what are they?

South Africa currently has over 40 bargaining councils operating nationwide. What exactly is a bargaining council?

A bargaining council is a body that is established by one or more employers' organisations and one or more trade unions. It must be registered under the Labour Relations Act for a particular industry. This means that there are restrictions on what kind of dispute specific bargaining councils may hear.

Section 27 of the Labour Relations Act allows for the forming of bargaining councils by employer organisations and trade unions for the purpose of seeking solutions to labour disputes, managing collective agreements, and putting forward labour law and policy recommendations, in addition to establishing relevant schemes.

Council creation

Registered employer organisations and trade unions can form a bargaining council through the adoption of a constitution and by submitting an application in terms of section 29 with the Registrar of Labour Organisations. The application for registration must be accompanied by the application form and any other information deemed necessary and relevant by the Registrar.

The role of a bargaining council

The role is governed by Section 28 in the Labour Relations Act and entails the creation and enforcement of collective agreements, establishment and management of a dispute resolution found, and the prevention and resolving of labour disputes. It also serves to create and manage funds and schemes, which will benefit its members or relevant parties, and to make proposals regarding the laws affecting the specific sector.

Does an employer have to register with the bargaining council?

An employer is legally obligated to register with that specific bargaining council, if the CORE FUNCTION of the employer is prescribed in the scope of application of any bargaining council. The employer must also comply with the terms and conditions as set out in the collective agreement of the bargaining council.

What are the benefits of being registered with the bargaining council?

When it comes to dispute resolution the commissioners assisting with the disputes in the bargaining council are specialised in that specific industry and collective agreement. Businesses, trade unions and employees will receive expert advice and assistance from the commissioner with regards to dispute resolution.

What are the agreements?

Collective bargaining takes places and the agreement is the outcome of the negotiations. The Council agreement stipulates the minimum wages and aspects such as termination of employment notice period, sick leave and other conditions of employment.

The Bargaining Council consists of representatives from the various parties, including the employer organisations and trade unions. The outcome of the negotiations and bargaining is published in the Government Gazette. If the Council deems it necessary to extend the outcome of the collective bargaining to non-parties, it puts an application in writing to the Minister of Labour to the effect.

Where a sector is without a Bargaining Council, the parties can according to the regulations of the Labour Relations Act, apply for the introduction of a Statutory Council. For this to be approved, the sector-based unions must represent at least 30% of the workers in the particular sector and the employer organisations a minimum of 30% of the sector employers.

The Labour Relations Act stipulates compulsory adherence to the terms of the Bargaining Council Agreement for all parties relevant to the Bargaining Council. Disputes or problems regarding work conditions are referred to the Bargaining Council that appoints agents to investigate and provide compliance orders to the employers in breach of the Council Agreement.

How disputes are settled

The Bargaining Council plays an integral role in dispute settlements within the specific sector. Disputes can be referred to the Council for appeasement. Conciliators are appointed to help the parties negotiate and reach a compromise or solution. If this process fails then one of the parties can request the Council for arbitration assistance and the Council will appoint their arbitrators to seek a solution and order compliance.

Powers and functions of bargaining councils include:

- Making and enforcing collective agreements preventing and resolving labour disputes establishing and managing a dispute resolution fund.
- Promoting and establishing training and education schemes establishing and managing schemes or funds to benefit its parties or members making and submitting proposals on policies and laws that affect a specific sector or area Certain bargaining councils have the status to resolve labour disputes in the same way as the CCMA. In such cases the CCMA does not have jurisdiction to preside over labour disputes in a specific industry, if an accredited bargaining council exist.

Topic 6: External environments in which organisations operate

What are the organizations external environment?

The big picture of an organization's external environment, also referred to as the general environment, is an inclusive concept that involves all outside factors and influences that impact the operation of a business that an organization must respond or react to in order to maintain its flow of operations.

Definition of an external environment

An external environment is composed of all the outside factors or influences that impact the operation of business. The business must act or react to keep up its flow of operations. The external environment can be broken down into two types: the micro environment and the macro environment.

Types of external environments

- The micro environment consists of the factors that directly impact the operation of a company.
- The macro environment consists of general factors that a business typically has no control over. The success of the company depends on its ability to adapt.

Each type of environment has factors, or influences, to take into account. We will review factors for both micro and macro environments, as well as how they relate to our gas station example.

The micro environment

There are five factors that affect the micro environment: suppliers, customers, marketing intermediaries, financiers, and public perceptions.

- Suppliers: At your gas station, what happens if your suppliers don't show up with food, beverages, gas and other products? You'll have nothing to sell, which will have a direct impact on your operation.
- Customers: Customers are a requirement to run a business. If no one is buying, your gas station will have to close its doors.
- Marketing Intermediaries: Middlemen have a direct impact on your business operation. They could be your distributors, wholesalers, and other related people.
- Financiers: Typically, business owners take out a loan to get started, and the growth of the business depends upon their ability to obtain additional loans. Let's say you've decided to add a large kitchen to your gas station and offer fresh foods to your customers. This is a big investment. If the bank tells you no, it may directly impact the way you want your business to operate in the future.
- Public Perceptions: Does your gas station have a good reputation with the general public? You may have to work on this as you revitalize the business.

External forces that shape business activities

Businesses do not operate in a vacuum, and they are influenced by forces beyond their control. How they respond—and how quickly they respond—to these external forces can make the difference between success and failure, especially in today's fast-paced business climate. We can organize the external forces that affect business into the following six categories:

- Economic environment
- Legal environment
- Competitive environment
- Technological environment
- Social environment

- Global environment

Economic environment

The economic environment of business has changed dramatically in recent years.

Legal environment

The legal environment of business is by far the most complex and potentially dangerous external factor a business face. There is a minefield of regulations, laws, and liabilities that companies must cope with in order to stay in business—just turn on the TV or listen to the news to verify this fact.

Competitive environment

How do businesses stay competitive and still maintain a level of profitability that allows them to be successful? The competitive environment has intensified with the development of new technologies, the opening up of foreign markets, and the rise of consumer expectations

Technological environment

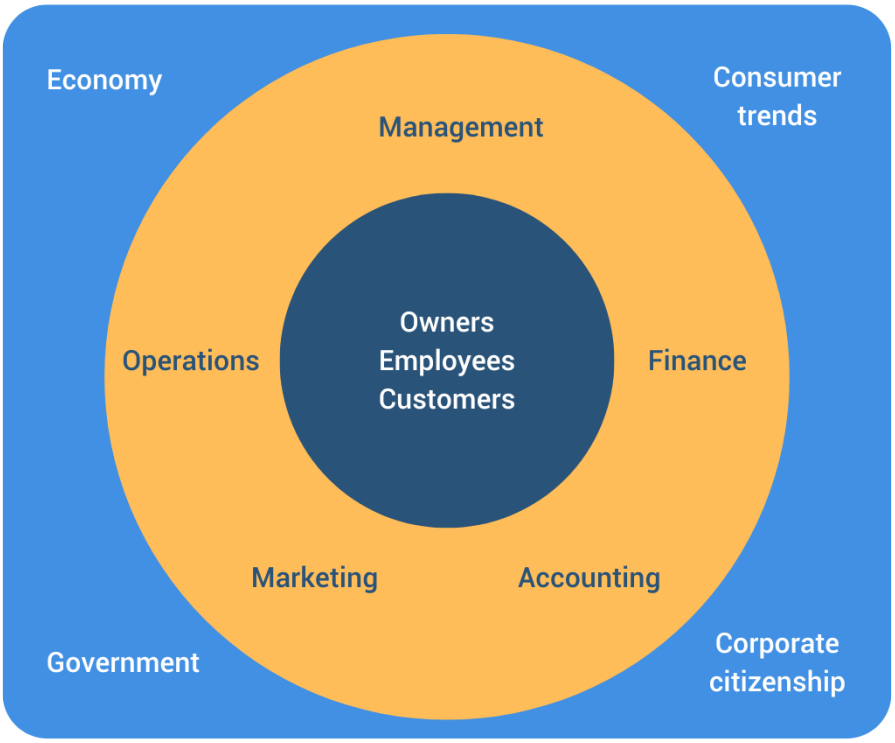
Almost daily, businesses are driven to rethink the business technology they use to reach customers, produce their products, and provide their services. When we refer to business technology, we mean digital tools such as computers, telecommunications, and the Internet. The expansion of Internet access to virtually every corner of the world has forced many traditional brick-and-mortar businesses into e-commerce or online sales. The advantage to businesses is that their customers no longer have to live in proximity to their stores in order to purchase goods and services. Consumers can conveniently shop for products and services without leaving their home, their desk, or their phone.

Social environment

The social environment of business encompasses the values, attitudes, beliefs, wants, and desires of the consuming public. The demographics that describe the American population by gender, age, ethnicity, location, occupation, education and income are constantly evolving.

Global environment

From a business perspective, it is a small world, and it's only getting smaller. Free trade among nations has allowed goods and services to flow across international borders more efficiently and cheaply. Formal trade agreements among nations have forged unprecedented links and interdependencies among economies.



Topic 7: Employer-Employee Relationships

What is an employer-employee relationship?

When an employer hires a new employee, he is not just bringing a new member of the workforce aboard, he is also starting a new relationship. Because employers and employees often work in close quarters, they necessarily develop relationships. Managing these relationships is vital to business success, as strong relationships can lead to greater employee happiness and even increased productivity. To reap these benefits, keep the dynamics of your employer-employee relationship in mind.

An employer/employee relationship, then, is the way an employer (either an individual or an entity) and employees view and treat one another in a work setting. From the moment a person signs his or her employment contract, a relationship starts to develop between that employee and their employer.

Definition of employees

Employees of a business work directly for the enterprise and are not independent contractors. Federal agencies define an employee as a person whose daily work is directed or controlled by the business, particularly when the method of executing duties is defined and an integral part of day-to-day operations. Employees generally work at a specific location or remotely during a specified time period, such as 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Employer-employee relationship basics

Generally, employer and employee relationships should be mutually respectful. The degree of closeness in these relationships will depend on both the employer and the employee. Some employers opt to keep their employees at a distance and, in doing so, ensure that there is no confusion as to the hierarchy that exists between them. Others elect to become friendlier with their employees, seeing this as a way to ramp up employee happiness.

While neither option is entirely right or wrong, it is wise to avoid getting too close to employees, as doing so can cause the line between employer and employee to become blurred.

Mutual reliance relationship

The employer-employee relationship should be one of mutual reliance. The employer is relying upon the employee to perform her job and, in doing so, keep the business running smoothly. Conversely, the employee is relying upon the employer to pay her and enable her to support herself, and potentially her family, financially.

Relationship building over time

Just as with all relationships, the employer and employee relationship are one that must develop over time. Employers can promote the building of relationships by speaking candidly with their employees about their lives, asking them about their families and learning about their interests. Similarly, employees can promote the building of this relationship by being open with their employer and sharing information about themselves and their lives.

Set relationship boundaries

Though the type of employee and employer relationship that is considered appropriate varies from company to company, boundaries exist at almost all companies. Generally, it is unwise for employers to develop romantic relationships with their employees. Similarly, employers should exercise care to ensure that the relationship they develop with one employee isn't notably closer than the relationships they develop with others, as this can lead to concerns regarding favouritism or similar issues of unfairness within the workplace.

Elements of an employer-employee relationship

Maintaining a good employer-employee relationship is crucial to the success of you and your business. Not only that-- but having a good employer-employee relationship can open up new doors of possibility for everyone at your workplace.

Interested to know some elements of a good employer-employee relationship? Keep reading for 7 elements plus some tips on How to improve the employer employee relationship.

1. Establish employer vs. employee relationships

Let's first look at an employment definition. An employer-employee relationship is simply the connection that you, as an employer, have with your employee(s).

This could be fairly simplistic depending on the hierarchy at your workplace, or fairly complex. The difference between employee and employer isn't usually too big.

2. Employee vs employer relationship example

Let's say you're the employer of a decent-sized business with managers, supervisors, and standard employees. You as the employer might not have the strongest direct relationship with each standard employee. They might have to go through the chain of command in order to reach you, which creates some distance.

On the opposite end, some situations will require you to be closer with standard employees. In these cases, it's imperative that you have a healthy relationship with your employees as it can ultimately affect their wellness.

Concerned about your relationship with employees? Let's take a look at how to improve the employer employee relationship.

3. Create a safe space for employees

One of the top reasons that employees leave their job or dread going into it is because they don't feel comfortable at work. For employees who spend a large amount of their life at work (we're talking over 30 hours here), it is vital that you provide a safe space for employees.

How can you do this? Well, get to know your employees. Ask them what they feel comfortable doing, what they don't feel comfortable doing, how their week is going, and so on.

Also-- one thing necessary in workplaces these days is to ask employees their pronouns. This helps them feel more accepted at work.

4. Communication is everything

On the topic of getting to know your employees, you need to have good communication. Employees rely on you to tell them how to proceed.

Similarly, you rely on them to get jobs done. You need to keep this in mind as there are many similarities between employee and employer that often go overlooked.

If something needs to be brought attention to, do not beat around the bush.

5. Be reliable

No one likes a person who can't stick to their word, especially employees! When you promise something to your employees, make sure it's done.

This creates a stronger bond between you two. If you can't get it done, offer an incentive for the opportunity missed. Both employer vs employee rights also need to be clearly stated and addressed.

6. Offer career advice and advancements

Oftentimes, employees look up to their employers because they assume you have more experience than them. Be that shining idol in their life. This is just another one of the great elements of an employee employer relationship.

Rather than boss them around, instruct them on ways they can advance through the ladder. On that note, you can even offer promotions or opportunities to them for good performance to boost their happiness!

7. Provide constructive feedback

If your employee is doing something that doesn't sit well with you, tell them!

But don't let this be an opportunity for you to lecture them. Interact with a calm mind and ensure them they are not in trouble (unless they did something truly heinous). Offer them guidance if they have trouble understanding what's going on.

Importance of employer employee relationship in companies

When an employer hires, he is not just adding a new member to the organization; he also forms an employee and employer link. Employers and employees who successfully grow a steady relationship are more likely to be happy and loyal to each other.

The degree of closeness in these relationships depends on both the employer and the employee. When some employers choose to follow the line of hierarchy, others opt to create a friendly bond.

This relationship often leads to employee engagement, nurturing strong employee morale and vibrant company culture. It plays a significant role in the overall success of the businesses.

While establishing a solid employer employee relationship, you must consider a few essentials:

1. Mutual respect

Both the employers and employees should have mutual respect. Signs of disrespect are not just bad for the relationship; it also leads to low retention and bad word of mouth.

2. Knowing each other

To start a healthy relationship, it is essential to know the mutual strengths and weaknesses. It allows them to understand each other by discovering similarities and differences.

3. Communicating freely

Open communication is vital in an employer-employee relationship. It leads them to be on the same page, moving in the same direction, towards one common goal.

4. Knowing the gap

There needs to be a gap between professionals and personal relationships. It is wise to avoid getting too close to employees, as it can cause the gap between employer and employee to become blurred. As a result, it can bring in allegations of favouritism in the workplace.

5. Embracing recognition

Employers should remember that appreciation and recognition are equally important as criticism.

6. Understanding what 'control' means

An employer doesn't necessarily have to exercise their right to control the employees.

The standard law test should work as a balance in maintaining the employer-employee relationship.

Having strong employer and employee relations reaps a lot of benefits for your business. Let's know-how.

Here's how a good employer employee relationship helps your business

1. Fewer workplace disputes

A friendly work environment leads to a reduction in conflicts. Employee's trust gets more robust when they don't argue and work towards a common goal. That, in turn, results in making them productive by avoiding confusion and increasing disharmony.

2. Added on productivity

Just as mentioned above, a positive relationship with the employer helps the employees to generate more revenue by increased productivity. It is because when the work atmosphere is pleasant, motivation is increased, and morale is improved. And when employees feel happy, they are more likely to give their best efforts on the job.

3. Higher engagement rate

The organizational relationship is directly related to employee engagement. According to a report by the Society for Human Resource Management, "The majority of employees find the relationship with their employer to be significant to their job satisfaction."

Thus, a close relationship can make the employees grow and stay for the long term because they feel valued.

4. Higher retention rate

Companies that endorse positive relations are more likely to be successful because it helps gain the confidence of their loyal employees who prefer to stick around.

They won't leave the team and organization, saving on recruitment, hiring, and training. To avoid business loss, it is better to invest in creating a strong relationship rather than spending on new searches.

5. Easier work assignment

As an employer, you should know your employees' strengths, weaknesses, and the current and potential range of their expertise. It helps in assigning responsibilities and avoiding mix-ups. It enables the employees to stay motivated and complete the given task efficiently.

Some employers also choose to create tasks to overcome weaknesses. When employees uncover new strengths, they feel happy and be themselves at work.

6. Quick understanding of problems

Maintaining a good relationship with employees results in overall free and frank communication in the day-to-day business. Such open conversations assist in being aware of existing business problems and drawbacks, which helps find quick resolutions.

7. Workplace equality

Most employers fail to serve equality in the workplace. And without a fair and equal environment, employees do not feel important.

As a result, they don't tend to work harder and be productive. By embracing equality for the employees, you can create a sound and efficient workforce vital for any business's success.

8. Earning employee advocacy

Employee advocacy is nothing but empowering your employees to promote the brand name of the company.

But why would an employee do that without a sense of oneness and trust towards the company? A solid employer-employee relationship can create a consistent employee advocacy strategy and activate them as promoting assets.

9 Examples of employee relations

On the surface, employee relations are a simple concept. But going deeper, there's a lot you need to consider when putting together a strategy.

Below are 9 examples of employee relations in action:

- Making sure new team members fit into the company culture

Hiring is no longer about competence alone. A good employee relationship includes making sure that all potential employees fit into the company well. It's up to the HR relations team to screen potential employees not only when they apply but also in interviews.

- Onboarding support for new recruits

Employee relations teams are responsible for the full onboarding process. Teams need to create welcome packs, set up meetings with key members, and get their equipment ready.

- Providing ongoing support for employees

Employee relations doesn't stop once a new team member joins the company. You also need to provide ongoing support in the form of learning programs, plus mentoring and coaching.

- Analysing performance

The improvement of employees' performance is essential for helping companies to grow year-on-year. Employee relations teams are responsible for monitoring each colleague's performance and offering ways to help where possible. You can do this by using insights software.

- Dealing with employee misconduct

Even with the best employee relations strategy, HR teams will find themselves in challenging situations. Unfortunately, employee misconduct such as violating health safety regulations and harassment does happen. Teams, therefore, need a plan in place to deal with these problems.

- Resolving ongoing conflicts

Not everyone is going to get along at all times. Disgruntled employees may argue with their managers or even with each other. Employee relations teams will play an essential role in diffusing these situations and finding the best possible solution.

- Exploring new ways to further-improve employee well-being

Even in an office full of happy colleagues, there is always room for improvement. You might look for new ways to further-improve your employees' happiness by paying for online courses, promoting mental health days, and more.

- Extra-curricular initiatives

One of the best ways to improve your employees' well-being is by providing activities and events outside of the office. This could be something as simple as drinks on a Friday evening or even paid-for fitness and yoga classes.

- Office health and safety procedures

Employee relations professionals are responsible for putting together building safety procedures. They must also provide everyone with the correct training and manage everything efficiently if something happens.

8 Crucial traits of an employee relations manager

Being a HR Manager requires a unique set of skills. You must be competent in both managing people and having a forward-thinking mindset.

The most important skills for maximizing your employee engagement capabilities are below.

- Emotional intelligence

As the leader of a labour relations team, you need to have a high emotional intelligence level. You must know how to control your thoughts and feelings, but also read others.

Empathy and understanding other points of view will enable you to solve colleagues' problems better.

- Good communication skills

Unsurprisingly, employee relations require being a good communicator. You need to know how to engage others, create emails that people want to open, carry out interview questions, and more.

- The ability to identify problems

Being a valuable Employee Relations Manager requires proactivity. You must have the ability to identify problems that may arise and solve them before they become a serious issue.

You also need an understanding of where underlying office issues may be, and how to solve them.

- A strategic mindset

Employee engagement trends change. So does what employees want and do not want from their office experience.

As the Employee Relations Manager, you must have a strategic mindset and be able to identify changing trends and know how to implement improvements.

- Leadership

Whenever something goes wrong with any employee, employee relations are usually the first called in to help. Therefore, you need to lead others in difficult times and be a source of inspiration to others.

- Social responsibility

Everyone should be socially responsible, but this is especially true for Employee Relations Managers. You should consider how your team's actions impact both the office and wider community, and also think about how you can support humanitarian issues.

- An innovative mindset

A good Employee Relations Manager is not afraid to try new things. They might overhear new ways to improve what they offer to employees, or introduce ideas they've seen happen elsewhere.

- Resilience

No profession is all sunshine and rainbows, even less so when managing a whole office of employees. You might find that others talk to you disrespectfully, you need to make difficult decisions, or deal with other employee-related challenges. Therefore, resilience is essential in employee relations.

What are common employee relations issues?

Most employee relations teams will have to deal with similar challenges. If left ignored, they will have a detrimental effect on your teammates' experience in the office. This can lead to bitterness, resentment and further rifts.

4 common issues in employee relations are:

- Disengaged employees

This is a big employee relations issue. Beyond stifling their own personal growth, a disengaged employee can become toxic. Their actions could affect the productivity and morale of others, and also harm their mental health.

- Little opportunity for upward mobility

If employees feel like they've put in the work to deserve a higher salary or promotion, they may find it disheartening when others achieve this.

Limited opportunities for upward mobility can also cause jealousy and resentment, while also providing little incentive for them to go above and beyond.

- Conflict management

Not everything will be rosy all the time. Personalities may clash, team members might not see eye-to-eye, and tempers could flare. It's important that all disagreements are settled fast and professionally.

- Not having access to better information

According to HR Acuity, 58% of HR representatives think that having access to better data would help them to serve their employees better. Not having the tools to improve your offerings can hold you back and cause leakage in talent.

TOPIC 8: Workplace Health and Safety

What is the meaning of health and safety at work?

Employers have duties under health and safety law to assess risks in the workplace. This means identifying work activities that could cause injury or illness and taking action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 intends:

- To provide for the health and safety of persons at work and for the health and safety of persons in connection with the use of plant and machinery;
- The protection of persons other than persons at work against hazards to health and safety arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work;
- To establish an advisory council for occupational health and safety; and
- To provide for matters connected therewith.

Health and safety policy

The Occupational Health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993, requires the employer to provide and maintain as far as reasonable and practical a work environment that is safe and without risk to the health of employees.

Section 7 of the Act provides direction to employers concerning the health and safety policy of the organisation.

According to this section the employer will be obligated to have a health and safety policy once the chief inspector has directed him to do so. It would therefore not be compulsory for all organisations to formulate and implement a health and safety policy but the employer is still duty-bound to inform employees of work-related risks and dangers. According to legal prescription the employer must inform employees how work-related risks and dangers could be prevented.

A health and safety policy could prove to be a valuable tool in this regard, in fact the importance of work-related policies and procedures cannot be over emphasised. In a home there are usually rules that the family abides by which brings order to the home. The same applies to the workplace; rules and regulations bring order to the workplace.

Employers need to comply with minimum standard legislation but the employer also have the right to set a better standard for their particular business. It is imperative to communicate these standards to employees and other role players like contractors. This should preferably be done in writing and these documents are called policies and procedures.

Policy documents also provide direction to all company activities and provide the criteria to measure and evaluate efficiency. In short, policies and procedures could be described as a set of documents that describe an organisation's policies for operation and the procedures necessary to fulfil the policies. Without it, it would basically be impossible to effectively control and manage employees and other role players.

The primary objective of a health and safety policy should be to prevent or reduce work-related accidents and occupational diseases. An appropriate policy could help to avoid the expense, inconvenience, and other consequences of workplace accidents by making sure that employees and other role players know what is expected of them.

An employer who lacks the necessary rules and regulations in order to regulate the behaviour of employees and other role players cannot expect any sympathy if these persons misbehave and take advantage of the situation.

A health and safety policy are a written statement of principles and goals embodying the company's commitment to workplace health and safety. There are no hard and fast rules about what to include in a policy. The employer should create a policy that is suitable and sufficient in order to address the health and safety need of the company.

A good policy will indicate how the organisation protects those who could be affected by its activities and be broad enough to cover all aspects of the company's activities.

The policy should be of an appropriate length and relevance to the activities and size of the organisation.

The health and safety policy statement can be brief, but it should mention:

1. A description of the organisation.
2. Recognize the need to comply with minimum standard legislation of the occupational health and safety act.
3. Recognize the priority of safety in relation to other organizational goals and policies.
4. Acknowledge the right of every employee to work in a safe and healthy environment.
5. Stipulates that management is accountable for occupational health and safety. programs and management's commitment to providing a safe and healthy work environment by eliminating or minimizing the hazards that can cause accidents and injuries.
6. The organisation's basic health and safety philosophy (statement of health and safety principles and goals).
7. The general responsibilities of all employees.
8. That health and safety shall not be sacrificed for expediency.
9. That unacceptable performance of health and safety duties will not be tolerated.
10. Encourage co-operation with unions and workers to involve all employees in implementing the health and safety policy into practice.
11. The policy dates.
12. Be signed by the chief executive officer.
13. Be visibly displayed for all workers to se.
14. Review date of the policy.

The policy basically demonstrates how seriously an organisation takes its health and safety responsibilities. It is important to note that the employers are bound by the prescriptions of their specific policy and could be held legally liable for not complying with it.

Monitoring that the policy is still effective is also very important, a policy will only be effective if it is reviewed on a regular basis.

The drafting; implementation and monitoring of the organisations health and safety policy is a clear demonstration of management commitment in this regard. Senior management must be committed to carrying out and review that policy consistently and completely.

Health and safety should enjoy the same priority as the organization's other major objectives. Senior management must be committed to ensure that the policy is carried out with no exceptions.

Commitment and involvement are complementary to each other and are essential elements needed to spearhead any health and safety program to success.

Topic 9: Understand and apply work ethics, norms and values

What is work values and work ethics?

Work ethic is a value based on hard work and diligence. It is also a belief in the moral benefit of work and its ability to enhance character. An example would be the Protestant work ethic. A work ethic may include being reliable, having initiative, or pursuing new skill.

What are ethical norms and values?

In this lesson, you have learned that ethical norms can be defined as standardized ways of conduct and behaviour in a society, company, or other organization. You also learned that values can be described as the virtues and principles desired in a society, company, or other organization.

What is the difference between norms and values?

The main difference between norms and values is that norms are accepted standards of behaviour, whereas values are principles that help you to decide what is right and wrong.

Norms are standards of behaviour that play a major role in maintaining social order and stability. Values, on the other hand, are abstract concepts that help us to decide what is wrong and right. While values are general guidelines, norms are specific guidelines.

What are norms

Norms or social norms are accepted standards or ways of being or doing things. To be more specific, they are standards of behaviour shared by members of a social group. These are unwritten rules of behaviour. For example, shaking hands when you meet someone, saying 'sorry' when you bump into someone, not interrupting someone when they are talking, opening a door for an elderly person, covering your mouth and nose when sneezing, not talking with your mouth full, etc. are some social norms. In addition,

norms can change according to culture, society or environment. For example, when you enter a Hindu or Buddhist temple or a mosque, you have to take off your shoes. However, this is not applicable to all religious places.

Furthermore, norms help to create order and stability in society. Most people want to be part of society and be accepted by society; those who do not follow social norms will face disapproval and alienation from society. This is how society makes sure people follow norms. Moreover, we usually learn social norms by experience and observation, not through formal learning.

What are values

Values are basically principles that help you to decide what is right and wrong. They describe personal standards of what is valuable or important. Values help us to make decisions about right and wrong, important and less important, etc.

Values can be made of our likes, dislikes, perspectives, prejudices, and judgment. They have the ability to shape a person's behaviour. Therefore, they provide a basic foundation for understanding a person's personality, behaviour, attitudes, and perceptions.

Difference between norms and values

Definition: Norms are accepted standards of behaviour, whereas values are principles that help you to decide what is right and wrong.

Nature: While norms are specific guidelines, values are general guidelines.

Social vs personal: Norms are behaviours that are accepted by the society, while values are principals believed by an individual.

Variance: Moreover, norms may vary from society to society, while values may vary from individual to individual.

Examples: Covering your mouth and nose when sneezing, shaking hands when you meet someone, saying 'sorry' when you bump into someone, not talking with your

mouth full, etc. are some examples of norms whereas honesty, integrity, courage, kindness, fairness, and generosity are examples of values.

What is work ethic, and its purpose?

In its simplest definition, a system of moral principles is called ethics. They affect how people lead their lives, for life is an unbroken stream of decision-making and ethics are concerned with what is the right moral choice, for individuals and for society. This is also known as a moral philosophy. The etymology of ethics is derived from the Greek word ethos, meaning habit, custom, disposition or character.

Ethics are therefore concerned with these sorts of moral decision: how to live an ethical life, rights and responsibilities, right and wrong language, what is good and bad and so on. Contemporary notions of ethics have been handed on from philosophy, religions, and global cultures. Ethics are debated in topics such as human rights, right to life, and professional behaviour.

In a business, an ethical code is a defined set of principles which guide an organization in its activities and decisions and the firm's philosophy may affect its productivity, reputation, and bottom line.

Among staff ethical behaviour ensures work is completed with integrity and honesty and staff that are ethical adhere to policies and rules while working to meet the aims of the enterprise. An ethically positive, healthy work culture enhances morale among employees.

Work ethic definition and meaning

Traditionally, work ethic has been understood as a value based on hard work and diligence. Capitalists, for example, believe in the necessity of working hard and in consequential ability of enhancing one's character. Socialists suggest that a concept of "hard work" is deluding the working class into being loyal workers of the elite; and working hard, in itself, is not necessarily an honourable thing, but simply a way to create greater wealth for those at the summit of the economic pyramid.

These values have been challenged and characterized as submissive to social convention and authority, and not meaningful in and of itself, but only if a positive result accrues. An alternative perception suggests that the work ethic is now subverted in a broader, and readily marketed-to society. This perspective has given us the phrase "work smart".

In recent times, many say that a work ethic is now obsolete and that it is no true any longer that working more means producing more, or even that more production leads to a better life… this is, of course, not to be confused with quality productivity.

Here is one of the views about work ethic from Will Smith and how important it is where Will says (about 2:00 during the interview):

"I've never viewed myself as particularly talented. Where I excel is ridiculous sickening work ethic".

Importance of work ethic

Those with a strong work ethic have inculcated principles that guide them in their work behaviour. This leads them to consistent higher productivity, without any prodding that many require to stay on track. Therefore, whether staff are naturally this way or need be trained, if possible, into such an attitude is determined by the managers.

Productive work

Individuals with a good work ethic are usually very productive people who work at a faster pace. They regularly accomplish more work, more quickly than those who lack a work ethic, for they do not quit until the work which they are tasked is completed. At least in part, this is also due to the fact that they wish to appear to be stronger employees, and thus, they wish to appear to be of more benefit to their managers and the company.

Cooperation

Cooperative work can be highly beneficial in a business entity, individuals with a good work ethic know this well. They understand the usefulness of cooperation, e.g., teamwork — they often put an extensive amount of effort into working well with others.

Such people usually respect company authority enough to cooperate with anyone else with whom they are paired, in a polite and productive way, even if the individuals in question are not so ethically inclined.

Ethics in organizational culture

Employers, executives and employees, all adhering to an ethics code stimulate an ethical work culture. Business leaders must lead by exhibiting the behaviour they wish to see in employees.

Reinforce ethical conduct by rewarding employees who show the integrity and values that coincide with company policy, and discipline those who make the wrong ethical decisions. Positive ethics culture improves morale in a business, plus it may increase productivity and employee retention which cuts the costs of employee churning, consequentially financially benefitting an organization as improved productivity improves company efficiency.

Basic work ethic for an organisation

Ideally, the policies a business operates with are compassion, fairness, honour, responsibility, and integrity. One of the best ways to communicate organizational ethics is by training employees about company standards. Basic work ethics for any organization should include:

- Uniform rules and regulations: An ethical organizational example is the common treatment of all staff, i.e., with the same respect, regardless of race, culture, religion, or lifestyle, with equal chances for promotion. Therefore, small company

managers should desist from favouring any one employee, for it can lead to lawsuits and is also highly counterproductive.

- Communication of the rules and regulation to all employees: Company policies must be clearly communicated to each employee with a transparency at all levels of the hierarchy. Employees are the spine of all organizations and should have a say in the goals and objectives of a firm.
- Respect for employees: Respect employees and in return receive the same. Regulations should not be so rigid, and therefore, don't expect staff to attend work two days before a marriage. If somebody is not well, don't ask them to attend office unless or until there's an emergency.
- Allow a degree of freedom to employees without constant micro-management: Key roles of responsibility need to be established on the first day of joining with responsibilities commensurate with a person's expertise. Employees should be inducted into training if needed.
- Clear cut salary and promotion policy: Employees crib if they are underpaid. Make sure they get what is deserved and decided in the presence of the person. A major attrition factor is a poor appraisal, promotion prospects are ideally based on merit, not favour. Clarity is crucial.
- Clear and uniform holiday schedule: It is the responsibility of human resource professionals to prepare the holiday calendar at the beginning of the year and circulate the same among all employees.
- Effects of work ethics within an organization: Preferably a workplace ethic culture will ensure that employers guide and mentor staff appropriately while management treats all as equal. Transparency is essential.

How leadership ethics and employee ethics can impact the organization

Owner and executive level accountability is a vital function of leadership. Executives, as equally as employees, are expected to be honest and transparent. Organizations need to abide by ethical norms; all of which benefit the consumer, the society and the firm.

What is the core ethical elements that define the ethics of an organization?

There are at least four elements that aim to create an ethical behavioural culture of employees within an organization?

- A written code of ethics and standards (ethical code).
- Ethics training for executives, managers, and employees.
- The availability of ethical situational advice (i.e., advice lines or offices).
- A confidential reporting system.

How to develop strong work ethic

The employment market is now so competitive that if one doesn't have a positive work ethic, then employers do not bat an eyelid about looking for someone who meets their firm's requirement.

As a positive work ethic is vital to a business success, then each person from the CEO to new staff, must inculcate this to keep the company functioning optimally. Get to work promptly, arriving late always starts a workday badly, and signals that you are not committed. Take into consideration traffic, weather and so on and leave home to reach on time. Take responsibility for your actions, which includes being punctual.

- Step 1: Be professional about your work

Professionalism is beyond a clean shirt, for it includes one's values, attitude, and demeanour. Practice being cordial and positive while refraining from gossip. Knowing how to communicate constructively and positively, while respecting the feelings of others is an invaluable tool. Respect others and develop a reputation for having integrity, meaning honesty, fairness, and consistency in what you do and speak.

Reliability and honesty: Work ethic is more than completing long hours for its foundation is integrity. To develop integrity, one can:

Act the same when people are not watching you, as when they are.

Perform consistently at the same level of quality. Be conscientious. Be honest in all things.

Honesty isn't a business policy; it is a state of mind.

Deliver best outputs: A work ethic is fundamental to success at anything, plus it makes you a valuable employee. For career advancement this is more important than ever before. In work assignments strive to exceed expectations by paying attention to details and making the quality of work your central priority. Everyone can work fast, but few will deliver best quality outputs with few mistakes.

Keep everything in an organized method like a good file system for documents (both soft and hard copy), so you can retrieve these easily to get on with the essential tasks. All of us have times when we are more productive, some in the early morning, some later at night. Identify and schedule the difficult work to be completed in those periods.

Be consistent in delivering good quality work and earn good reputation: Everything worthwhile accomplishing requires discipline. Remain focused on a long-term goal while avoiding getting side-tracked by a short-term gratification. To be persistent and able to follow through on assignments… Train yourself.

However productive you may be, there is always an opportunity to increase one's level of quality work. Effectiveness means doing the work that matters. Be effective first, then become efficient. Efficient is achieving improved output in less time. There is no point in becoming efficient at doing that non-value-added work.

- Step 2: Manage your time

Know your strength and weaknesses (including potential distractions, so you can avoid them): Evaluate work. Identifying one's weaknesses and making a plan to improve these areas builds a stronger work ethic. One way of evaluating this is to create a list summarizing the skills and requirements of your work, and the strengths and weaknesses. Be honest about weaknesses, and what it is that distracts you – this is step one in learning to manage those weaknesses.

Distractions are everywhere – Twitter, Facebook, TV, mobile, etc. Complete these before arriving at work for a no-distraction period. Turn off the internet and see how you start

doing work in due time. Ditch the unimportant. If the work is nice-to-do but not need-to-do. Stop it.

Accelerate becoming a more productive employee by regularly visualizing yourself as channelled toward higher accomplishments. Vision yourself as highly efficient and feed the subconscious mind with this vision until it is accepted as a command. The individual that you "vision", is the individual that you "become". Lastingly successful people have one common denominator: they focus on strengths and manage around any weaknesses.

Set yourself deadlines for delivering even small tasks: Being able to complete your tasks and finish what you start, is an essential part of character building. You cannot imagine a fully mature, fully functioning person who is unable to finish what she begins. The development of this habit is the key to long-term success. Don't waste time by doing stuff that is not important? Constantly evaluate to check which things absolutely must get done.

Prioritize tasks and set the most important ones in the morning: Complete projects and tasks immediately. A trademark behaviour of a worker with a poor work ethic is delaying work until another day, which usually only leads to an incomplete or late project.

Avoid procrastination: Procrastinating is a great waste. Imagine all that could be accomplished by eliminating procrastination from this moment on. To overcome procrastination, first realize that it's not the real issue. Procrastination, laziness, bad time management, or lack of discipline, are merely symptoms of the issue. The real reason is beneath this. You can also use the Pomodoro technique to avoid procrastination.

Avoid negative talk and gossip: Keep the lazy, the negative minded, and the unproductive, at arm's length, for it's a psychological prison. Associate with ambitious, hard-working people, and soon count yourself amongst them.

Provide feedback that improves situations and builds people up.

Be an active listener and keep an open mind.

- Step 3: Keep a balance and deliver consistent high-performance work

Do sport, sleep well, and socialize: Play is best when it's earned, equally sleep. Earn sleep by working hard on one's goals in the day. A good work ethic isn't just being glued to a computer. It is also understanding how to take care with decent sleep, and eating nutritiously. Take time to relax and recharge while keeping priorities in your life clear, helps maintain a good perspective at work.

- Step 4: Develop good work habits

Steer the self-development path towards choosing to be an employee with a strong ethic, after all, creating a habit for oneself is really a question of being an action-minded person. The 'doing component' flows easily when embracing the 'being part.'

Create and learn habits: Values to inculcate and habituative:

- Valuing punctuality and attendance.
- Valuing time, orderliness, neatness, and speed.
- Working smarter but not harder; being psychologically self-employed.
- Playing an internal game of working, yet enjoying the importance of relaxation and rest.

"Do it now" habit: Never leave 'till tomorrow what can be accomplished today.' Good ethics habituative both attitude, action, and inevitably – consequence: how you do, what you do this moment.

- The initiative habit – positivity.

The main cause of poor productivity and self-sabotage is procrastination, for many reasons, including the perceptions that a task is unpleasant, may lead to negative consequences, or is overwhelming.

- Cultivate flexibility

"Do it right" habit: A disciplined habit makes a difference in the long term. Don't try to break bad habits. Alternatively, choose preferable substitutes that you move forward to, in place of the old ones.

Other good habits:

Concentration is the ability to stay on a task until it is completed, by working in a straight line to get from where one is, without distraction or diversion, to the destination, i.e., completion of the work.

Get off to a good start:

- Clean up and get organized.
- Plan activities.
- Streamline work and emphasize the important work.
- Concentrate on one work task at a time until completion.
- Work steadily.
- Make smart use of technology.
- Be in control of office paper, work in-basket, and e-mail.
- Multitask on routine matters.
- Make better use of time.
- Don't forget to create some quiet, uninterrupted time!

Core elements of a strong work ethic

It is difficult to define the elements of good work ethics, as it is such an individualistic approach and thinking. What may be good work ethics for me may not be the same for you. Much depends upon how each organization or person looks at work ethics and the moral values that each follows. What moral values you practice in daily life will define your attitude towards work and your work ethics. But there are a few common elements that are universally followed and employers look for it in their employees.

- Honesty: This is the core element of work ethics; all the other elements are based upon your honesty. Be honest about your successes and failures, take credit only where due, do not steal other's works or ideas, and own up to your failures.

- Integrity: Do not let people down, try to fulfil your commitments, and be consistent in your thoughts, action and behaviour.
- Impartiality/fairness: Be fair to all, do not practice favouritism. Treat everyone as equals.
- Alertness: Be aware of what is happening around and keep an eye on things.
- Openness: Share your ideas, results and resources with the other team members, so that everyone has the same opportunity and know what you are doing. Being secretive is counterproductive.
- Respect for others: No matter how urgent a deadline or heated that tempers become, remain diplomatic and poised and show grace under pressure. Whether serving a client, meeting a customer or meeting with management, do the best to respect other's opinions, even in stressful circumstances. It shows one values other's individual worth and professional contribution.
- Reliability and dependability: Means being punctual for work and meetings, delivering assignments within budget and on schedule. Be reliable about keeping promises for reputation precedes one so that clients, customers, and colleagues do trust in you to do all that you say you will – everyone appreciates the stability this embodies.
- Determination: Obstacles cannot stop you as they are a challenge to be overcome. Embrace challenges positively and know that your role is to solve problems with purpose and resilience. Push on, no matter how far it is necessary to go.
- Dedication: Continue until the job is complete, and delivered. "It's good enough" is not sufficient for you and the team, as you aim to be "outstanding" in content and quality. Put in the extra hours to get things right by attending to detail and excellence.
- Accountability: Accept responsibility personally for one's actions and outcomes in all situations, plus avoid excuses when work does not proceed as planned – admitting mistakes or oversights are used as a learning curve and will not be

repeated again. Employers expect employees to attain to high standards, and they should fully support staff who accept responsibility, instead of passing the buck.

- Confidentiality: Any confidential information of documents you have should remain confidential. You cannot discuss it or show it to anyone else, other than the people authorized to do so.
- Responsibility: Take responsibility for your thoughts, actions, behaviour and work.
- Legality: Always work within the legal boundaries, do not break or twist the law to fit your agenda.
- Competence: Improve your performance and competence by constantly learning and including the new learning into your work.
- Professionalism: From how one dresses and presents oneself in the business world, to how others are treated, professionalism is such a very broad category that it encompasses all the elements of a work ethic.
- Humility: Acknowledge other's contribution, and share credit for successes. You have integrity and are open to learning from mentors and others, even as you teach via your action, example, and words. Though you take the work seriously, you are also maintaining a sense of humour about yourself.
- Initiative: Do not be afraid to put forth your ideas or volunteer for work.

These days a work ethics is important in many situations. It is a skill that can be learned by every person and has so often proved to be the path of success for many. All businesses give a higher regard to an ethical employee, and hiring staff with positive ethics is appreciated around the world.

Simply stating that "I have a good work ethic" is not the way to demonstrate it to an employer. Don't provide generic, wishy-washy utterings, allow the employer to visualize your ethic by defining how they are incorporated in your accomplishments, without condition.

What is workplace ethics?

Workplace ethics are the set of values, moral principles, and standards that need to be followed by both employers and employees in the workplace. It is the set of rules and regulations that need to be followed by all staff of the workplace.

These ethics are implemented by employers to foster both employee-employee relationship and employee-customer relationships. An organization may decide to put these ethics into writing or not—they are however meant to be followed.

Examples of ethical behaviours in the workplace

Examples of ethical behaviours in the workplace includes; obeying the company's rules, effective communication, taking responsibility, accountability, professionalism, trust and mutual respect for your colleagues at work. These examples of ethical behaviours ensure maximum productivity output at work. And could be pivotal for career growth.

- Obey the company's rules & regulation

At the start of an employee contract, companies may need the employee to sign various documents, including the company rules and regulation agreement form. Also, the employee may be given a handbook that may serve as a guide.

Some common rules are tardiness, inappropriate dressing, and language, etc. Due to the excitement of getting a new job, some employees do not properly read these rules and may end up deferring them in the future.

- Communicate effectively

Effective communication is very important to avoid misunderstandings when dealing with issues in the workplace. Communicating effectively may mean different things to people at different points in time.

Let us consider the hypothetical situation of an employee trying to relay information to a French-speaking customer. The best way to communicate effectively with the customer is to have an employee who can speak French relay the information.

Effective communication may also have an employee breaking one of the rules and regulations of the company without getting penalized for it. An employee reaching out to HR that they will be coming in late due to some unforeseen circumstances may be spared for coming late if the situation is properly communicated.

- Develop professional relationships

Good professional relationships are not only a thing that fosters teamwork among employees, but also help with individual career development for employees. Developing professional relationships with co-workers or other professionals outside the workplace will also directly or indirectly improve productivity.

Professional relationships between low-level and high-level employees will make it easier for ideas to be shared and knowledge to be passed to junior employees. That way, the company can confidently have an intern work on a tough project to meet a pending deadline due to the guidance from older employees.

Salespeople, for one, need to build external professional relationships with professionals from other organizations—especially those who are potential clients. These relationships will help create a contact person in another organization in case they need to sell a product to them.

- Take responsibility

It is important for employees to always take responsibility for decisions made both individually and in a team. This is, in fact, a leadership trait that every employee who is looking to take up a managerial position in the future should exhibit.

Understandably, employees may want to save their job and are therefore scared of taking responsibility for a particular event. However, they shouldn't let this fear take them. Out of the team.

For example, the communications team came up with a marketing strategy for the company and it failed. The team members are to jointly take responsibility for this failure, not individuals coming out that they weren't part of the decision-making process.

- Professionalism/standards

There are professional standards that everything an employee does in the workplace. The use of informal words in a formal workplace is highly unprofessional.

These standards should be held high and applied to every part of an employee's activity in the workplace. This should include the way they speak, kind of work they deliver and their relationship with co-workers and customers.

- Be accountable

Accountability is also a very good trait of an employee. One of the things that may short change a talented and responsible is the lack of accountability.

Lack of accountability may result in your boss thinking you have an "I don't care attitude" to the company's project or worst take you as a liar and may lead to job loss in the long run. For example, at the beginning of each year, a certain amount of money is allocated to each department.

The manager is meant to oversee how this money is spent. If at the end of the year, the manager cannot make an account of how the money was spent, he may then be suspected of stealing company funds.

- Uphold trust

An employee should not do anything that may make his or her employee withdraw trust. As an employee of a company, your employee trusts you to get work done perfectly on time.

Things like missing deadlines regularly or delivering work that needs to be revised over and over again will deny you a promotion. It may even leave the employer not giving you tasks to complete in the future—a nightmare for freelancers.

- Show initiative without being told

Is the company running behind deadline and you feel you can stay a few extra hours after work to finish up? Do it.

You are a freelance designer and your client wants a particular poster designed but doesn't have a copywriter to write the content. If you can write the contents, do so. Don't delay a client's work because of a few contents.

- Respect your colleagues

It doesn't matter whether you are dealing with the intern, a junior, janitor, etc. they should all be treated with respect. As a manager, treating your team members with respect will help improve their productivity.

Giving constructive criticism and saying kind words to them even when they are not able to deliver perfectly will help them strive to do better in the future.

- Work smarter

Don't just work hard, work smarter. The reason why you see an employee promoted to the post of manager after just 2 years and a hardworking employee who has been with the company for 10 years failed to get a promotion is smart work.

Assume that these 2 employees are data scientists who collect data and analyse them. A smarter employee will use the Form plus data collection tool to collect data and receive real-time data analytics, while a hard-working employee will print paper-based forms and do the hard work of sharing it to respondents.

Unethical workplace behaviours

- Lies

Lying is a trait that is detested in and outside the workplace. It kills trust, affects relationships and may even put people in trouble.

There are different situations where employees lie in the workplace—with just one lie opening the floor for many others. It could be a sales manager lying about the number of clients they were able to get in a month or an employee calling in sick just to attend another job interview.

A lot of employees start lying from their CV, by adding experiences they didn't acquire, and the skills they don't have. Employees need to understand that lying about work may eventually get them in trouble and needs to stop before they lose their job.

However, we notice that employees lie due to fear of their employer—an employee will call in sick to go for interviews because companies' frown against employees interviewing at another company. HR should put up a more friendly culture that will encourage people to progress in their careers taking up other jobs and even support them throughout the process.

- Taking credit for others hard work

It is very common for managers to take credit for their team member's hard work when reporting to the management. A team member may have brought an idea that helped the sales team improve their sales by 200%.

However, when giving a report, the manager doesn't mention the team member's name but claims the idea as his. Employees need to reduce the use of "I", but embrace the use of " We".

By taking credit for another person's work, you will be denying the person a promotion, bonus or commendation for a job well done. This will discourage the person from sharing ideas that will benefit the company in the future.

- Verbal harassment/abuse

Employees need to stay away from using foul language on co-workers in and out of the workplace. This is very important when dealing with customers.

Customers are known to get angry and may result in verbal abuse due to a bad product or service. They may even get insult you when they are at fault.

As a customer care representative, salesperson or any other employee, it is Beth important that you don't use abusive words on customers no matter how provoked.

- Violence

Similar to verbal harassment, employees should not be violent when dealing with co-workers and customers. Customers may likely provoke you, but it is better to keep shut and walk away rather than turn violent.

- Non-office related work

A lot of employees have side hustles which they use to supplement salaries. This is very good and only very few companies are against employees working to make money outside work hours.

However, some employees still do non-office related work during office hours. Employees who have side hustles should try doing them on weekends or employing other people to handle some of the business logistics to avoid eating into office hours to get the work done.

- Extended breaks

Companies give lunch breaks to employees and people take advantage of these breaks to do other things outside office work like, go for interviews, meet with friends or even work on their side hustles. They are free to do whatever they want these lunch breaks.

Employees, however, take advantage of these lunch breaks and extend them beyond time.

- Theft/embezzlement

Some employees are known for diverting company funds into their bank accounts—padding project quotations, invoices, etc. to deceive the company on how much was spent on particular projects.

This act is detrimental to the company because employees who steal sometimes replace quality products with counterfeits which are cheaper but causes damage in the future.

- Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is an offense that is not limited to the workplace alone. An employee accused of sexual harassment will not only face consequences in the workplace but also tried at a court of law.

Many companies have a zero-tolerance rate for sexual harassment in and outside the workplace. This may tarnish the company's reputation and the only way to curb is to make an example of defaulters.

- Corrupt practices

Some common causes of corruption can be seen during the employment process of an organization. They invite so many people to send their CVs and come for interviews but only people with the same political affiliation with them get the job.

This is also common with companies that ask for contractors to bid for a project but the employees will only give them to their friends who may not even bid at all.

Get started with our workplace harassment form template to receive feedback from employees.

Management/employers unethical behaviours

Workplace ethics is not for employees alone. Employers are also bound to workplace ethics and may also be tried for unethical behaviour.

- Sex for job/promotion

It is common for managers, employers and major decision-makers to use their position in the workplace to influence the hiring decision in exchange for sex.

- Late night out/unpaid overtime

Some employers take advantage of desperate job seekers and the competitive job market to use employees' leisure time as they wish. They do so with the mentality that they are doing employees a favour by employing them, not knowing that the favour is mutual.

Employees who are scared of queries or job loss are not able to protest the infringement into their private time by the employer.

- Verbal harassment

It is common among employers to verbally harass employees when they make little mistakes. This will reduce employee morale and productivity.

- Undue pressure

Deadlines are a great way to make sure the work gets done on time. However, when employees are placed under undue pressure, they end up trading quality for on-time delivery.

An example of undue pressure will be giving an employee a 1-day deadline for a project that would normally take a week.

- Nepotism

This is a common type of corruption that happens in the workplace. An employee who has been working hard for years while influencing company growth may get side-lined for a promotion because of another employee who is a family friend, family, or friend of the employer. Things like this are what reduce employee morale or even push talented employees to dropping a resignation.

- Unfriendly work environment

One of the things that can mar productivity is an unfriendly working environment. This may come as a combination of abusive bosses, lack of commendation, nepotism, etc. An unfriendly environment is an environment that combines various unethical behaviours into one.

- Unrealistic expectations

Creatives usually have it worse when it comes to having unrealistic expectations from employees.

Advantages and implications of workplace ethics

- It can stimulate positive employee behaviour and create a positive ambiance in the workplace
- Ensures management guides and mentors their employees in a healthy environment
- A workplace with good ethics usually strengthens the bond employees have with their superior
- It boosts productivity through employee performance and job satisfaction which in turn increases company growth.
- Bad workplace ethics can cause a strain in the relationship with company stakeholders
- When it leaks (which it most likely will) poor behaviour can be recorded and propelled into unsavoury headlines online. This can lead to reputational damage to the brand name.

How to solve unethical issues at the workplace

1. Have rules

Organizations need to have predefined rules and regulations regarding workplace ethics. These rules and regulations should be given to new employees together with their employment contracts.

2. Accept feedback/complaint

Make it easy for employees to send feedback or complaint in case of harassment, abuse, or any other unethical activities going on in the workplace.

With tools like Form plus, you can create online forms to receive complaints on workplace harassment or any other unethical behaviours.

3. List consequences for unethical behaviours

Consequences for unethical behaviours should also be placed alongside the rules at strategic places in the organization. That way, if anyone wants to ignore the rules despite seeing them, the fear of getting punished will stop him or her from going ahead.

4. Swift justice/disciplinary action

Some Companies often cover up issues of rape, sexual harassment, etc. when the perpetrator is a high-ranking member of the organization. Things like this should not be accommodated.

TOPIC 10: Ethics at Work

What are ethics at work?

Also known as workplace ethics, ethics at work are the moral principles that businesses implement to determine what actions are right or wrong and appropriate or inappropriate at work. Workplace ethics impact everything from how the business is run to how employees should act at work to uphold the company's image.

To ensure businesses successfully integrate workplace ethics into their company's culture, every employee must follow them. This includes managers and even CEOs as they set an example for their employees to act appropriately. Employees at every level are motivated to work harder and uphold workplace ethics, as they feel equal to one another.

As an individual, you can also have your own set of ethics to follow at work, but they should align with the company. This ensures you can set personal goals that are attainable while still working towards common goals.

What is the definition of ethics in the workplace?

Ethics in the workplace is defined as the moral code that guides the behaviour of employees with respect to what is right and wrong in regard to conduct and decision making. Ethical decision making in the workplace takes into account the individual employee's best interest and also takes into account the best interest of those impacted. The latter of the definition is often where individual employees struggle to act ethically. Furthermore, ethical behaviour doesn't only apply to individual employees, the organization itself should exemplify standards of ethical conduct.

The 8 central characteristics of strong employee work ethic are:

- Punctuality: completing projects when due, showing up on time, following break-time protocol, and informing supervisors of challenges in a timely manner are all efforts that respect the value of time in the workplace.

- Accountability: employees and employers alike should be held accountable in their work efforts, meaning they shoulder the responsibility for ongoing projects and take the blame for errors when necessary.
- Focus: in order to efficiently accomplish a task, an employee must remain focused and avoid the distractions of chatter, social media, technology, etc.
- Initiative: this is when an employee does something productive or useful to the company without being asked. Strong employees care not about ticking off items on a to-do list but doing what needs to be done for the betterment of the organization. Showing initiative in work efforts indicates to management that an employee values success.
- Productivity: productivity hinges upon an employee's ability to overcome distractions, ignore external influences, and conquering obstacles that inhibit them from performing their task.
- Professionalism: being present in their work culture, employees who exhibit professionalism show up and take their work seriously, staying respectful of others and dressing appropriately.
- Dedication: dedication means consistency and showing up ready to accomplish tasks daily, all while maintaining focus and productivity.
- Desire to Improve: employees who embrace feedback and learning moments show that they are willing to work to grow in their careers.

Workplace ethics: examples

Beyond the individual's efforts to conduct themselves ethically in their work, there is a larger sphere of how workplace ethics exist in the corporate culture as a whole and how the organization conducts itself both internally and externally.

Companies should always have an employee code of conduct available, so all members of an organization can have a clear understanding on where the company stands on different ethical matters. If some unethical behaviours to some may seem harmless

and go unaddressed, it will speak a lot to both the individual's character and the tolerance of misconduct by the organization.

Some of the most common examples of workplace ethical lapses fall under the following categories:

- Preferential treatment. Employees who receive special treatment at work, whether from patronage, friendship, or sexual and/or romantic relationships, are privy to unfair and unethical favouritism, which should be reported by fellow employees.
- Gossiping. Spreading untrue rumours about colleagues, company projects and plans, or anything else related to work culture is both unethical and indicative that an employee cannot be trusted when it comes to discretion and privacy.
- Dishonesty. This can manifest in several different ways, though common ones include taking credit for other people's work or misleading information about progress on a project. Dishonesty comes in many different forms and is another trait that can derail an employee's career no matter how small or harmless it may seem in the moment.
- Selfishness. Thinking only of your own interests, even in seemingly insignificant situations such as hoarding office supplies, leaving dishes unwashed in the kitchen, not remaking coffee or refilling the printer paper, is not a behaviour conducive to cooperation, and is likely to be considered inconsiderate or even unethical by co-workers.

Why are ethics important in the workplace?

Having set ethics for every employee to follow, regardless of the size of the business, is crucial. Here are a few reasons why:

- Improved employee retention: Ethics that focus on improving employee morale encourage managers to show appreciation to their team. This leads to higher employee retention, as team members feel more loyal to the company and their

managers. Having clear ethics at work in place also ensures employees are more likely to act ethically.

- Stronger teamwork: Workplace ethics typically encourage employees to respect one another and listen to each other's ideas. This is the foundation of good teamwork, so ethics at work can increase camaraderie and collaboration. Employees are then more productive and motivated to do their best.
- Better leadership: Ensuring managers follow workplace ethics means they're more likely to treat their team respectfully. This encourages team members to follow their manager's lead which builds mutual trust and respect. It also improves collaboration and makes leading a team easier.

TOPIC 11: Communication

What is communication?

Communication is the sending and receiving of information and can be one-on-one or between groups of people, and can be face-to-face or through communication devices. Communication requires a sender, the person who initiates communication, to transfer their thoughts or encode a message. This message is sent to the receiver, a person who receives the message, and finally, the receiver must decode, or interpret the message. This sounds simple enough but is more complicated.

Language involves symbols and signs and is distinct to the culture that speaks and writes in that language. Effective communication requires a shared language and understanding of common concepts. It's also important to bear in mind that a receiver may interpret what the sender puts out differently than what the sender intended, and that this is less likely if the two share the same culture and language.

Importance:

The importance of communication can't be overstated. After all, you can't have culture, society, or civilization without the ability to communicate with one another. Good communication prevents wars and misunderstandings, helps us meet our needs, establishes rules and laws that aid in the structuring of society, helps people find and keep employment, provides information and guidance to people, and passes down cultural traditions, norms, and values.

Two adages to keep in mind about communication:

- You can't not communicate (i.e., we're always communicating, even subconsciously).
- You can't take back what you communicate once it's been put out into the universe (i.e., be careful how and what you communicate).

Types of communication

There are many ways that people communicate. Language is deeply ingrained in culture and, thus, communication types and styles will vary. General types of communication include the following:

1. Verbal

This is verbal, spoken language and includes not only the language and words spoken, but the tone they are spoken in, the cadence and speed, as well as formal versus informal language.

2. Nonverbal

This type of communication includes posture, facial expressions, kinesics (gestures), and coalesces (eye movements and behaviour). American Sign Language (ASL), which is an officially recognized language, also falls into nonverbal types of communication.

3. Visual

Social media has provided the world with a type of visual communication that has to connect us across the world. Zoom, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and many other social media platforms have added a new dynamic to how we communicate with one another. Other kinds of visuals include signs and symbols that communicate a concept or use of audio-visual aids for presentations.

4. Written

This is communication that is written in many forms, from emails and texts to old-fashioned pen and paper.

5. Active listening

This is a vital type of communication because it encourages and guides communication by reflecting back on what is being said and responding to the sender in a thoughtful and deliberate manner to indicate that the receiver is truly listening to what is being communicated.

The importance of good communication in the workplace

Good communication is an essential tool in achieving productivity and maintaining strong working relationships at all levels of an organisation – and this has been particularly important since the Covid-19 outbreak forced many people to work remotely. Employers who invest time and energy into delivering clear lines of communication will rapidly build trust among employees, leading to increases in productivity, output and morale in general. Meanwhile, employees who communicate effectively with colleagues, managers and customers are always valuable assets to an organisation and it is a skill which can often set people apart from their competition when applying for jobs.

Poor communication in the workplace will inevitably lead to unmotivated staff that may begin to question their own confidence in their abilities and inevitably in the organisation.

The importance of strong communication runs deep within a business. Here are five key reasons you should be paying attention:

- Team building – Building effective teams is really all about how those team members communicate and collaborate together. By implementing effective strategies, such as those listed below, to boost communication you will go a long way toward building effective teams. This, in turn, will improve morale and employee satisfaction.
- Gives everyone a voice – As mentioned above, employee satisfaction can rely a lot on their having a voice and being listened to, whether it be in regards to an idea they have had or about a complaint they need to make. Well established lines of communication should afford everyone, no matter their level, the ability to freely communicate with their peers, colleagues and superiors.
- Innovation – Where employees are enabled to openly communicate ideas without fear of ridicule or retribution, they are far more likely to bring their idea to the table. Innovation relies heavily on this and an organisation which encourages communication is far more likely to be an innovative one.

- Growth – Communication can be viewed both internally and externally. By being joined up internally and having strong lines of communication you are ensuring that the message you are delivering externally is consistent. Any growth project relies on strong communication and on all stakeholders, whether internal or external, being on the same wavelength.
- Strong management – When managers are strong communicators, they are better able to manage their teams. The delegation of tasks, conflict management, motivation and relationship building (all key responsibilities of any manager) are all much easier when you are a strong communicator. Strong communication is not just the ability to speak to people but to empower them to speak to each other – facilitating strong communication channels is key.

How can you improve how your organisation communicates?

How can you improve how your organisation communicates?

With 40 years of recruitment experience, we understand the value of good communication. Below, we've outlined some of the key areas where organisations can improve and enhance communication between their teams.

- Define goals and expectations – Managers need to deliver clear, achievable goals to both teams and individuals, outlining exactly what is required on any given project, and ensuring that all staff are aware of the objectives of the project, the department and the organisation as a whole.
- Clearly deliver your message – Ensure your message is clear and accessible to your intended audience. To do this it is essential that you speak plainly and politely – getting your message across clearly without causing confusion or offence.
- Choose your medium carefully – Once you've created your message you need to ensure it's delivered in the best possible format. While face-to-face communication is by far the best way to build trust with employees, it is not

always an option. Take time to decide whether information delivered in a printed copy would work better than an email or if a general memo will suffice.

- Keep everyone involved – Ensure that lines of communication are kept open at all times. Actively seek and encourage progress reports and project updates. This is particularly important when dealing with remote staff.
- Listen and show empathy – Communication is a two-way process and no company or individual will survive long if it doesn't listen and encourage dialogue with the other party. Listening shows respect and allows you to learn about any outstanding issues you may need to address as an employer.

4 powerful benefits of workplace communication

1. Good communication mitigates conflict

One of the times an organization is most likely to seek communication training is when there's clear tension or conflict in the workplace. Regardless of the conflict, communication is usually an underlying factor.

Conflict typically comes down to:

- Misunderstanding/feeling misunderstood. Even when someone feels like they are communicating well, if the person to whom they're speaking has a different communication pattern, then there may be a misunderstanding. With communication tools such as identifying communication patterns and making small communication adjustments, new information can be dispensed in a way that is easy and clear to understand, and the listener can better communicate their understanding.
- Not understanding how others communicate. Miscommunication also comes down to communication patterns. When someone hasn't undergone an individual or team communication program, they default to presenting information using their own communication pattern instead of considering the communication pattern of the receiver.

- Someone feeling their emotional needs is not being met or are being disregarded. If an employee feels disrespected, taken advantage of, or disregarded, then it may lead to tension or conflict. A better-communicating team lays the groundwork for expressing and understanding needs, which also increases employee engagement and performance.

2. Good communication increases employee engagement

Communicating is more than just talking. It's about connecting with people. One of the most powerful benefits of better communication in the workplace is more engaged employees. Employees are more engaged in their work and can better align with company objectives and goals when a culture of good communication is established in a team or workplace.

Communication can improve employee engagement in the following ways:

- Gives you tools to better understand the needs and goals of your employees.
- Allows you to better understand what motivates and fulfils the employee.
- Better understanding of employees' talents and skills that may otherwise go unnoticed.
- Ability to cultivate talents and skills in a way that develops them in line with company goals.
- Improved connection between co-workers for a more positive and satisfying work environment.
- Better relationship with managers and leaders

3. Good communication creates better client relationships

This one is a biggie if you have client-facing employees since client interactions are usually the difference between a satisfied customer and a disgruntled one. When your employees are trained to communicate more effectively and to connect with others they can better:

- Mitigate and resolve conflict

- Understand needs
- Help the customer feel understood
- Present new information in a way in which the client will be more receptive

4. Good communication results in a more productive & talented workforce

Employee engagement is a significant factor in the productivity of a workforce. But besides contributing to increased employee engagement, communication skills can also help foster a more productive and talented workforce in many other ways:

- Understanding team talents & skills. In a company culture focused on connecting with others, managers better understand the talents and skills of their workforce. Some communication patterns aren't forthcoming with their talents and skills, or express them in ways a fast-paced or high-level-thinking communicator won't naturally notice. Mastering the identification of communication patterns empowers a leader to better understand the skills and talents of their team.
- Achieving more buy-in. With the right communication tools, a leader can influence initiative buy-in from their team.
- Innovation and creative thought. A workplace that communicates more effectively establishes a "safe" place for people to think creatively and express their ideas. It helps employees feel more comfortable taking ownership for challenges and projects, and typically results in more creative brainstorming or problem-solving initiatives.
- More strategic team building. Understanding communication patterns gives a leader more information about their employees, and often information they would have otherwise overlooked. This powerful insight lets the leader make more strategic decisions on delegation, employee development, team development, and strategic initiatives to drive business success.

The impact of effective communication

- Effective communication may contribute to organizational success in many ways. It:
- Builds employee morale, satisfaction and engagement.
- Helps employees understand terms and conditions of their employment and drives their commitment and loyalty.
- Educates employees on the merits of remaining union-free (if that is the organization's goal).
- Gives employees a voice—an increasingly meaningful component of improving employees' satisfaction with their employer.
- Helps to lessen the chances for misunderstandings and potentially reduces grievances and lawsuits.
- Improves processes and procedures and ultimately creates greater efficiencies and reduces costs

The impact of ineffective communication

Ineffective communication may increase the chances for misunderstandings, damage relationships, break trust, and increase anger and hostility. Ineffective communication may stem from poorly aligned strategy, a failure to execute the strategy, use of the wrong communication vehicle, bad timing, and even nuances such as word choice or tone of voice.

Two-way communication

HR professionals may initially think of communication mainly in the context of delivering messages to employees about business issues, policies and procedures, but two-way communication plays an essential role in a comprehensive communication strategy. Listening to employee issues and concerns builds loyalty and drives improved

productivity. Organizational leaders can learn through listening about issues or concerns before they become formal grievances or lawsuits. They can also discover potential employee relations issues and learn about attitudes toward terms and conditions of employment.

Building a communication strategy

To develop a communication strategy, employers should begin by linking communication to the strategic plan, including the organization's mission, vision and values; its strategic goals and objectives; and its employment brand.

Effective communication strategies:

- Safeguard credibility to establish loyalty and build trust.
- Maintain consistency to establish a strong employment brand.
- Listen to employees and to members of the leadership team.
- Seek input from all constituencies.
- Provide feedback.
- Prepare managers in their roles as organizational leaders.

A communication strategy includes the following elements:

- Highly effective strategies that are often top-down, with senior management setting the tone for a cascading series of messages.
- A budget that allows for the use of various types of communication vehicles depending on the message to be delivered and any unique issues associated with it.
- A process by which leaders evaluate any particular situation driving the need to communicate and from which key messages will emerge.
- A method for generating feedback and using it to shape follow-up messages.

- A customized delivery approach with communication materials that are easy to understand.

Constituencies

Everyone in the organization has a role to play in communication:

- The CEO and senior managers are ultimately responsible for setting the tone and establishing organizational culture. Key leaders should be coached on their role in ensuring effective companywide communication.
- The HR professional and communication leader also have critical roles, especially in challenging economic environments.
- Managers are responsible for daily communication with their employees and for relating to their peers and colleagues.
- All employees have a responsibility to voice concerns and issues, provide feedback, and listen effectively.

Training

Communication training may encompass any number of topics, including:

- Company communication policies.
- Effective writing and presentation skills.
- Train-the-trainer initiatives.

A strong training component will not only equip leaders to communicate effectively with their teams and other organizational leaders, it will also help them understand the appropriate communication channels and protocols.

Responding to employee issues

There is no better way to cause resentment among employees than to ask them for feedback and then fail to act in response to their concerns. Honest, constructive feedback from employees starts with trust and the understanding that employees can voice their concerns without fear of retaliation.

TOPIC 12: Current trends influencing work

What are the current trends in the workplace?

The biggest drivers of workplace trends include advances in technology, social changes, and current events. On a macro level, factors like globalization, a shift to remote work, and an increase in education drive large-scale trends.

8 Future workplace trends for 2022 and beyond

Workplace trends are business changes expected to continue to grow within coming years. Examples include hybrid work, employee wellness, and ongoing education. The purpose of pointing out trends is to alert employers to industry shifts and help companies build more progressive workplaces.

List of workplace trends

From flexible working hours to employee safety, here is a list of employment trends shaping the future of work.

1. Remote and hybrid work

Globalization and advances in technology led to a rise in remote work within the past decades. Pandemic shutdowns in 2020 sped up this growth.

Remote work offers employees benefits like flexible working hours and no commutes. Employers often see higher rates of productivity from staff, and can also cut overhead expenses via office rental costs. Plus, remote work allows recruiters to pull from a wider and more diverse candidate pool.

Organizations initially hesitant to allow employees to work from home now have evidence that virtual offices are practical and sustainable. Also, as more companies offer remote work options, professionals who want to work from home have more choices. Inflexible employers are likely to see higher turnover rates from aspiring telecommuters.

An analysis from McKinsey predicts that in the coming years, three to four times as many professionals will work remotely at least part of the week. The hybrid work model has gained significant popularity, and experts expect that many companies will shift to hybrid offices where employees work on-site at least once or twice a week.

Smart organizations will spend energy designing guidelines for telecommuting rather than wasting effort trying to force staff to revert to more traditional work structures.

Here is a guide to writing work from home policies to help shape remote and hybrid offices.

2. Virtual team building

During the pandemic, many managers used Zoom for team building when co-workers could not meet in person. However, with more offices going fully or partially remote, there is a growing need for online team building. Virtual team building is one of the most quickly growing remote work trends. Companies increasingly turn to activities like online murder mysteries, zoom happy hours, and virtual trivia to engage remote employees.

Remote team building also has utility beyond virtual offices. Even in more traditional workplaces, many professionals travel or have busy schedules. Coordinating team outings can be tricky, and often several team members miss the gatherings. Virtual team events accommodate wider audiences. Zoom events do not need travel time or parking hassles, participants can wear comfortable clothes and call from the couch, and there is a likely chance of spotting a pet or two. Plus, these gatherings are ideal for introverts with easily-drained social batteries, or parents who are wary of leaving kids for too long.

Online team building activities can supplement in-person outings. The team can still gather for restaurant outings or retreats when possible, and Zoom game nights, remote dinners, and team Slack threads can fill in the gaps between physical gatherings.

Check out more remote team building activities, and learn about trends in team building.

3. Employee wellness

The hectic pace of modern life has contributed to a rise in anxiety and depression. Calls for self-care and employee health have increased as awareness of mental illness and work stress has grown. The global pandemic crisis magnified the need for employee wellness initiatives. Many folks struggle to set boundaries and avoid burnout, especially when working from home, juggling multiple responsibilities, and facing down outside adversity.

Workplace wellness trends are more essential than ever. In the coming years, employees are more likely to prioritize self-care, and employers are more likely to invest in programs that spotlight health and wellness. For example, massages, meditation classes, and stress management life-coaching sessions. Also, services like therapy, and financial literacy workshops.

As work shifts towards hybrid and remote models, the nature of these wellness programs will also change. In lieu of office workout rooms and catered healthy lunches, companies may instead provide more credits towards gym memberships and home equipment or healthy food prep services. There will also be more telehealth visits and online consultations with specialists. Also, staff may spend more time taking care of social needs to fight off the isolation of remote work. For example, forming clubs with co-workers and planning more outside-of-work team outings.

4. Flexible working hours

A sudden mass shift to remote work permitted many employees the freedom to choose a working schedule. Since workers were not limited to regular office hours, they could carve out routines that better suited work styles. Night owls or early-morning risers could work during hours they could focus most, with fewer distractions. This liberty permitted professionals to tend to other responsibilities, such as doctors' appointments, childcare, online schooling, or errands.

Variable working hours is one of the most obvious workplace flexibility trends. While some jobs ask for overlap in schedules, there is often little reason for the entire staff to work identical hours. This fact seems obvious when you consider that global teams spread across different continents and time zones have worked together for years.

5. Multi-functional workspaces

Industry standards may seem like age-old institutions; however, the current workplace is a fairly modern invention. White-collar office work only rose to prominence in the past 150 years or so. Even within that time, workplaces shifted from private offices and cubicles to open floor plans. As the workforce moves towards more hybrid and remote work, office design will evolve again.

Within the next few years, companies will minimize office space and make the remaining places of work more flexible and multi-functional. For example, introducing hot-desking, where employees do not have an assigned seat but rather claim a different open workspace every day. Also, a rise in rearrangeable work furniture, such as easily-movable tables and chairs. Not to mention, offices are likely to adopt technology like projectors, screens, and electronic whiteboards, and possibly even VR to better accommodate hybrid workforces.

6. Diversity and inclusion

As awareness of injustices spread, so does society's call for fair and safe workplaces and practices. The public increasingly holds companies accountable for building diverse, inclusive organizations.

In recent years, society has increased demands for companies to appoint more women and people of colour to positions of leadership, greater awareness of mental health in the workplace, a growing number of brands and organizations outwardly supporting the LGBTQ+ rights movement, and more accommodations for professionals with disabilities. Despite considerable progress, further improvements are necessary.

As society grows more connected through technology, it is becoming harder to hide professional injustices. The internet gives people the power to share experience and likeminded peers. The more stories come out, the greater the calls for tolerance and inclusion. Younger generations tend to be more empathetic towards the struggles of minority groups, young leaders included. Gen Z and millennials tend to be driving these changes, however other generations also play a part. The public is pushing to see more equitable practices across all facets of life, including work.

Diversity and inclusion are a rising trend, and should not be a passing trend. Every employee deserves a safe and supportive work environment. The movement has been growing steadily over the past decades and has recently received significant boosts and breakthroughs. Whether these leaps in progress lead to paradigm shifts, or are just part of the current zeitgeist depends on actions moving forward.

With the rise of employee resource groups, experimentation with fairer hiring practices, and appointment of diversity officers in organizations, the work world seems to be making progress on making industry more inclusive.

7. Ongoing learning

Experts predict that within coming decades, the higher education system may shift towards long-term learning models. Instead of obtaining terminal degrees, future professionals may revisit college years after graduation to learn the latest skills and information. Workplace learning trends are bound to follow suit.

Professional development is already experiencing a similar transformation. Gone are the days when folks spent their whole life in a single company, or even a single industry. A competitive job market means that professionals need to stay informed to stay employed and advance their careers. Workers are calling for their employers to provide that education. A 2019 LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report found that 94% of employees would stay at a job longer if employers provided training and development opportunities.

According to the 2021 LinkedIn Learning Report, learning and development professionals have taken on a more prominent role in organizations by helping employees adapt to the seismic changes in the work world. Re-skilling and up-skilling have been some of the top priorities in workforce development.

As remote work increases, so does virtual learning. Remote learning is convenient for employers and employees alike. Online modules and training videos ensure a consistent level of training for employees, and these self-guided courses allow staff to learn on their own schedules and paces. Digital courses are an easy way to bring continual education to the workforce.

8. Worker safety

Workplace safety standards have long been a hot topic in industry. The work world has come a long way from widespread child labour and dangerous factory conditions, however there is still a long way to go.

After the mass-health scare that was COVID-19, there is likely to be more emphasis on safety in many workplaces, including white-collar jobs. There is likely to be a change of attitude in using sick days. In a post-pandemic world, coming to work while sick is more likely to be seen as a liability than a mark of commitment. Workspaces would do well to keep some of the increased safety precautions in place, such as better air filtration systems, plastic dividers, and easy-access sanitizing stations.