Contents

1A   Prepare workgroup plans

In your role as a manager, team leader or supervisor, you will be responsible for planning your own work schedule as well as that of your team to ensure that the team's goals and objectives are met. Depending on the size of the organisation you are working in, you may be involved in planning at an organisational level. In this case you will be directly involved in linking your team's responsibilities to the overall goals and objectives of the organisation.

Even if you are not involved in high-level planning in your organisation, as the team leader you will be responsible for devising a workgroup plan, including setting goals, objectives and targets for the team. You must also incorporate the team objectives into your personal work plan and each team member's work plan.

To be able to do this you need a thorough understanding of how all the plans fit together and how the progress of one of these plans affects the progress of the others. You also need to understand how planning and setting priorities helps you and the team achieve your objectives.

Be aware of the organisation's policies and practices for preparing work plans, developing budgets, seeking and managing resources, keeping records, and customer service. Know where you can access information and procedures to follow.

Definition of terms

Workplaces use different terms for describing how people work together and what they have to achieve. Below are some commonly used terms and what they mean.

Work group

A work group is any number of people who work together in a team. This can be a group of people who always work together or a team that is formed to achieve a specific task over a specific period of time. A work group or team is usually defined as people working together to achieve a common goal.

Work schedule

A work schedule can be referred to as a work plan, an operational plan or simply a plan. These words are used interchangeably in most workplaces in Australia. A work schedule or work plan details the tasks and responsibilities involved in achieving a specific objective. A work plan can cover one person's, a team's or a whole department's responsibilities.

The planning process

1   Establish realistic and measurable goals, objectives and targets.

2   Make them quantifiable and specify a time frame for their achievement.

3   Identify the resources and budget required to achieve your objectives and targets.

4   List all the things that need to happen in order to achieve your goal.

5   Determine the order in which events should occur. Be aware of team and individual targets and dates.

6   Implement your plan.

7   Check progress against the plan to make sure that your original targets and time frames are being adhered to.

Types of team plans

Organisations use a range of team plans to achieve their team and individual employee goals. Here is an outline of three strategic team plans.

Workgroup or team plans

Depending on the size of your organisation, you may be responsible for a work group or team within a department. In this case, you will devise a team plan that details the daily, weekly or monthly actions the team is responsible for achieving on behalf of the department and the resources you will need to carry out your work plan.

Team manager plans

Your own plan should detail your overall goal, objectives and targets and how you expect to achieve them. This includes your major areas of focus, the allocation of specific tasks to team members, your weekly activities and daily tasks, and the resources you need to successfully complete your plan.

Team reflection

Whereas the organisation's strategic plan should focus, motivate and inspire its employees, your own work plan should help you focus and keep you motivated towards your own work goals and targets. Your goals and tasks provide direction and act as guidelines to help you complete your day-to-day tasks, make appropriate decisions and solve problems.

Individual team member plans

Team members' individual work plans must reflect their weekly and daily tasks and detail how they are expected to achieve the set tasks. You need to set time lines, allocate resources and discuss outcomes for each of the tasks. This should be done at a team meeting when tasks are allocated and deadlines are set.

Link the plans together

Every plan in an organisation must link with all the others. If individual work plans are not designed to contribute to achieving the team manager's plan, then the team manager's plan will not be implemented effectively and the objectives will not be achieved. If the team manager's plan is not achieved, the workgroup plan will not be achieved and so on, right up to the organisation not achieving its strategic plan.

If an organisation does not achieve its strategic plan it will have failed to meet its obligations to its board of directors, shareholders and clients. Therefore, it is very important that team and individual work plans reflect the objectives and goals of the organisation.

… continued

<div style="background:#cfe0f0; padding:8px">

Know the business cycle of your organisation

</div>

Your knowledge of your market and clients includes understanding market trends or purchasing patterns and planning for them. There could be certain times of the year when customers are more likely to purchase your product. For example, ski gear is a seasonal purchase. Other purchases could be cyclical; for example, mostly made at the end of the financial year. In that case, you may need to put aside other work during this period while you focus on meeting the increased production, purchasing or sales demands placed on your team.

Access any information held within your organisation that records the services requested of your team over the past 12 months. This will help you predict client needs for the next 12 months. You can also use purchasing data to determine purchasing patterns, which will help you schedule cyclical tasks and anticipate client demand.

Business offerings

Your clients may make an unusual or new request for a product or service. Your knowledge of your organisation's range of products or services will help you meet the client request. By working with the client to understand exactly what they require, you may find that your organisation can develop a product or service to suit the client, or that an existing product or service that the client is unaware of would suit their needs. Sometimes your clients' needs will not be best met by your organisation and you will need to refer them to someone who is better placed to service them.

By understanding your clients' needs and knowing your products and services, you will be able to make these judgment calls and provide a better service to your clients. As a team leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that your team also understands the parameters within which to make these judgment calls. Set guidelines for team members to follow and, when requests fall outside of the guidelines, make sure they know to discuss the solution to the client's need with you.

Know your market

Your understanding of the market that you operate in will help you when you are devising the work plan for the team. For example, if you have a good relationship with your clients, they may tell you when your competitors approach them for business. With this knowledge, you will be able to plan your strategy for keeping the client and you will also be able to report the competitor's activity to your manager and other colleagues who could be affected.

Workgroup targets

As you write your workgroup plan, keep in mind your organisation's overall goal (its mission or vision), its objectives and targets. Be clear about the big picture before you set your own objectives. It makes sense for individual work objectives to be linked to team objectives, and for team objectives to be geared towards delivering business goals.

Your understanding of your team's goals must be clear enough for you to know what you should do to help achieve them. Consider your unique role and the responsibilities that correspond with the role to help ensure that your team reaches its goals. You must have a clear understanding of the role of your work group in the organisation.
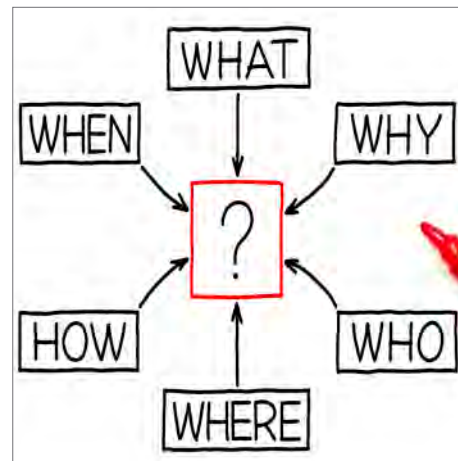
Whether a plan is intended to shape the future directions of the organisation, or shape your own daily activities in the short or long term, it needs a clear statement of purpose, objectives that can be measured and tasks that can be prioritised.

Definitions

You need to be clear about the subtle differences between goals, objectives and targets.

Here is an explanation of each.

Mission or vision

At the broadest level, the mission or vision of an organisation is a strategic goal set by the senior management of the organisation and encapsulates what the organisation wants to achieve.

Objectives

Objectives provide clear measuring posts as an organisation proceeds towards these strategic goals. Objectives are more short-term and more specific than goals.

Targets

Targets are usually more short-term than objectives and even more specific. They tend to cover five main areas: cost, quality, quantity, time and safety. Targets must be measurable; that is, you must be able to express them with a quantity, dollar, time or number measure.

Practice task 2

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

Case study

Kirk is the team leader of five legal secretaries. The team looks after the administrative work of three partners in a law firm. The firm's partners pass work to Kirk who then distributes the work among the five secretaries. Usually, all work from a particular client will be given to the same secretary.

Kirk's draft work plan for his team includes the following objectives:

- Provide accurate and timely administrative support to partners.
- Maintain currency of all hard-copy and electronic active files.
- Ensure all closed files are archived accurately.
- Provide professional service to all clients.

Kirk is holding a meeting with the partners to determine the priorities of his team's objectives. He discusses with the partners the range of administration tasks the team has been undertaking in recent months, including preparing draft contracts and keeping up with the correspondence between the firm and its clients involved in the deals.

Kirk knows that the key objective of the partners is to maintain a high level of billing so that their revenue targets are met and salary levels can be maintained. In order to maintain a high level of billing, the administration team needs to make sure that all documents for clients are accurate and ready as needed.

Kirk is concerned that with the number of deals the partners are expecting to sign, his team will be flat out providing administrative support and customer service to clients. Kirk is worried that the files will not be accurately maintained. He raises his concerns with the partners and is confirmed that it is more important that the administration work is completed and that clients are kept informed about the progress of the work.

1. Describe how Kirk uses his knowledge of the firm's strategic goals to help him work with the partners to determine which objectives should be prioritised.

2. What questions do you think Kirk asked himself to determine which of his team's objectives were more important than the others?

Here are several questions that might be posed when devising contingencies within a work plan.

Questions to ask when devising contingencies
• What will happen to the work plan if this risk occurs?
• Which tasks will be affected by the risk?
• How can we realistically stop this risk from occurring?
• What can we do to get the work plan back on track once the risk occurs?
• Is there more than one solution available to us?
• Are all solutions workable?
• Which is the best solution?
• What tasks are involved in executing the solution?
• Who will be responsible for carrying out the tasks?
• How will we know that we have overcome the risk?

Develop detailed risk management plan

Just as your original work plan has tasks and responsibilities detailed, your contingency plan also needs to contain these details. If you have identified risks that could seriously affect your team's ability to achieve its objectives, you may want to consider developing a very detailed risk-management plan for these particular dangers.

A number of common risks are outlined below.

Competing work demands

Competing work responsibilities can generally be resolved in a number of ways:

- Re-allocate the tasks to a team member who has the requisite skills and is available.
- Determine the priority of the competing responsibilities (possibly with the assistance of your manager). If your work plan takes precedence over other teams', you can refocus the team member's effort onto completing the team's objective.
- Increase the size of your team by hiring additional people temporarily or seconding someone from another team.
- Change the order of the tasks.
- Remove the tasks and change the scope of the work plan.

Contingency plans for specific work plans

Depending on the contingency you are preparing for, you may need to incorporate the specific contingency plan into one of the following plans where most relevant:

- Sales plan
- Reporting plan
- Production plan
- Budgetary plan
- Team participation plan
- Work schedule
- Team and individual learning goals

For example, if you were planning to overcome a budgetary risk, you would most likely include the contingency plan in the budget plan. If you were planning to overcome a team member availability risk, you would include the contingency plan in your team participation plan.

Example: work plan and its corresponding contingency plan

The following is a work plan and its corresponding contingency plan.

Work plan

Milestone	Task	Responsible	Risk	Time line
Annual report dispatched to all shareholders	• Coordinate receipt of all departments' contributions (including financials) to annual report	SA	• Contributions delayed • Contributions incomplete • Contributions unavailable • See 'Contributions contingency plan'	31 July
	• Format all contributions into the annual report template	LO	• Template corrupts • New template required • LO unavailable • See 'Template contingency plan'	14 August
	• Proofread and edit formatted draft	TF	• TF unavailable • Draft corrupts • See 'Editing contingency plan'	15 August

1D Use business technology to manage tasks

Business technology can be extremely useful when it comes to planning. There are software application programs such as Microsoft Project that can be used to schedule tasks and resources, and monitor time lines. You can also use personal schedulers such as a Palm Pilot to record and monitor your tasks on a daily basis.

However, it is important that you use technology as a means to an end, not as the end itself. Your responsibility is to develop your work group's plan and monitor the team's progress towards achieving its objectives, not to spend time learning computer programs and using technology.

If you are focusing on perfecting the different features of your personal organiser in preference to completing your responsibilities within the work plan, you are unlikely to be contributing to your team's achievement of its objectives.

The following technology may be useful to you when managing tasks:

- Computers and computer applications, including email and internet, intranet and extranet, software management programs and spreadsheets
- Personal schedules
- Modems
- Scanners
- Photocopiers
- Fax machines
- Printers

Computers and computer applications

Your computer can be a powerful planning tool. Depending on the software available on your computer, you may have access to specific project management and planning software.

Consider training courses to ensure you and your relevant team members become proficient users of these useful applications. If this is a required skill for the job role or tasks at hand, make sure you include relevant training in the professional development plan.
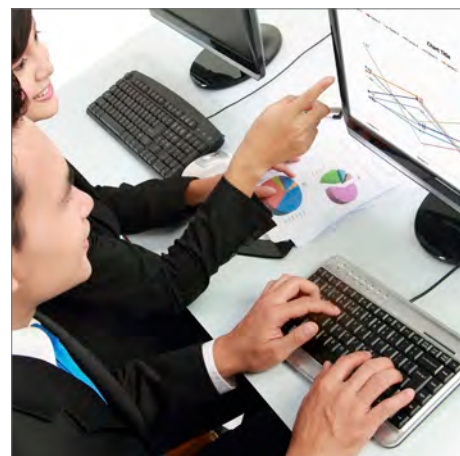
Here is an example of how you can do this.

Person responsible	Activity	Tasks	Time line
Maya	Begin planning the content and budget for the mail-out	Determine recipients of the mail-out.	16 August
		Compile database of recipients and contact details.	
		Prepare a list of items that will be involved in the mail-out.	
		Draft an estimated budget for the project from supplier quotes.	
		Provide budget to management for approval.	

Intranet

If your organisation has an intranet, you may be able to use it to post information about your work plan. An intranet allows many people to simultaneously access the same information. Therefore, an intranet can be used to share details about your team's tasks, time lines and responsibilities.

If your team is not located together geographically, the intranet can be a quick and easy way for you to share information between each other. You can upload the team's work plan as well as updates about how the team is progressing towards achieving its tasks and milestones. Then, everyone on the team can monitor the completion of the team's tasks and keep updated about which tasks are scheduled and for when.

Email, calendar and task scheduling applications

Email can be used as an efficient means of distributing information to a large group quickly and easily, keeping the team well informed in a timely manner. You can also attach additional documents with your email messages such as reports, photos and spreadsheets.

Calendar and tasks features are powerful planning tools and can be used as your personal schedule. It is a good way of keeping track of your appointments, meetings, tasks and the time lines you have to complete them in. You can record details against specific dates and times and set reminder alarms.

You can also attach all relevant documents and correspondence related to the task in the same place. Make a list of things you need to do during the day or week and use the task list view to monitor and prioritise your daily work. This helps you keep track of your important tasks, categorise and prioritise tasks and will prompt you with a reminder if a task is overdue. You can also allocate tasks to other individuals and groups and track their progress. Some programs arrange tasks on a time line so you can see which tasks are competing for the same time.

2A | Identify and analyse personal performance standards

In order to evaluate and monitor your work performance, it is important that your job description and performance standards are clearly defined. You can easily refer to the quantifiable, 'hard' measures such as objectives, targets and key performance indicators for required benchmarks.

'Soft' measures, such as your attitude towards your job, your initiative, motivation and interpersonal behaviour, are not so easily quantified. These aspects should be constantly self-evaluated. They will also become evident in any performance appraisal processes conducted by your manager and may be the source of much of your feedback.

Hard measures of performance

Make sure you are able to identify your expected performance outcomes in your work. Be clear about the activities that constitute your job and are contained in your job description.

Here are examples of key performance and area indicators that assist in supporting and measuring your personal work and professional performance.

Key result areas (KRAs)

Key result areas (KRAs) describe the main areas of accountability and responsibility of a job and provide a framework for your activities. KRAs specify the tasks that contribute to the team's goals and performance. For example, an office manager or team leader of a large recruitment company might have the following KRAs:

- Staffing levels
- Leadership
- Health and safety cost containment
- Industrial relations

Lead and lag indicators

Timely and effective monitoring can provide an early warning so that corrective action can be taken before more serious problems arise. Lead indicators are measures designed to track things as they happen. For example, instead of analysing complaints after six months, document each complaint when you receive it and look for a pattern. Are customers complaining about the same thing? You should be able to take immediate action to reduce the number of complaints.

Lag or historical indicators measure results after the monitoring and reviewing process is completed and documented. You may need to take corrective action if the results are unsatisfactory. Ensure that you document the soft questions so that the process is improved the next time you undertake a similar task.

Self-assess performance standards

Forward-thinking managers constantly reassess the direction of their organisations by promoting a process of evaluation and reflection. What are the organisation's goals and standards and how are these being achieved? Managers need to assess the organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This process is known as a SWOT analysis.

In your own job role, you need to evaluate to what extent you are achieving your performance standards. Reflect on your previous performance appraisals. Is there scope for self-assessment? Is this conducted prior to the appraisal interview? What benefits did you derive from the process?

Here are some advantages and disadvantages of self-assessment to consider.

Advantages of self-assessment

- A sharing of the process of appraisal
- Tangible input from the employee who provides much of the agenda
- A joint commitment to continuous improvement
- An honest and often more critical assessment of own performance than a manager
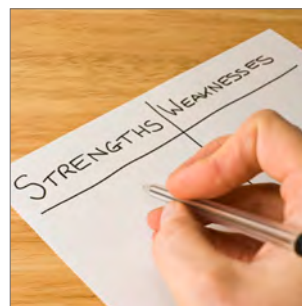
Disadvantages of self-assessment

- Managers feel that they are giving too much responsibility to staff and not having enough control
- Staff feeling that if they admit to weaknesses, their weaknesses may be used against them
- Staff being unsure about whether to provide upward feedback to their managers
- Uncertainty as to whether the self-assessment form becomes part of the formal record

2B | Seek feedback from colleagues and clients

You may think you are doing a good job until you are overlooked for promotion. Alternatively, you may underestimate your performance, until suddenly your manager gives you increased responsibility and higher duties in your supervisor's absence.

Although you may be performing your job to a high degree of personal satisfaction, think about whether it also satisfies and fulfils the expectations of your peers, supervisors and managers?

When seeking information from others, speak clearly and frame your query using language the other person is familiar with so there are no misunderstandings.

The role of feedback

Feedback is valuable, as you receive information about your performance from different perspectives. Most people want to know how others view their performance and whether people think they are achieving their goals. This is important in the context of both your individual and team requirements. Just as your level of self-esteem affects your ability to carry out honest evaluation, it may also affect your ability to accept and benefit from feedback.

People enjoy praise, and staff at all levels always respond well to positive feedback and constructive suggestions on their work performance. It is harder to receive negative feedback. However, such feedback can be just as valuable because it challenges you to re-evaluate your personal behaviour, your goals and how you achieve them.

Feedback may be about behaviour; that is, what you say or do. It may also relate to the way you communicate with peers, share the workload and cooperate with team members.

Different types of feedback

The objectives for establishing and building rapport with others when fostering an honest and trustworthy workplace culture is an underpinning requirement of peer feedback. You no doubt receive feedback in your daily work. If you receive regular positive feedback that shows you are performing to the standard required, you know that you are achieving your objectives to your manager's satisfaction. However, if you receive negative feedback you need to confront the issues raised and analyse where your performance is falling short of expectations. Take steps to improve the situation if the criticism seems justified.

Behavioural theorists show how feedback and reinforcement can improve performance. They identify two types of positive and negative feedback: unconditional and conditional feedback.

Topic 3
Coordinate professional development

If an organisation is to realise its full potential, it has to assess the existing skills of all its employees and decide what extra learning and training is needed. To do this, an organisation needs to facilitate a learning culture and provide employees with opportunities for self-improvement.

Likewise, to make the most of your job and maximise your career potential, you need to develop your own knowledge and improve your own skills set. In the face of constant change, you need accurate knowledge of career paths that suit your nature, needs and preferences.

In this topic you will learn how to:

3A   Assess your knowledge and skills against organisational benchmarks
3B   Research opportunities for improvement and learning
3C   Use feedback to identify improvement opportunities
3D   Facilitate continuous learning
3E   Record professional development achievements

3B | Research opportunities for improvement and learning

Although personal development and career planning is the responsibility of both you and your organisation, you often need to research opportunities for improvement and source avenues of learning yourself.

Here are examples of professional training and development activities that can assist in professional improvement and learning.

Professional development activities

Analyse your interests, values, goals and capabilities, and source avenues for advancement that suit your personality and interests.

Make decisions relating to your current job by becoming familiar with the future direction of your organisation.

Establish personal development plans through identifying the benefits to you that are likely to also benefit your organisation.

Research your options

Once you have identified and prioritised your development and learning needs, research the opportunities that are available. Find out whether your organisation offers time for you to attend a study course during work hours, and/or provides financial support. Think of creative solutions to your needs. Often, a formal training course is not the answer. Coaching or mentoring from a colleague with expertise in the targeted area may be more beneficial in some instances, as well as more cost-efficient.

As you research, make a note of the courses offered, their duration, cost and what they cover. Are they relevant? Will they help you achieve your work goals? Do they target the specific needs you have? How will the information be delivered – in a workshop, as a seminar or one-on-one? Will you have to attend outside of work hours? Will you receive recognition for attending?

Sources to help you plan your professional development include:

- your colleagues
- professional advice from the Learning and Development team in your organisation
- mailing list, brochures and catalogues advertising relevant courses
- training institutions
- the internet
- your local library
- professional associations
- your network of business colleagues.

Example: application form

Here is an example of an application form for professional development.

Name: ....

Date: ....

Program or course name: ....

Organiser or Institution/location: ....

Commencement date: .... / .... / .... Completion date: .... / .... / ....

Objectives of program or course: Match program or course objectives to company needs

Program/Course objectives	Company needs

Estimated costs: for information purposes only

Program or course fees for current year	
Resources, books etc.	
Travel	
Total	$

Applicant signature: ....

Date: .... / .... / ....

Approved by: ....

Date: .... / .... / ....

Study/examination leave days:

Financial support (please specify):

Total $ ....

Feedback from others

Here are examples of other sources of feedback.

Feedback from customers

Feedback from customers can be helpful in identifying a skill gap you were not aware of. For example, a customer may complain that their details are not correct. This may lead you to notice that the customer database is poorly constructed and you will need to make a recommendation to purchase a new customer management software program and learn how to use it.

Feedback from team discussions and brainstorming sessions

Feedback from discussions at team meetings can highlight a training need. For example, you might find that you need to learn a project management program to better allocate and follow tasks. Or perhaps you need to upgrade your personal planning skills after your manager reprimands you for missing an important meeting.

Feedback from coaching and mentoring

Tips, advice and suggestions from mentoring or coaching sessions should be recorded and followed up promptly. They may also include formal training options.

All feedback should be regarded as positive opportunities to improve your work practices and extend your skills and knowledge.

Feedback following professional development

Once you have actually undertaken the professional development, feedback can be obtained from:

- formal or informal performance appraisals
- supervisors and colleagues
- customers and clients
- self-reflection on your behaviour and performance post training.

Career management model

1

Stage 1: Self-assessment
- Clarifying issues and concerns
- Assembling an information base through structured analysis
- Reviewing current job effectiveness
- Checking employment experiences
- Identifying your abilities, interests, values, primary needs
- Identifying employment environment preferences
- Reflecting on lifestyle considerations

2

Stage 2: Data analysis and interpretation
- Identifying transferable (employability) skills
- Identifying career requirements
- Resolving ambiguities
- Integrating career and lifestyle choices
- Identifying monetary needs and considerations
- Identifying barriers to success
- Identifying perceived and real constraints

3

Stage 3: Opportunity awareness
- Gathering information on professional development opportunities
- Cultivating a network
- Seeking and benefiting from mentoring
- Evaluating results
- Selecting career path options

4

Stage 4: Opportunity awareness
- Evaluating career action options
- Identifying trade-offs
- Deciding on goals
- Scheduling career transition

3E Record professional development achievements

An organisation's human resources department usually holds a personal file on each of its employees. This file contains confidential information relating to an individual's employment. It should also keep relevant documentation that pertains to your qualifications and your job.

Your personal file may include:

- your résumé
- a copy of your job description
- your employment contract
- relevant documentation on your qualifications
- performance agreements/appraisals from the annual performance planning and review process
- development plan
- courses, workshops and other professional development activities you have completed in the course of your employment.

Your personal file

You should always keep a copy of all your personal documentation that you have provided to Human Resources, your manager or other authorised personnel. Remember to keep your file current. You need to follow your organisation's policies and procedures for storing your records. For example, the organisation may have a filing cabinet dedicated to holding employee records and documents. It may be your responsibility to ensure that your documents are passed on to the appropriate person to file.

Here is a sample of what might appear in your personal file.

Brief reports

Brief reports can be of all professional activities you have completed. Record the information with physical evidence such as a certificate, transcript or report. This provides a useful basis for discussion at performance appraisals and internal job interviews. You may be asked to present or prepare a written report for your manager with recommendations for future development and learning. The report should include:

- description of the activity
- feedback forms
- report of the activity or transcript
- certificates gained or statements of attendance.