NKWALI
TRAINING CONSULTANTS

LEARNER GUIDE

WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS (SP211009)

QCTO Skills Programme	NOF Level	Credits	
SP211009	**4**	**20**	

QCTO Skills Programme ....

NOF Level ....

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Learn. Grow. Succeed

WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS

LEARNER GUIDE

Module Code	SP-211009
NQF Level	4
Credits	20
Curriculum Code	SP-211009
Skills Programme Title	SP- Workplace Essential Skills
Quality Assuring Body	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)

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Note to the learner

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.

Introduction to Workplace Essential Skills

Workplace Essential Skills are the skills needed for work, learning and life.

Workplace Essential Skills training is designed to support apprentices who have experienced difficulties within a company working environment.

The purpose of this skills programme is to prepare a learner to operate as an employee and to complete daily tasks and activities at a workplace.

No similar skills programme is not already approved and listed by the QCTO.

Workplace Essential Skills are used in every industry and at different levels of complexity. They provide the foundation for learning other skills and enable employees adapt to modern working practices and workplace change. Workplace Essential Skills are the core skills you need to continue learning and to complete daily tasks and activities at work.

The benefit to industry sector to address inequalities and to grow the economy, by enabling community reskilling and upliftment of an individual or society with providing employable skills The typical learners for the skills programme is employed and unemployed South Africans, including those employed or previously employed in low-skilled occupation.

The purpose of this skills programme is to prepare a learner to operate as an employee and to complete daily tasks and activities at a workplace.

Workplace Essential Skills are used in every industry and at different levels of complexity. They provide the foundation for learning other skills and enable employees adapt to modern working practices and workplace change.

Workplace Essential Skills are the core skills you need to continue learning and to complete daily tasks and activities at work. Workplace Essential Skills are the skills needed for work, learning and life.

Quality Assurance

QCTO will facilitate the assessment and quality assurance.

Provider Accreditation Requirements for the Knowledge Module

Physical Requirements

- Access to all relevant equipment and materials for the skills programme
- Training manuals and other relevant documentation, manufacturer's manuals and specifications.
- A quality management system Adequate area to accommodate the number of learners, as prescribed by the OHS Act, that is well lit and well ventilated.

Human Resource Requirements:

- Trainer to learner ratio of 1:30.
- Workshop assistant to learner ratio 1 to 15.
- Trainer/Facilitator with relevant Human Resources Management or Post Graduate Diploma in Labour Law qualification.

Legal Requirements

- Compliance with relevant occupational health, safety and environmental regulations

Venue, Date and Time:

Consult your facilitator should there be any changes to the venue, date and/or time.

Refer to your timetable.

Assessments

The only way to establish whether you are competent and have accomplished the learning outcomes is through continuous assessments. This assessment process involves interpreting evidence about your ability to perform certain tasks. You will be required to perform certain procedures and tasks during the training programmer and will be assessed on them to certify your competence.

This module includes assessments in the form of self-evaluations/activities and exercises. The exercises, activities and self-assessments will be done in pairs, groups or on your own. These exercises/activities or self-assessments (Learner workbook) must be handed to the facilitator. It

will be added to your portfolio of evidence, which will be proof signed by your facilitator that you have successfully performed these tasks.

Listen carefully to the instructions of the facilitator and do the given activities in the time given to you.

Module 1: The Workplace Environment and Responsibilities of an Employer and Employee

Understanding the Workplace Environment

What Is a Positive Workplace Environment?

A positive workplace environment is one where employees feel safe, supported, respected, and motivated to contribute their best. It is characterized by trust, cooperation, fairness, open communication, and opportunities for growth. In such an environment, people feel a sense of shared purpose and are more likely to be productive and committed.

What Does "Work Environment" Mean?

The term "work environment" refers to the conditions, both physical and psychological, in which employees operate. These include tangible elements like office layout and lighting, as well as intangible ones like workplace culture, leadership style, and interpersonal relationships.

Example: You may not like pale green walls in your office. That color affects your experience of the work environment. Similarly, a company that uses group interviews as part of hiring affects your experience too. These are both parts of the work environment.

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.

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- **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**.**

Corporate Conditions	Job-Specific Conditions
• **Employer's Programs for Employees** Training, recreation, engagement initiatives that boost morale, skills and productivity • **Leadership Style** Management approach and collagoratio between supervisors and cubordinates • **Company Policies and Protocols** Rules guiding behavior, feedback ulture, and participation in decisions • **Company Values** Core beliefs shaping culture, leadership, and employee expectations • **Employee Opinions** Staff reactions to the wkplace environment, morale, and productivity feedback	• **Job Benefits** Salary, medical aid, leave, and other contractual benefits that affect motivation and performance • **Job Conditions** Specifics like hours, shift work, flexibility, type of contract, an health & safety requirements • **Job Satisfaction** Individual sense of fulfillment, morale, and alignment with job duties

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 workspace 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.

Benefits of a positive work environment

A healthy work environment leads to:

- Higher motivation and productivity.
- Improved communication and teamwork.
- Lower employee turnover.
- More innovation and problem-solving.
- Better mental health and job satisfaction.

- A strong company reputation.

Characteristics of a positive work environment

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

Characteristics of a Positive Work Environment

- 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 democra tic lealership 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 and Responsibilities of employers

According to South African labour laws, employers must:

- Provide a safe and hazard-free workplace (OHSA).
- Train and supervise employees adequately.
- Supply personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Give induction to new staff on safe procedures.

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- Maintain safe equipment and materials.

- Consult with workers on safety and health matters.

- Respect employee dignity and ensure fair treatment (LRA & BCEA).

- Provide agreed remuneration and benefits.

The Employee's Duties

Services

An employee must make his/her services available to the employer within an agreed period of time.

Competence

An employee must act in accordance with their skills for which they were hired for.

Good Faith

So much of the employer-employee relationship is based on the moral character of the employee.

Subordination

This is an employee's obligation to obey the employer's commands.
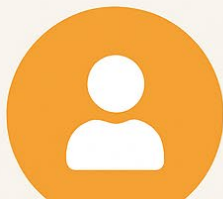
Subordination

This is an employee's obligation to obey the employer's commands.

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

Consequences When Duties Are Ignored

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

The Role of the Manager in the Workplace

Managers play a vital role in shaping the workplace environment and leading their teams effectively. Their responsibilities include:

- Setting clear expectations and goals for their team.

- Supporting and coaching employees to achieve performance.

- Ensuring compliance with company policies and labour laws.

- Promoting positive communication and team collaboration.

- Resolving workplace conflicts constructively.

- Monitoring staff wellbeing and workload.

- Conducting performance appraisals and giving feedback.

- Identifying training needs and encouraging development.

Discussion: How can a manager's behaviour affect the morale of their team?

Career Development

Career development is the ongoing process of learning, growing, and advancing in your professional life. It includes:

- Gaining new knowledge and qualifications.

- Learning job-specific and transferable skills.

- Attending training sessions, workshops, or mentoring programmes.

- Receiving feedback and using it to improve.

- Exploring different roles within a company or industry.

Employers often support career development by:

- Offering promotions, training bursaries, or mentorship.

- Creating internal job opportunities.

- Supporting employees in pursuing professional certifications.

Career Development Cycle

You are responsible for managing your own career path. This includes:

- Setting career goals and creating a plan to reach them.

- Being proactive in finding growth opportunities.

- Regularly reviewing your performance and skills.

- Networking with colleagues and industry peers.

- Staying informed about changes in your field.

Activity: create a Personal Career Development Plan that includes short-term and long-term goals.

PERSONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Name: _____

SHORT-TERM GOALS

LONG-TERM GOALS

Summary

Employer Duties	Employee Duties	Manager Duties
Provide safe workplace	Work safely	Guide and support employees
Pay agreed wages	Do assigned work properly	Resolve team conflicts
Offer induction and training	Be punctual and honest	Monitor and develop performance
Supervise and consult	Obey lawful instructions	Create a positive team culture
Promote respect and equality	Avoid harming the employer or others	Promote development opportunities

Learner Task: Identify where you are in your career journey and list three actions you can take this year to move forward.

Module 2: Employer – Employee Relationships

Understanding the Employer–Employee Relationship

An employer–employee relationship is the professional connection between an employer (individual or organisation) and the people they hire to work for them. It begins the moment a person accepts an offer and signs an employment contract, and it continues for as long as they are part of the organisation.

In South Africa, this relationship is guided by legislation such as the Labour Relations Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, and Employment Equity Act, which set standards for fair treatment, workplace rights, and mutual responsibilities.

Strong relationships between employers and employees can:
- Improve workplace morale.
- Increase productivity and quality of work.
- Boost staff loyalty and retention.
- Reduce workplace disputes.

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.

Key Concepts:
- Employment is the **state of being hired** and performing work in exchange for pay.
- The **employer** provides employment; the **employee** performs work.
- A contract (written or verbal) governs this relationship.

Example: A factory hires a packer at R30/hour to work 4 hours a day, three days a week. This is part-time employment governed by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

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.

Elements of a Positive Employer–Employee Relationship

1. **Mutual Respect** – Both parties value each other's contributions and treat each other with professionalism.
2. **Clear Boundaries** – Friendliness is encouraged, but the distinction between professional and personal relationships should be maintained to avoid favoritism or conflicts of interest.
3. **Trust and Reliability** – Employers trust employees to do their work; employees trust employers to provide fair pay, safe working conditions, and growth opportunities.
4. **Open Communication** – Information flows freely in both directions, avoiding misunderstandings and confusion.
5. **Fairness and Equality** – Equal treatment and non-discrimination in opportunities, recognition, and workload distribution.

Defining Employment in South Africa

According to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997 (BCEA), employment must uphold fair labour practices, as set out in Section 23(1) of the Constitution.

The BCEA regulates:

- Working hours
- Leave entitlements
- Termination processes
- Payment of wages
- Employment contracts

> **Note**: Employees have the right to fair treatment, safe working conditions, and payment for services rendered.

Time and Compensation of Employment

Employment varies based on the time commitment and how employees are paid.

Examples:

- **Hourly work**: Employees are paid per hour worked (common in retail or hospitality).
- **Salaried work**: Employees earn a fixed monthly wage, often with benefits like leave, UIF, and bonuses.
- **Full-time roles**: Usually 40–45 hours per week, with standard lunch and tea breaks as prescribed by law.
- **Part-time roles**: Fewer hours but still covered by BCEA if they work more than 24 hours a month.

Employees must be paid **on time** and as agreed. Late payment or failure to pay is a violation of labour law.

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.

PART-TIME vs. FIXED-TERM vs. CASUAL EMPLOYEES

	PART-TIME EMPLOYEE	FIXED-TERM EMPLOYEE	CASUAL EMPLOYEE
Hours	Works less than full-time ongoing basis	Works on a contract ending at a set date	Works as needed by the employer
Job Security	Has stable employment	Has stable employment until the end of contract	Typically has low job security
Benefits	Usually eligible for benefits such as paid leave	Usually eligible for benefits such as paid leave	Usually not entitled to additional benefits
Examples	Customer service representative	Project manager on a 10-month contract	Event staff member

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.

Employees should seek environments where they feel empowered and respected. If not, they can raise issues via:

- Line manager

- Human Resources

- Formal grievance channels

- Resignation (as a last resort)

Thought for Discussion: "Would you prefer to work in a structured or flexible environment? Why?"

Understanding Employment Contracts

An employment contract outlines the rights and responsibilities of both the employer and employee. It should include:

- Job title and duties

- Working hours

- Remuneration and payment frequency

- Leave entitlements

- Termination conditions

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES
– Fair Compensation
– Provide Training
– Safe Working Conditions

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES
– Do Quality Work
– Follow Policies
– Act Professionally

The Role of Leadership in Employer–Employee Relationships

Leadership is one of the most powerful influences on the quality of employer–employee relationships. It determines how employees experience their work environment, how motivated they feel, and how committed they are to the organization's goals.

In South Africa, where workplaces are diverse and guided by strong labour legislation, leadership also plays a critical role in ensuring **fairness, inclusivity, and compliance** with laws such as the Labour Relations Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, and Employment Equity Act.

Effective leaders:

1. **Set the Vision and Expectations Clearly**
   - Employees perform best when they know the organization's goals and their role in achieving them. Leaders must communicate not just *what* needs to be done, but *why* it matters.
   - *Example*: A factory supervisor shares monthly production targets and explains how meeting them secures contracts that keep everyone employed.

2. **Lead by Example in Ethics and Professionalism**
   - Employees mirror the behaviour of their leaders. When leaders demonstrate honesty, punctuality, accountability, and respect, it encourages the same standards in their teams.
   - *Example*: A department head who follows company safety protocols without exception reinforces their importance.

3. **Inspire and Motivate Rather Than Intimidate**
   - Motivation through encouragement builds trust and creativity. Leading through fear can produce short-term results but often damages morale and retention.
   - *Example*: A call centre manager motivates staff with recognition programs instead of threats about job security.

4. **Provide the Resources and Training Employees Need to Succeed**
   - A strong leader removes obstacles, ensures employees have the tools they need, and invests in their professional development.
   - *Example*: A retail store manager organizes point-of-sale system training before introducing a new checkout process.

5. **Make Fair and Transparent Decisions**

- o Transparency in promotions, performance reviews, and disciplinary action ensures that employees feel valued and treated equally.
- o *Example*: A logistics company uses a clear scoring system for driver performance before awarding bonuses, avoiding perceptions of favoritism.

Example:

A retail store manager who works alongside staff during busy periods demonstrates commitment and earns respect, creating stronger bonds with the team.

Leadership Styles That Influence Employment:

Leadership Style	Characteristics	Impact on Employees
Autocratic	Top-down decisions, little input	Quick results, but can lower morale
Democratic	Encourages participation	Boosts engagement and motivation
Transformational	Focuses on growth and inspiration	Encourages innovation and loyalty

Laissez-faire	Minimal supervision	Works for self-motivated staff; risky for new hires

Leadership Styles in the Workplace

Autocratic	Democratic	Transformational	Laissez-Faire
Gives new hires clear instructions but may make them feel less valued	Involves new hires in decision-making and values their input	Motivates new hires with a vision that promotes development	Gives new hires autonomy but may leave them without guidance
Gives new hires clear instructions	Customer service representative	Project manager on a 10-month contract	Event staff member

Discussion: "Which leadership style would make you feel supported as a new employee — and why?"

Following Up with New Employees

Onboarding doesn't end after the first day. Regular follow-ups with new employees are essential to ensure that they:

- Understand their role and responsibilities
- Feel welcome and supported
- Know how to access resources
- Can raise concerns or ask questions early

Follow-Up Best Practices:

- Week 1 Check-In: Confirm they've settled in, completed training, and know their tasks.
- Month 1 Review: Assess progress, clarify any misunderstandings, and offer support.
- Probation Period Reviews: Formal assessments at 3 or 6 months to provide structured feedback.
- Employers should view follow-ups as an investment in employee performance and retention.

30-Day New Employee Check-In

Employee: _____

Date: _____

What do you like about your role?
_____

What is going well so far?
_____

What challenges have you encountered?
_____

Are there any areas where you need support?
_____

Do you have any resources you need?
_____

What could your supervisor do differently?
_____

What is something you would like to learn?
_____

Do you have any feedback or suggestions?
_____

The Importance of Feedback in Employment

Feedback is a key part of any employment relationship. It helps employees grow, identify strengths, and address areas for improvement. It also helps employers understand how their teams feel and where support is needed.

Types of Feedback:

- Positive Feedback: Reinforces good performance.
- Constructive Feedback: Guides employees to improve, without blame.
- Upward Feedback: Employees give feedback to supervisors or managers.

Why Feedback Matters:

- Improves job performance and confidence
- Prevents misunderstandings and resentment
- Builds open communication and trust
- Helps identify training or support needs early

Tip for Employees: Don't fear feedback — ask for it regularly. It shows maturity and commitment.

FEEDBACK LOOP DIAGRAM

```
          ┌──────────┐
    ┌─────►  ACTION   ├─────┐
    │     └──────────┘     │
    │                      ▼
┌───┴──────┐          ┌──────────┐
│ FEEDBACK │          │          │
└───▲──────┘          │          │
    │                 ▼          │
    │     ┌──────────────┐      │
    └─────┤  ADJUSTMENT  ◄──────┘
          └──────────────┘

          ┌──────────┐
          │  GROWTH  │
          └──────────┘
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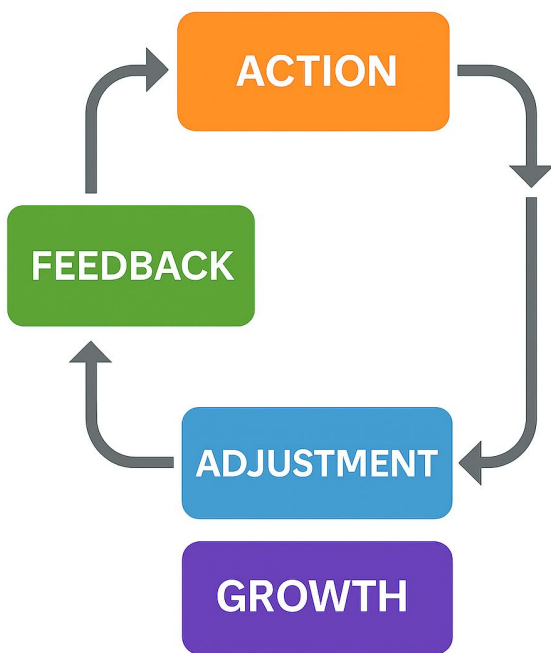
How It All Connects

Concept	Why It Matters in Employment
Leadership	Influences employee motivation, trust, and retention
New Employee Follow-Up	Ensures proper onboarding, performance, and engagement
Feedback	Drives performance, development, and communication

Together, these elements support the full employee lifecycle: from recruitment to successful integration, growth, and retention.

Career Tip: Know Your Employment Status

It is important for employees to understand:

- Their employment type (casual, permanent, etc.)

- Their rights under BCEA

- How to read their payslip

- How to report non-compliance

TIE BENEFITS OF A STRONG EMPLOYER–EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

Fewer Disputes

Increased Productivity

Smarter Task Assignment

Higher Engagement

Strong Relationships Build Strong Businesses

Faster Problem Solving

Better Retention

Faster Problem Solving

Employee Advocacy

Workplace Equality

Strong Relationships Build Strong Businesses

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

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping the employment experience. The way a manager or employer leads directly affects how employees perform, feel, and grow in their roles.

Why Leadership Matters in Employment:

- Sets the tone of the workplace environment.
- Ensures clear communication about expectations and performance.
- Affects employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity.
- Builds trust and respect between employer and employee.

Module 3: The Organisation of Work

The organisation of work refers to how work is structured, divided, and coordinated in a company. It includes the way job tasks are defined, how responsibilities are assigned, and how people and teams collaborate to meet business goals.

This concept looks at the division of labour, coordination between team members, systems of accountability, and the hierarchy or flow of authority in the workplace.

Example: In a restaurant, waiters, kitchen staff, and management all perform different tasks, but their work must be coordinated to deliver good service. What is the importance of work organization?

Work organisation allows a business to operate smoothly and efficiently. When tasks are clearly defined and processes are well-structured:

- Employees know their roles and responsibilities.
- Time and resources are used effectively.
- Mistakes and duplication of work are reduced.
- Teamwork and communication are improved.
- The organisation can meet its objectives.

Being well organized also makes it easier to adapt when changes occur — whether it's taking on new projects, handling customer complaints, or scaling the business.

Faster Work

Tools, files, and information are easy to find.

Improved Safety

Clean, well-maintained areas reduce the risk of accidents.

Organized Workplace

Better Teamwork

Employees can rely on shared systems and know where to find what they need.

Data Protection

Important documents are stored securely, preventing loss or misuse.

Understanding Workplace Organisation

Workplace organisation involves structuring both the physical space and digital systems in a way that supports efficiency, safety, and productivity. It includes organizing documents, tools, files, and communication platforms so that everything is easy to find, use, and manage.

A commonly used model for workplace organisation is the 5S system:

1. Sort: Separate necessary from unnecessary items and remove what isn't needed.
2. Straighten: Arrange essential items so they are easy to access and return.
3. Shine: Keep the workplace clean and safe.
4. Standardize: Create rules and procedures for maintaining organisation.
5. Sustain: Monitor and audit the system to ensure long-term effectiveness.

Discussion: "How does disorganization affect customer service in a company?"

Office Organisation

- Office organisation refers to how a physical or virtual office space is structured to support effective work. A well-organized office can:
- Improve efficiency by reducing time spent looking for tools, files, or information.
- Improve employee morale by creating a clean and structured environment.
- Reduce safety risks and promote hygiene**.**

Examples:

- Labelled storage cupboards and file cabinets.
- A clean, clutter-free desk policy.
- Shared digital folders with controlled access.
- Centralized scheduling tools and internal communication systems.

Tip: Use color-coded folders and drawers to quickly locate office supplies or documents.

Time Management

Time management is the process of planning and controlling how much time is spent on specific tasks. It is a key part of personal work organisation and is essential for meeting deadlines, maintaining productivity, and reducing stress.

Effective time management requires:

- Setting goals and deadlines.

- Breaking work into smaller, manageable tasks.

- Avoiding procrastination and limiting distractions.

- Making time for rest and breaks.

TIME LOG

TIME	ACTIVITY

How I Spend My Time

REFLECTION

How could I manage my time better?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

To-Do Lists

A to-do list is a simple but powerful tool for organizing daily tasks. Writing down what you need to do helps you remember, prioritize, and stay focused. To-do lists:

- Provide a visual overview of your tasks.

- Help you track progress.

- Allow you to prioritize urgent vs non-urgent work.

Tips for effective to-do lists:

- Break larger tasks into smaller action steps.

- Use highlighters or color coding for urgent tasks.

- Cross out or tick completed tasks for motivation.

Reflection: What's the difference between a long wish list and a realistic to-do list?

Using a Diary or Planner

A diary or planner helps keep track of appointments, deadlines, and scheduled tasks. It also helps prevent double bookings, missed meetings, and late submissions.

You can choose between:

- Paper diaries – easy to carry and use.

- Digital planners – sync with calendars, phones, and reminders.

Good diary habits include:

- Checking your planner daily.

- Blocking out time for focused work.

- Setting reminders or alarms for key tasks.

- Writing both personal and professional events to manage your full schedule**.**

Tip: Use recurring calendar events to schedule weekly planning and task reviews.

Prioritizing Tasks

Prioritization means deciding what is most important and completing those tasks first. It ensures that deadlines are met and that time is not wasted on low-priority work.

Ways to prioritize:

- The Eisenhower Matrix: Categorize tasks into urgent/important, not urgent/important, urgent/unimportant, and not urgent/unimportant.

- ABC Method: Label tasks A (must do), B (should do), or C (nice to do).

- Consider deadlines, consequences of delay, and dependencies.

Discussion: How do you decide what to do first when you're overwhelmed with work?

Types of Organizational Structures

Different companies use different structures depending on their size, goals, and industry. The three most common types are:

Functional Structure

- In a functional structure, the company is divided into departments based on business functions, such as Sales, Finance, HR, and Operations.

Advantages: Clear hierarchy, specialized teams, focused training, and clear promotion paths.

Disadvantages: Poor communication between departments and "tunnel vision" where staff only focus on their area.

Advantages

> 1. Focus on specialists' skills.
> 2. Clear chain of command.
> 3. Clear promotion opportunities.

Disadvantages

> 1. Limited communication between departments.
> 2. Tunnel vision.
> 3. Silo effect.

Functional Departmentalization
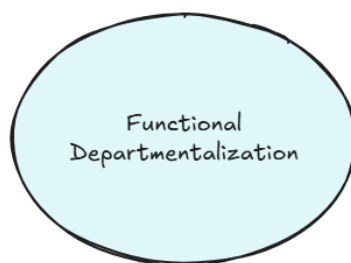
Structure

> Departments: Sales, Accounting, Marketing, Finance, Research, Production.

Hierarchy

> CEO
> |
> Vice-President
> |
> Department Managers

Divisional Structure

- This structure groups employees based on products, services, geographical areas, or customers. Each division operates like a mini business with its own resources.

Advantages: Faster decision-making, accountability, tailored service for specific markets.

Disadvantages: Higher costs, duplication of roles, possible rivalry between divisions.

Advantages

```
Clear
accountability for
each division's
performance.
```

Disadvantages

```
Higher operational
costs and
potential
inefficiencies.
```

Divisional Structure
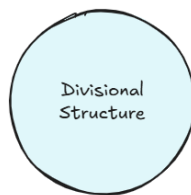
Quick Decision Making

```
Local managers can
respond swiftly to
market changes.
```

Inter-Divisional Rivalries

```
Divisions may
compete against
each other,
hindering
collaboration.
```

Matrix Structure

- A matrix structure combines functional and project-based structures. Employees report to both a department head and a project manager.

Advantages: Cross-functional collaboration, better problem-solving, more innovation.

Disadvantages: Confusion about reporting lines, conflicting instructions, high need for coordination.

Advantages

```
Clear objectives
for projects,
fostering teamwork
and innovation.
```

Disadvantages

```
Complexity in
authority,
potential for
conflicting
directives.
```
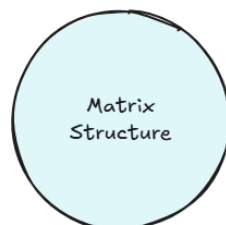
Matrix Structure

Project Management

```
Requires
negotiation skills
and tolerance for
conflict.
```

Functional Skills

```
Employees report
to both project
and functional
managers.
```

FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE	DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE	MATRIX STRUCTURE
Departments: Marketing, Production, Finance	Product lines: Electronics, Clothing, Food	Employees in both functional and product teams
EXAMPLE	PROS	CONS
• Clear lines of authority • Specialization within departments	• Focus on specific markets or products • More adptable to change	• Improved collaboration • Efficient use of resources
• Lack of interdepartm-ental communication	• Duplication of resources • Can be costly	• Complex to manage • Potential confli-cts of authority

The organisation of work affects how efficiently a business runs and how comfortable, confident, and productive its employees feel. Well-organised workplaces reduce stress, protect company information, and ensure that everyone knows what to do, when to do it, and how to work together.

Module 4: Performance and Business Operations

Understanding Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to how effectively a staff member carries out their duties, completes required tasks, and contributes positively to the work environment. It includes both what they achieve (results) and how they go about achieving it (behaviors and processes). Performance is more than just results — it reflects:

- The behaviors employees exhibit.
- The skills and knowledge they apply.
- The outcomes they produce.

An employee may complete all tasks, but if they create conflict, miss deadlines, or need constant supervision, their performance is still lacking.

Example: A call centre agent who resolves many calls but is rude to customers is not considered high performing.

Performance is more than just results. It involves:

- The behaviors employees exhibit
- The skills and knowledge they use
- The outcomes they achieve

  An employee may complete all tasks, but if they create conflict or need constant supervision, their overall performance is still lacking.

Example: A call centre agent who resolves many calls but is rude to customers will not be seen as a high-performing employee.

How Is Performance Measured?

- Methods vary, but typically include:

  ✓ Quality of Work

- Are employees meeting required standards and delivering consistent output?

  ✓ Speed and Efficiency

- Are they meeting deadlines without cutting corners?

  ✓ Trust and Reliability

- Can they be counted on to work independently and meet expectations?

- These metrics must be aligned with the employee's role and the company's objectives.
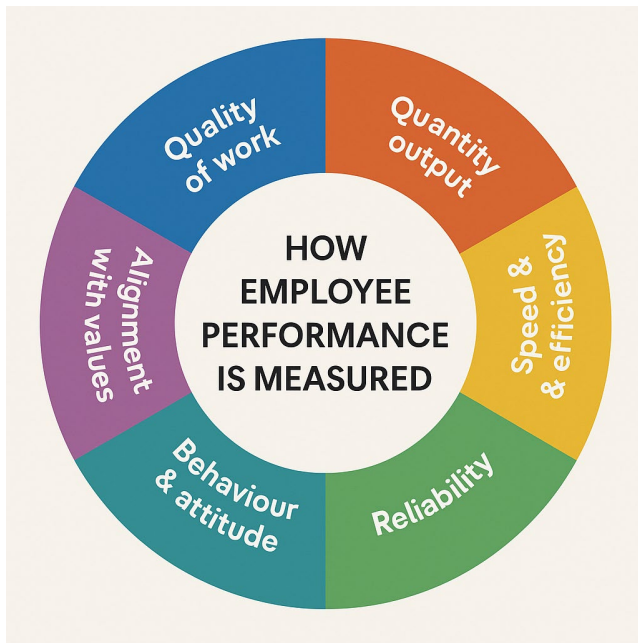
Evaluation Methods

Several approaches exist for evaluating employee performance:

- 360-Degree Feedback: Involves input from managers, peers, and subordinates.

- Objective-Based Reviews: Employees are measured against agreed goals.

- Self-Evaluation: Encourages employees to reflect on their own performance.

- Ranking/Scales: Performance is scored numerically across competencies.

- SWOT-Based Appraisal: Focuses on strengths, development areas, opportunities, and support needs.

POPULAR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION METHODS

Method	Who Provides Input	Purpose	Strength
360-Degree Feedback	Peers, Managers, Self	Well-rounded feedback	Broad perspective
Objective-Based	Employee & Manager	Goal alignment	Clear expectations
Self-Evaluation	Employee	Reflection & awareness	Encourages ownership
Ranking/Scale	Manager	Comparison topl	Simple to administerr
SWOT	Employee & Manager	Development tool	Encourages discussion

Activity

SELF-ASSESSMENT

JOB KNOWLEDGE

_____

_____

_____

SKILLS & ABILITIES

_____

_____

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

_____

_____

GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

_____

_____

_____

_____

Improving Employee Performance and Productivity

To improve performance, managers must first understand why performance is low and then work collaboratively with the employee to find solutions.

Key Steps:

1. Identify root causes (skills gap, lack of resources, personal issues).

2. Balance praise with honest feedback.

3. Provide regular feedback – not just at formal reviews.

4. Create a positive workplace culture – aligned with values and open to feedback.

5. Support learning and development – including training and mentorship.

6. Set SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

7. Recognise effort and improvement – to keep morale high.

8. Promote job satisfaction – through fair pay, growth opportunities, and support.

9. Act on persistent underperformance – through formal interventions if needed.

HOW A PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN WORKS

```
IDENTIFY ISSUE
      ↓
HOLD DISCUSSION
      ↓
CREATE ACTION PLAN
      ↓
   REVIEW
      ↓
 IMPROVEMENT
    ↙     ↘
IMPROVEMENT   FORMAL ACTION
```
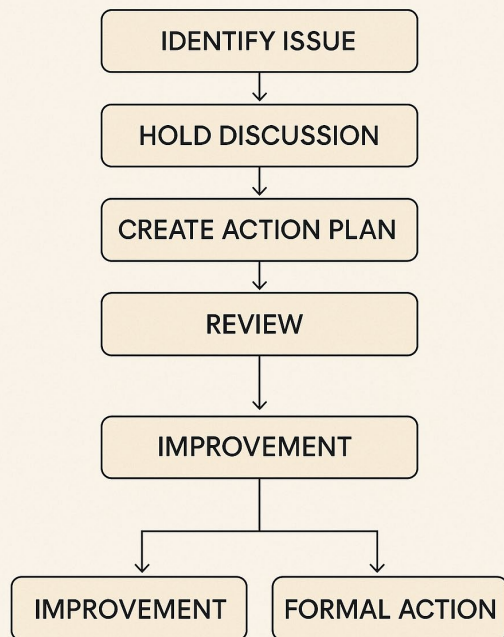
Operations Management and Performance

Operations management refers to how a company runs its daily business activities efficiently to produce goods or deliver services. Performance at the employee level contributes directly to operations.

Key Concepts:

- Clear workflows and resource allocation improve productivity.
- Efficient processes help employees do their jobs without delays or waste.
- Front-line performance must align with back-end planning.

Discussion: "How can slow or inefficient employee performance affect customers?"

Aligning Performance with Business Plans

A business plan outlines the company's goals, strategy, and expected outcomes. For these plans to be realized, every employee must understand their contribution.

- Employees should know why their tasks matter.

- Performance reviews should link individual actions to business objectives.

- Managers must communicate updates to ensure alignment.

Implementing Action Plans

Once gaps in performance are identified, action plans are essential. These plans should include:

- Clear performance goals

- Training/support activities

- Feedback intervals

- Progress tracking

- Action plans are often formalized as part of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

Vision, Mission, and Long-Term Plans

Long-term organizational performance is guided by the company's:

- Vision: What the company aims to achieve in the future

- Mission: Its current purpose and what it delivers to clients/customers

These define values and strategic direction. Employee performance must reflect these guiding principles.

Example: A company with a mission to "serve clients with integrity" expects ethical behaviour as part of performance standards.

Short- and Medium-Term Plans: Goals and Objectives

Organizations use short- and medium-term plans to:

- Break long-term strategies into yearly goals

- Set quarterly or monthly performance targets

- Create KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) for each employee

These goals must be:

- Specific

- Measurable

- Achievable

- Relevant

- Time-bound

This SMART approach gives clarity and motivation.

Teamwork and Performance

Individual performance often contributes to team outcomes. Strong teams:

- Share workload and ideas
- Hold each other accountable
- Deliver on joint goals

Poor performance by one team member affects the entire group.

CONNECTING INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE TO COMPANY VISION

INDIVIDUAL KPIs

TEAM GOALS

DEPARTMENT OBJECTIVES

COMPANY MISSION

Reflection: "How can a poorly performing team member affect others' morale and output?"

Performance Management Principles and Systems

A good system includes:

Goal Setting

- Aligned with job roles and business objectives
- Includes job, project, and behavioral goals

Regular Reviews

- Focused on dialogue, not just forms
- Fair, consistent, and objective
- Should include multiple perspectives

Performance Improvement

- Uses a documented process (PIP)

- Sets expectations and timelines

- Includes support and regular check-ins

Challenges in Performance Management

Common problems include:

- Bias or favoritism

- Inconsistent ratings between departments

- Lack of follow-up after reviews

- Managers who avoid difficult conversations

- Employees who fear or misunderstand feedback

Solutions:

- Use 360 feedback and data to balance subjectivity

- Train managers in honest, respectful communication

- Reinforce a culture of regular, constructive feedback

Common Errors in Performance Reviews

Recency Bias

Halo/Horns Effect

Personal Bias
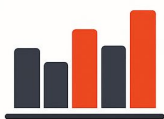
Lack of Differentiation

Incomplete Feedback

Poor Goal Clarity

Characteristics of Effective Performance Management

- Aligns individual work with company strategy

- Encourages employee participation

- Promotes fairness, accuracy, and efficiency

- Allows continuous monitoring and coaching

- Recognizes improvement, not just excellence

Key Takeaways

- Performance is about both results and behaviour.

- It must be measured fairly and improved strategically.

- Feedback, communication, teamwork, and goal setting are vital.

- Performance systems must connect daily work with organizational success.

Module 5: Employer Organizations

In South Africa, the employment relationship does not exist in isolation. It is shaped by laws, formal structures, and institutions that protect the rights of both employers and employees. One of the most important structures for employers is the employers' organisation. These organizations act collectively to protect business interests, negotiate with trade unions, and engage with government on employment matters.

Understanding employer organizations, their role in the workplace, and the legal framework that governs them is crucial for both employers and employees. This topic will cover:

- What an employers' organisation is
- The role of the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL)
- Key institutions like the Labour Court, CCMA, and Bargaining Councils
- The legal acts that govern these bodies (BCEA, LRA, etc.)
- How these structures affect the workplace

Understanding employer organizations

An **employers' organisation** is a legally registered body with the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL). Its main purpose is to represent its member businesses in matters relating to employment and labour law.

Much like trade unions represent employees, employers' organizations represent businesses in areas such as:

- Negotiating wages and working conditions with trade unions
- Representing employers at forums such as the Labour Court, the CCMA, or bargaining councils
- Coordinating the behaviour of member companies on matters of mutual interest
- Promoting the economic and social interests of their members

Example: The LWO Employers Organisation represents businesses across various sectors, assisting them in CCMA disputes, labour law compliance, and industry-specific negotiations.

The Role of the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL)

The DEL is the government department that regulates the labour market. Its main purposes include:

The DEL works closely with bargaining councils, the CCMA, and other agencies to ensure labour laws are enforced.

Labour Court

The Labour Court was established under the Labour Relations Act (LRA) and functions at the same level as the High Court. It deals specifically with employment-related matters such as:

- Disputes arising from the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA)
- Certain contractual disputes related to employment
- Appeals and reviews of CCMA awards
- Disputes involving trade unions, strikes, and collective bargaining

Example: If an employer or employee disagrees with a CCMA arbitration award, they may approach the Labour Court for a review.

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA)

The CCMA is an independent dispute resolution body created under the LRA. It resolves workplace disputes in an accessible and cost-free manner.

Common Disputes Referred to the CCMA

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) is an independent dispute resolution body in South Africa that handles a wide range of workplace-related disputes between employers and employees. Below are some of the most common matters brought before the CCMA:

1. **Unfair Dismissal**

   This occurs when an employee believes they have been dismissed without a fair reason or without following the correct legal procedure. Examples include being dismissed without a proper hearing, without valid evidence of misconduct, or for reasons that are not legally recognized.

2. **Unfair Labour Practices**

   These refer to actions by the employer that unfairly disadvantage an employee, such as withholding promotions without valid reasons, demoting an employee without just cause, or altering benefits in a discriminatory or unjustified way.

3. **Discrimination Claims**

   Employees can approach the CCMA if they believe they have been treated unfairly based on race, gender, age, disability, religion, political opinion, or any other prohibited ground under the Employment Equity Act. Discrimination can be direct (overt) or indirect (hidden within policies or practices).

4. **Wage Disputes**

   These involve disagreements over pay, overtime, or other wage-related matters. Examples include non-payment of wages, disputes over agreed rates of pay, or disputes about bonuses and commission structures.

5. **Changes in Employment Conditions**

   When an employer unilaterally changes terms and conditions of employment—such as working hours, job roles, or benefits—without consultation and agreement, employees may refer the matter to the CCMA for resolution.

When an employment dispute is referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), it follows specific processes designed to resolve matters quickly, fairly, and at minimal cost to the parties. The main processes include:

1. **Conciliation**
   - **What it is:** An informal, confidential meeting between the employer, the employee, and a CCMA commissioner.
   - **Purpose:** To explore settlement options and reach a **mutually acceptable agreement** without going to a formal hearing.
   - **Timeframe:** Must take place within **30 days** of the dispute being referred to the CCMA.
   - **Process:**
     - The commissioner facilitates discussion but does not make a ruling.
     - If an agreement is reached, it is recorded in writing and becomes binding.
     - If no agreement is reached, the commissioner issues a "Certificate of Outcome" stating that the matter is unresolved, which allows the dispute to move to arbitration.

2. **Arbitration**
   - **What it is:** A formal process where a commissioner listens to evidence, examines documents, and hears witness testimony from both parties.
   - **Purpose:** To make a legally binding decision when conciliation fails.
   - **Process:**
     - The commissioner acts like a judge, but the process is less formal than court.
     - Both parties present their case, call witnesses, and submit evidence.
     - The commissioner issues a **written award** within 14 days, which is legally binding and enforceable.

3. **Con/Arb (Conciliation-Arbitration)**
   - **What it is:** A combined process where **conciliation and arbitration take place on the same day**.
   - **When it applies:**

- Mandatory for certain disputes, such as **probation-related dismissals** and **minimum wage disputes**.
- Can also be used if both parties agree for other disputes.
  - o **Process:**
    - If conciliation fails, the arbitration begins immediately (often in the same room, without adjourning).
    - This process speeds up resolution and avoids delays.

CCMA Dispute Referral Deadlines

30 Days	60 Days	90 Days
Unfair Dismissal	Unfair Labour Practice	Unfair Discrimination

Bargaining Councils

- A **bargaining council** is established jointly by one or more employers' organizations and trade unions in a specific industry. It is registered under the LRA and aims to:
  - Negotiate and enforce collective agreements
  - Resolve labour disputes in that industry
  - Establish industry-specific benefit schemes
  - Promote training and education in the sector
- **Legal Obligation:** Employers whose core business falls under the scope of a registered bargaining council **must** register with that council and comply with its agreements.

Example: The Metal and Engineering Industries Bargaining Council (MEIBC) negotiates minimum wages, overtime rates, and working conditions for the metal industry.
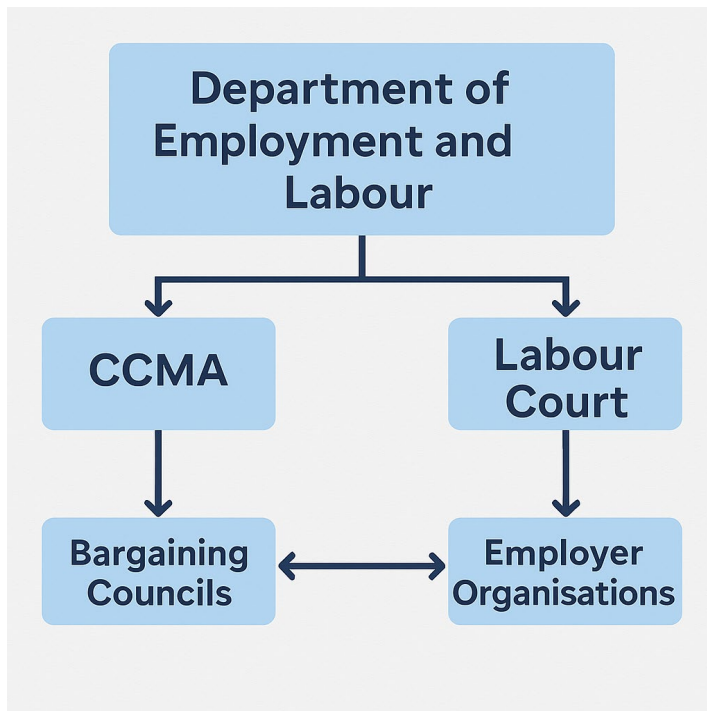
Relevant South African Labour Legislation

Several key acts govern the operations of employer organizations, bargaining councils, and dispute resolution bodies:

1. **Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA)** – Sets minimum standards for working hours, leave, overtime, and termination.

2. **Labour Relations Act (LRA)** – Regulates trade unions, employer organizations, collective bargaining, strikes, lockouts, and dispute resolution structures like the CCMA and bargaining councils.

3. **Employment Equity Act (EEA)** – Promotes equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment by eliminating unfair discrimination.

4. **Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)** – Ensures workplace safety and sets out employer duties to protect workers.

5. **National Minimum Wage Act (NMWA)** – Establishes a minimum wage across all sectors, with provisions for adjustments.

Why Understanding Employer Organizations Matters

For employees, knowing how employer organizations work helps you understand:

- Who represents your employer in wage and condition negotiations

- Why do certain workplace rules and pay structures exist

- How disputes are handled outside your company

For employers, it ensures:

- Compliance with legal requirements

- Access to industry-specific dispute resolution

- Strengthened bargaining power through collective action

Module 6: External Environments in Which Organisations Operate

Understanding the External Environment

The external environment refers to all the outside factors and influences that impact the operation of a business. These are conditions and events beyond the organization's direct control, but they still affect decision-making, strategies, and day-to-day activities.

Businesses must monitor and adapt to these external factors in order to remain competitive and sustainable.

Example:

A funeral services company in Durban may need to adjust its pricing and payment plans when new competitors enter the market, or when national unemployment rates rise and affect customers' ability to pay.

Macroenvironment
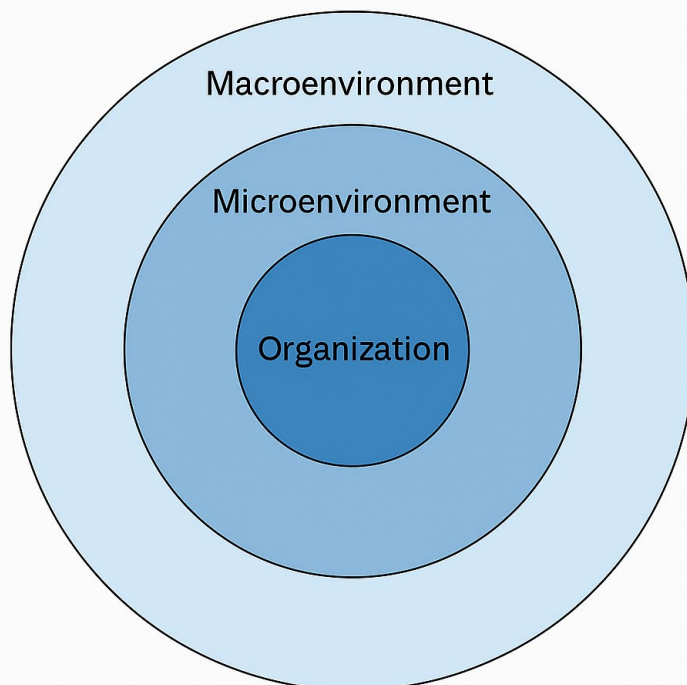
Microenvironment

Organization

Microenvironment

The microenvironment includes factors that **directly** impact the organization's operations and that the business can influence to some degree.

Key components include:

a) **Suppliers** – Provide the goods and services your business needs.

   o *Example*: A supermarket in Soweto depends on local farmers and wholesalers for fresh produce. If deliveries are late, shelves remain empty.

b) **Customers** – The individuals or businesses that buy your products or services.

   o *Internal customers*: Other departments or teams in your organisation that depend on your work.

   o *External customers*: The public, clients, or organizations who purchase your products/services.

c) **Marketing Intermediaries** – Entities that help promote, sell, and distribute your offerings, such as distributors, advertising agencies, or delivery partners.

d) **Financiers** – Banks, investors, or other entities that provide funding.

   o *Example*: A transport company may need financing to purchase new vehicles. If a bank refuses the loan, expansion plans are delayed.

e) **Public Perceptions** – The organization's reputation in the community.

   o *Example*: Negative publicity on social media can reduce trust and customer loyalty.

FACTOR	DEFINITION	SOUTH AFRICAN EXAMPLES
Suppliers	Companies that provide resources for the business	• Farmers supplying fresh produce • Paper manufacturer supplying packaging
Intermediaries	Businesses that aid in promoting, selling, and distributing goods or services	• Retailers stocking company products
Customers	Individuals or businesses buying goods or services	• South African airlines flying Boeing planes • Tourists visiting a local safari lodge

Competitors	Other companies offering similar products or services	• Competing brands in the same market • Local cafes near the same office park
Stakeholders	Groups that have an actual or potential interest in or impact on the business	• Environmental groups • Local communities • The media
The Company	Internal functions or departments within the organisation	• Marketing department

Macroenvironment

The macroenvironment includes broader factors that a business has **little or no control over** but must adapt to in order to survive.

a) **Economic Environment** – National and global economic conditions such as inflation, interest rates, and unemployment levels.

   o *Example*: During high inflation, consumers may prioritize essential goods over luxury items.

b) **Legal Environment** – Laws and regulations affecting operations, such as the Companies Act, Labour Relations Act, and Consumer Protection Act.

   o *Example*: Amendments to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act may require changes to employee contracts.

c) **Competitive Environment** – The number and strength of competitors in your market.

   o *Example*: A local coffee shop in Cape Town facing competition from a new franchise chain.

d) **Technological Environment** – Innovations and changes in technology.

   o *Example*: Small clothing retailers adopting e-commerce platforms to reach customers beyond their physical location.

e) **Social Environment** – Cultural values, social trends, and demographic shifts.

   o *Example*: The growing demand for environmentally friendly packaging in response to climate change awareness.

f) **Global Environment** – International trade, foreign markets, and global events that influence local business.

Example: Fuel price changes influenced by global oil markets affect transport and logistics costs.

Factor	What it means	Example effects on a South African business
Economic	Inflation, interest rates, exchange-rate volatility, unemployment	Input costs rise; customers cut discretionary spend; margins squeezed; cash-flow pressure
Technological	New tech, automation, e-commerce, digital payments, cybersecurity	Need to invest to stay competitive; early adopters lower unit costs; cyber risks increase
Environmental	Climate risks (drought, floods), energy/water constraints	Production downtime; higher generator/water costs; supply delays; insurance premiums up
Legal / Regulatory	Changes to tax and compliance (POPIA, OHSA, BCEA/LRA, industry regs)	New processes and training; compliance costs; penalties if non-compliant
Social / Cultural	Demographics, consumer preferences, social media activism, inequality	Shift to value brands; reputation risk from campaigns; demand for ESG practices
Political / Governance	Policy uncertainty, elections, public unrest, corruption risks	Investment/project delays; permitting/tender risk; contingency planning required
Global / Trade	Export demand, import tariffs, shipping costs, global shocks	Rand volatility impacts pricing: export orders fluctuate; logistics costs swing

The Supply Chain in Context

The supply chain refers to the full network involved in creating and delivering a product or service—from raw materials to the final consumer. It includes:

- Suppliers (raw materials or products)
- Transport and logistics providers
- Manufacturers or service providers

- Distributors and intermediaries
- Retailers or service outlets
- End customers (internal and external)

> **Example:**
>
> A bakery in Johannesburg relies on wheat farmers (supplier), a milling company (manufacturer), a wholesaler (distributor), and delivery drivers (logistics) before the bread reaches retail shelves.

Business Systems and Processes

Business systems are the structured methods, tools, and technologies used to manage and support operations. Examples:

- **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems** – Not just for sales; also used for customer service, complaint handling, marketing campaigns, policy renewals, event tracking, and compliance recordkeeping.
- **Point-of-Sale (POS) systems** – For processing transactions and tracking inventory in retail businesses.
- **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems** – For integrating finance, HR, inventory, and operations.

- **Learning Management Systems (LMS)** – For training and staff development.

Business Processes

Business processes are the step-by-step activities that turn inputs into outputs, enabling the organisation to operate efficiently.

Examples:

- **Procurement Process** – Ordering stock, receiving deliveries, recording invoices.
- **Sales & Customer Engagement Process** – Managing enquiries, issuing quotes, closing sales, and following up.
- **Customer Service Process** – Handling complaints, providing support, and ensuring satisfaction.
- **Compliance & Reporting Process** – Gathering required documentation, submitting reports to regulators, and maintaining compliance records.

Role of SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures)

SOPs document the exact steps for performing each process in a consistent, standardized way.

- Ensure quality and efficiency.
- Maintain compliance with regulations.
- Serve as training tools for new staff.

Why Businesses Must Respond to External Environments

Ignoring external factors can result in:

- Loss of customers.
- Reduced revenue.
- Regulatory penalties.
- Closure of the business.

Example:

A taxi association that does not adjust fares in response to fuel price hikes may operate at a loss, while competitors adapt and remain profitable

Module 7: Workplace Health and Safety

Understanding Workplace Health and Safety

Workplace health and safety refers to all the measures taken to ensure that employees, contractors, visitors, and even members of the public are protected from harm while in the workplace. In South Africa, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), Act 85 of 1993, sets out the legal requirements for keeping workplaces safe. This law requires employers to identify hazards – anything that could cause injury, illness, or harm – and either remove those hazards entirely or reduce the risk they pose.

The Act applies to every workplace and every industry, from offices to factories, construction sites, and farms. It does not only protect employees; it also ensures the safety of anyone who could be affected by the work being carried out. This includes suppliers, customers, and members of the public.

Key Point: Employers must identify potential hazards in the workplace, take reasonable steps to eliminate them, and, where elimination is not possible, control the risk.

The Role of a Health and Safety Policy

A health and safety policy is a formal written statement that shows the organization's commitment to preventing workplace accidents and promoting a safe and healthy environment. Although not every employer is legally required to have a written policy, the OHSA requires all employers to inform their employees about the risks associated with their work and how these risks can be prevented. A written policy is the most effective way to do this, as it sets out clear rules, responsibilities, and procedures that apply to everyone.

The main purpose of a health and safety policy is prevention. A well-written policy can help avoid the human and financial costs of accidents, such as medical expenses, compensation claims, downtime, and damaged equipment. It also makes it clear what is expected from employees, management, and contractors when it comes to safe behaviour in the workplace.

For example, a manufacturing company's policy might state that all workers operating machinery must receive formal training, wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and goggles, and follow strict lock-out procedures before performing maintenance.

A good policy should include:

- Company description.
- Commitment to complying with OHSA minimum standards.
- Recognition that safety is a top priority.
- Commitment to a safe and healthy workplace for all employees.
- Management accountability for health and safety programmes.
- Statement of health and safety principles and goals.
- Responsibilities of all employees.
- Statement that safety will not be sacrificed for convenience.
- Zero tolerance for poor health and safety performance.
- Encouragement of cooperation between management, unions, and employees.
- Policy date, signature of CEO, and visible display in the workplace.
- Review date for updating the policy.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Company Description

Safety is recognised as a top priority

Commitment to complying with OHSA minimum standards

Safe, healthy workplace for all employees

Safety is recognised as a top priority

Statement of health and safety principles and goals

Safety will not be sacrificed for convenience

Responsibilities of all employees

Zero tolerance for poor health and safety performance

Encouragement of cooperation between management, unions, and employees

Policy date, CEO signature

Review date for updating the policy

Strong Relationships Build Strong Businesses

Policy Date _____

_____
Chief Executive Officer

Personal Care in Health and Safety

Health and safety is not just the employer's responsibility – every employee has a role to play in protecting themselves and others. Personal care means being mindful of your own safety and acting in ways that prevent harm. This includes wearing the required PPE, maintaining good personal hygiene, and reporting unsafe conditions immediately. It also means coming to work fit for duty – not under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and well-rested enough to perform tasks safely.

UNDERSTANDING PPE

Safety goggiles
Head protection
Protecting hearing
High-visibility vest
Work gloves
Work suit full-body
Breathing protection
Work suit
Breathing protection
Work boots
Faster problem solving

For example, in a hospital setting, a nurse who sanitizes their hands before and after every patient interaction is taking personal care to prevent the spread of infection.

Understanding Workplace Hazards

A hazard is anything in the workplace that has the potential to cause harm. These hazards can take many forms. Physical hazards include things like moving machinery, slippery floors, and excessive noise. Chemical hazards come from substances such as cleaning agents, pesticides, or fuel, which can cause burns, poisoning, or long-term illness. Biological hazards include bacteria, viruses, or mold that can cause disease. Ergonomic hazards arise from poorly designed workstations, repetitive movements, or heavy lifting, which can cause muscle strain and injury. Psychosocial hazards include workplace stress, harassment, and violence, which can harm mental and emotional well-being.

Every workplace has its own mix of hazards. For example, a construction site may have physical hazards such as falling objects and moving vehicles, chemical hazards from paints and solvents, and ergonomic hazards from lifting heavy building materials.

Example:

In a hospital, hazards could include exposure to infectious diseases (biological), lifting heavy patients (physical/ergonomic), and long working hours (psychosocial).

Risk Control and Monitoring

Once hazards are identified, employers must take steps to control them. The most effective control is elimination – removing the hazard entirely. If that is not possible, substitution can be used, such as replacing a toxic cleaning chemical with a less harmful one. Engineering controls involve physically isolating people from hazards, for example by installing machine guards or safety barriers. Administrative controls include measures such as safety training, rotating jobs to avoid repetitive strain, or implementing strict work procedures. Finally, PPE provides personal protection, such as helmets, gloves, or masks, when other measures cannot remove the hazard completely.

Controlling risks is not enough; employers must also monitor the workplace to ensure controls remain effective. This means carrying out regular inspections, investigating accidents and near-misses, and reviewing safety procedures at least annually. Monitoring also includes checking whether employees are following safety rules and whether training needs to be updated.

For example, a transport company might regularly inspect its vehicles for mechanical faults and review driver fatigue management policies to reduce accidents.

HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

Elimination

Substitution

Engineering
Controls

Administrative
Controls

Fewer
Disputes

Faster
Problem
Solving

Recinesed
Productivity

Workplace
Equality

PPE
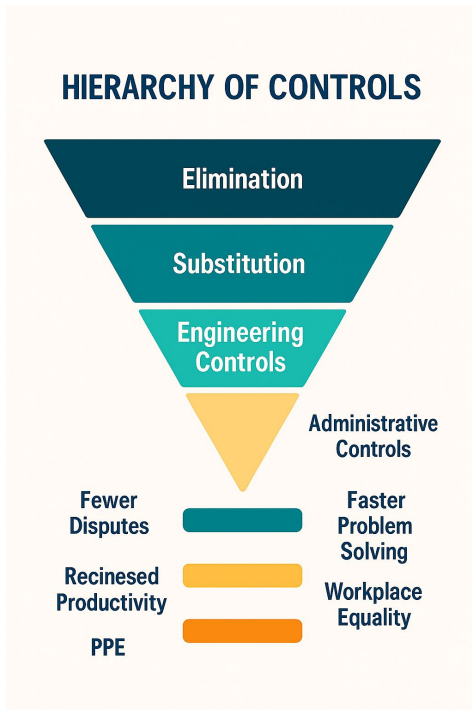
Implications of Non-Compliance

When health and safety rules are ignored, the consequences can be serious for both employers and employees. For employers, non-compliance can lead to legal penalties, fines, and even criminal charges under the OHSA. It can also result in higher insurance premiums, damaged reputation, and loss of business contracts. For employees, non-compliance can cause injury, illness, disability, or even death. It can also lead to disciplinary action if they fail to follow safety rules.

In 2023, for example, a South African construction company was fined heavily after a scaffolding collapse injured several workers. The investigation found that the company had not provided adequate training or equipment. This shows how failing to follow health and safety requirements can result in both human tragedy and financial loss.

The Importance of Management Commitment

No health and safety programme will succeed without genuine commitment from senior management. This means leading by example, allocating resources for training and safety equipment, and making safety a standing item on management agendas. Health and safety should be treated with the same importance as productivity or profitability.

**KEY ELEMENTS OF A
SUCCESSFUL HEALTH AND
SAFETY PROGRAMME**

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION

SAFER WORKPLACCE

FASTER PROBLEM SOLVING

EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY

When employees see that managers take safety seriously, they are more likely to do the same. For instance, if a factory manager always wears the required PPE on the shop floor, workers will be more likely to follow suit.

Module 8: Ethics in Business

Ethics in business is about doing the right thing — not only because the law requires it, but because it builds trust, strengthens relationships, and protects the long-term success of the organisation.

In South Africa, ethical behaviour is not just a nice-to-have — it's a legal, professional, and social expectation.

Understanding Business Ethics

Business ethics are the moral principles and values that guide how a company operates and how employees behave.

It includes fairness, honesty, respect, and responsibility in decision-making.

Business ethics refers to the organization's principles and standards for fair, legal, responsible conduct (how we make money).

> **Example:** A company refuses to bribe an official to speed up a license approval, even if it means a delay in starting operations

What is 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. Work ethic refers to the individual's habits and character at work (how I do my work).

Interrelationship between business ethics and work ethics

Although business ethics and work ethics are distinct concepts, they are closely linked and often influence each other in powerful ways. Understanding this connection helps both employees and employers create a workplace that is not only productive but also fair, responsible, and sustainable.

> **Business ethics**
>
> These are the principles, values, and standards that guide how an organisation as a whole conduct its business. They deal with decisions on a company-wide level—such as fair treatment of clients, transparent accounting, responsible marketing, environmental responsibility, and compliance with laws.

The two influence each other in several ways:

Influence Direction	Explanation	Example
Business ethics → work ethics	When an organisation's leadership sets strong ethical standards, employees are more likely to develop and maintain high personal work ethics.	A company with a strict anti-bribery policy encourages staff to refuse questionable "facilitation fees."
Work ethics → business ethics	The collective work ethics of individual employee's shape and strengthen the overall ethical culture of the business.	Staff who consistently act with integrity make it easier for the business to uphold transparent tender processes.

Why the Relationship Matters

Reputation Building
Employees' ethical behavior is often what the public sees; it reinforces or damages the company's image.

Decision-Making Consistency
When both personal and business ethics align, decisions are made faster and with less conflict.

Trust
Strong work ethics contribute to internal trust; strong business ethics extend that trust to clients, suppliers, and the community

Compliance and Risk Management
Employees with a strong work ethic will more likely follow policies and spot risks early, helping the company remain complianet

Risks When Work Ethics and Business Ethics Don't Align

High Personal Ethics, Weak Business Ethics

• Employee frustration

• High turnover

(people don't want to work for a **company** that acts against their values)

Strong Business Ethics, Weak Personal Ethics

Policy breaches

• Misconduct and reputational harm

Both Weak

Toxic culture where unethical practices become normaliazed

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.

IMPORTANCE OF WORK ETHIC

Those with a strong work ethic are guided by principles that lead to consistent higher productivity.

Productive Work
They regularly accomplish tasks more efficiently and quickly.

Cooperation
They understand the importance of teamwork and collaboration

Ethics in Organizational Culture
An ethical culture can boost morale and improve company efficiency

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- **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. 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.

THE PILLARS OF ORGANIZATIONAL' WORK ETHICS

ORGANISATIONAL INTEGRITY & TRUST

| UNIFORM RULES & REGULATIONS | CLEAR COMMUNICATION OF POLICIES | RESPECT FOR EMPLOYEES | FAIR SALARY & PROMOTIONS | CLEAR HOLIDAY SCHEDULE | WORKPLACE ETHICS CULTURE | WORKPLACE ETHICS CULTURE |

CORE ETHICAL ELEMENTS

| WRITTEN CODE OF ETHICS | ETHICS TRAINING | ADVICE LINES | CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING |
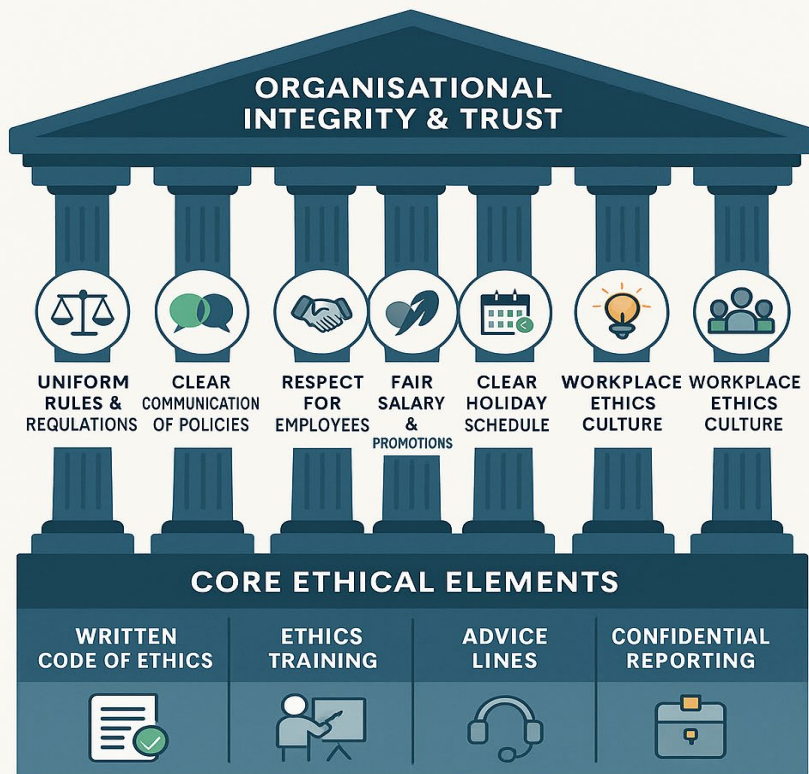
When these pillars stand strong, the organization thrives in trust, fairness, and mutual respect.

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.

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**:**

Together, these elements form the foundation of an ethical workplace culture.

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.

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.

HOW TO DEVELOP STRONG WORK ETHIC

Step 1: BE PROFESSIONAL ABOUT YOUR

Practice being cordial and positive while refraining from gossip

Respect others and develop a reputation for having integrity

RELIABILITY AND HONESTY

Work ethic is more than completing long hours for its foundation is integrity.

- Act the same when people are not watching you, as when they are.
- Perform consistently at the same level of quality
- Be honest in all things

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.

Manage Your Time

- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Eliminate distractions
- Set deadlines and stick to them
- Prioritize important tasks early in the day

Discussion Prompt: What time of day are you most productive? How can you protect that time?

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.

KEEP BALANCE & DELIVER CONSISTENT HIGH PERFORMANCE

- Sleep, exercise, and relaxation.
- Maintain perspective at work.
- Prevent burnout with healthy routines

DISCUSSION PROMPT: How can you incorporate small breaks without losing momentum?

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:

CREATE AND LEARN HABITS

Valuing punctuality and attendance

Valuing time, orderliness, neatness, and speed

Working smarter; being psychologically self-employed

Playing an internal game of working yet enjoying relaxation and rest

'Do it now' habit
Never leave 'till tomorrow what can be accomplished today.'

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.

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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 gét organized

Plan activities

Streamline work and emphasize the important work

Work steadily

Work smart use of technology

Make smart use of technology

Be in control of office paper, work in-basket, and e-mail

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.

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.

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**.**

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 in the Workplace

Values are the core beliefs that influence our decisions. In a business setting, values may include:

- Integrity
- Accountability
- Respect for others
- Customer focus
- Social responsibility

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

Difference Between Norms and Values

Norms	Values
Norms are accepted standards of behaviour.	Values are principles that help you to decide what is right and wrong.
While norms are specific guidelines,	values are general guidelines.
Norms are behaviours that are accepted by the society,	while values are principles believeal by an individual.
Moreover, norms may vary from society to society,	while values may vary from individual to individual.

Workplace Ethics

In the previous sections, we explored norms (the unwritten social rules that guide acceptable behaviour), values (the deeply held beliefs that shape our decisions), and the core elements of a strong work ethic (such as reliability, accountability, and integrity). These form the personal and professional foundation for how individuals approach their work.

Workplace ethics takes these personal principles and applies them within a formal organisational context. While strong personal ethics help you operate with integrity on your own, workplace ethics establish shared rules, standards, and moral principles that everyone in the organisation—both employees and employers—must follow. They serve as the bridge between individual ethical character and collective professional conduct.

Where norms may differ from one workplace to another, and personal values vary from person to person, workplace ethics unify behaviour under a consistent code that promotes trust, productivity, respect, and fair treatment. In short, workplace ethics operationalise strong work ethics into clear expectations, rules, and professional standards for daily work life.

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.

Values

- Deeply held beliefs (e.g. honesty, fairness, respect)
- Shaped by culture, upbringing, and personal principles

Strong Work Ethic

- Reliability, accountability, perseverance, integrity
- How personal values influence work behaviour

Workplace Ethics

- Shared organizational standards, rules, and moral codes
- Examples: professionalism, communication, respect, responsibility

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.

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

Ethical Behaviour 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.

ETHICAL WORKPACE BEHAVIOR

- OBEY RULES AND REGULATIONS
- COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
- DEVELOP PROFES-SIONAL RELATIONSHISHIPS
- TAKE RESPONSBILITY
- MAINTAIN PROFESSIONALIS
- MAINTAIN PROFESSIONALSM
- UPHOLD TRUST
- UPHOLD TRUST
- RESPECT YOUR COLLEAGUES
- SHOW INITIATIVE
- WORK SMARTER

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 shortchange 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.

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

The Impact of an Individual's Ethics on the Business Environment

An employee's personal ethics—how they think, act, and make decisions—directly influence the overall health, sustainability, and success of the business. Even a single ethical lapse can have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the immediate team but also the organisation's reputation, legal standing, and financial performance.

IMPACT OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S ETHICS ON THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

REPUTATION
One dishonest act can damage public trust

WORK CULTURE
Ethical employees create a positive, respectful workplace

LEGAL COMPLIANCE
Ethical behaviour helps avoid lawsuits and penalties

1. **Reputation**

Public Trust: A single dishonest act, such as falsifying a report, leaking confidential information, or engaging in corruption, can severely damage public trust. In today's digital age, where social media amplifies incidents within minutes, reputational damage can be swift and long-lasting.

Brand Perception: Ethical employees uphold the company's image by consistently demonstrating integrity, fairness, and professionalism in dealings with clients, suppliers, and the public.

Client Retention & Attraction: Many clients, especially in regulated industries like finance, insurance, and healthcare, actively choose to work with businesses known for their ethical culture. A reputation for ethical behaviour becomes a competitive advantage.

2. **Work Culture**

Positive, Respectful Environment: When employees practice respect, honesty, fairness, and accountability, they foster a collaborative workplace where people feel valued and safe to share ideas.

Team Cohesion: Ethical conduct reduces internal conflict, prevents harassment or discrimination, and strengthens trust among colleagues.

Retention of Talent: High ethical standards make the workplace more attractive to skilled professionals. Talented employees tend to stay longer in organisations where fairness and transparency are valued.

3. **Legal Compliance**

Avoiding Lawsuits & Penalties: Ethical behaviour naturally aligns with legal requirements, reducing the risk of violations that could lead to fines, lawsuits, or even criminal charges.

POPIA & Data Protection: Adhering to confidentiality and privacy requirements under the Protection of Personal Information Act ensures that client and employee data is handled lawfully, minimising data breach risks.

King IV Corporate Governance: Upholding ethical leadership and accountability meets the corporate governance standards expected in South Africa, particularly in listed companies and regulated sectors.

Regulatory Compliance: In sectors overseen by the FSCA, NCR, FIC, or Department of Labour, individual ethics help ensure compliance with legislation such as the FAIS Act, FIC Act, and Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

4. **Financial Impact**

Cost of Misconduct: Fraud, theft, and corruption can lead to significant financial losses, not only through direct costs but also through legal fees, loss of contracts, and increased insurance premiums.

Investor Confidence: Shareholders and investors are more likely to invest in companies with a reputation for strong ethics and compliance.

5. **Long-Term Sustainability**

Ethical employees contribute to sustainable business practices by prioritising transparency, social responsibility, and fair treatment of all stakeholders.

By avoiding short-term gains through unethical behaviour, they ensure the business can thrive for years without reputational or legal setbacks.

Management / Employer Unethical Behaviors

Workplace ethics apply to employers as much as employees. Leaders set the tone for integrity, and unethical conduct from management can harm morale, productivity, and reputation.

UNETHICAL BEHAVIOURS BY MANAGEMENT

SEX FOR JOB / PROMOTION
Offering employment or promotions in exchange for sexual favors

UNPAID OVERTIME
Expecting employees to work extra hours without pay

VERBAL HARASSMENT
Intimidating or insulting staff through harsh language

UNDUE PRESSURE
Setting unreasonable deadlines and excessive workloads

NEPOTISM
Giving unfair advantages to favored friends or relatives

UNFRIENDLY WORK ENVIRONMENT
Creating a hostile or demotivating workplace climate

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS
Demanding results that are not attainable or reasona-

Solving ethical issues in 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

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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

Confidentiality in the Workplace

Confidentiality means protecting any non-public information you access in your role — whether it belongs to clients, colleagues, or the company. It's a core element of workplace ethics and a legal obligation under South Africa's Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA).

What Counts as Confidential Information?

1. Client Personal Details – Names, ID numbers, contact details, financial records, health information.
2. Company Information – Pricing models, contracts, strategic plans, financial reports, supplier agreements.
3. Intellectual Property (IP) – Designs, product formulas, proprietary systems, trade secrets.
4. HR & Staff Records – Disciplinary records, salary information, performance reviews.

Your Ethical & Legal Duties

Under POPIA, you must:

1. Only process personal information for a lawful, specific purpose (e.g., client onboarding, service delivery).
2. Collect only the minimum information needed (data minimization principle).
3. Ensure information is accurate and up to date.
4. Protect personal information against loss, damage, or unauthorized access — whether in physical or digital form.
5. Delete or destroy personal information once it's no longer required for the stated purpose, unless retention is legally required.

Good Practices to Maintain Confidentiality

- Share information strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- Use approved company tools for storing and sending information (e.g., secure cloud storage, encrypted email).
- Lock your computer screen when stepping away, store physical files in locked cabinets.
- Avoid discussing sensitive matters in public places or online forums.
- Report suspected data leaks or loss of documents immediately to your line manager or the Information Officer.

Remember:

Confidentiality is not just about avoiding "gossip" — it's about protecting trust and meeting your ethical and legal obligations.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct is a formal, written policy that defines the ethical and professional standards expected from all employees, contractors, and even business partners.

It sets the tone for workplace behaviour, helps ensure legal compliance, and protects the organisation's reputation.

Key Elements Typically Covered in a Code of Conduct:

1. Professional Behaviour

- Maintain high standards of integrity, respect, and courtesy in all interactions.
- Follow company policies, industry regulations, and relevant legislation (e.g., POPIA, FAIS, Labour Relations Act).

2. Conflict of Interest

- Avoid situations where personal interests interfere — or could appear to interfere — with your duties to the organisation.
- Disclose any potential conflicts (e.g., doing business with a supplier you have a personal relationship with).

3. Confidentiality & Data Protection

- Keep sensitive client, staff, and company information secure.
- Follow POPIA requirements for processing, storing, and sharing personal information.

4. Compliance with Laws & Regulations

- Adhere to applicable laws (e.g., Companies Act, FIC Act, Occupational Health & Safety Act).

5. Disciplinary Process

- Clearly outline what constitutes misconduct (e.g., fraud, harassment, data breaches).
- Define possible consequences — from verbal warnings to dismissal.

Many companies align their code with the King IV Report on Corporate Governance, which promotes ethical leadership, responsible corporate citizenship, and transparency.

The code should be reviewed regularly and made easily accessible to all employees.

All employees should sign an acknowledgment confirming they have read and understood the code.

Giving and Receiving Gifts

While giving or receiving gifts can be part of building relationships in business, it can also create ethical risks — especially if it may be seen as an attempt to influence decision-making.

Why This Matters:
- Gifts can create a conflict of interest or a perception of bias.
- In regulated industries (e.g., financial services), improper gift acceptance could lead to regulatory breaches under the FAIS Act or other codes.

Typical Gift Policy Provisions:

1.Value Limits

Many companies set a monetary threshold (e.g., R350 or R500) for gifts employees can accept without prior approval.

2. Disclosure Requirements

All gifts above a certain value must be declared to a manager or entered in a Gift Register.

3. **Prohibited Gifts**

- Cash or cash equivalents (e.g., vouchers).

- Gifts offered during a tender process or contract negotiations.

- Any gift that creates a sense of obligation.

4. **Giving Gifts**

- Company-funded gifts to clients or partners should be reasonable, transparent, and within budget policy.

- Ensure no gift could be seen as a bribe under South Africa's Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act.

Best Practice Tip:

When in doubt, ask yourself:

Would I be comfortable if this gift and its value were disclosed publicly? If the answer is "no", it's safer to decline.

ETHICAL STANDARDS AT WORK

CONFIDENTIALITY

Keep sensitive information private

- Client personal details
- Company financial records
- Trade secrets

In South Africa, POPIA enforces confidentiality obligations

CODE OF CONDUCT

Follow the company's written standards

- Professional behaviour
- Conflict of interest
- Disciplinary actions for breaches

GIFTS

Be mindful when giving or receiving

- May create a conflict of interest
- Adhere to company policy on gifts

Align with King IV in South Africa

Module 9: Communication in the workplace

Understanding Communication

Communication is the way we share ideas, instructions, and information so that everyone understands. It happens in many forms – a face-to-face conversation, a phone call, an email, or even a video conference. Every time communication takes place, there is a person who initiates the message, known as the sender, and another person or group who receives it, known as the receiver. The sender encodes the message by choosing the words, tone, and medium, and the receiver decodes it by interpreting its meaning. Finally, there is feedback, which lets the sender know whether the message has been understood as intended.

This process might seem simple, but it is easy for misunderstandings to occur.

Example:

If a manager says, "I need this quickly," one employee might think it means "within the hour," while another might interpret it as "by the end of the day." Clear communication helps to avoid such misunderstandings.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

SENDER	MESSAGE	CHANNEL	RECEIVER	FEEDBACK
The individual or group who initiates communication	The information or meaning that is conveyed	The medium used to send the message	The individual or group who interprets the message	The receiver's response or reaction
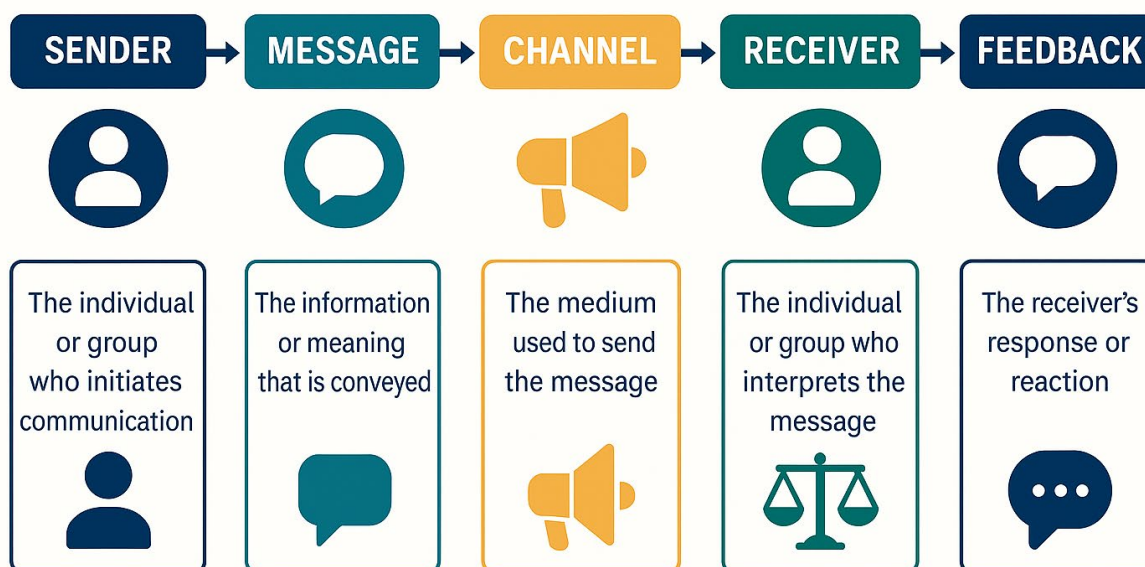
Why Communication Matters in the Workplace

Good communication is at the heart of any successful workplace. It builds trust, strengthens teamwork, and ensures that everyone understands what is expected of them. When employees feel comfortable sharing ideas and asking questions, they are more engaged and motivated. Poor communication can lead to mistakes, wasted time, low morale, and even workplace conflict. Communication is more than just passing on instructions; it's about making connections, understanding perspectives, and creating an environment where people feel heard.

Example:

During a safety briefing in a warehouse, a clear explanation of procedures with time for questions ensures everyone understands how to operate equipment safely, reducing accidents.

Types of Communication

In your new role, you will use several types of communication without even thinking about it. Verbal communication involves speaking directly to others, either in person, on the phone, or during meetings. How you say something – your tone, pace, and choice of words – is just as important as the words themselves. Non-verbal communication includes body language, posture, and facial expressions. For example, nodding while someone speaks shows attentiveness, while avoiding eye contact might suggest disinterest.

Written communication appears in emails, memos, and reports. It is permanent and can be referred back to, so it must be professional, clear, and free from careless errors. Visual communication uses images, charts, or diagrams to support understanding. And perhaps most importantly, active listening means giving your full attention to the person speaking, showing that you understand them, and asking questions if anything is unclear.

**The Five Types
of Communication**

VERBAL

NON-VERBAL

TYPES OF
COMMUNICATION

ACTIVE
LISTENING

WRITTEN

VISUAL

VISUAL

Attending Meetings

Meetings are a structured way to share information, make decisions, and coordinate tasks. As a new employee or intern, you may attend meetings simply to listen and learn, or you may be asked to take minutes. Either way, there is a professional protocol to follow.

Before the meeting, review the agenda so you know what topics will be discussed. If you are expected to present information, prepare your notes in advance. If you will be taking minutes, set up your document with the meeting date, time, and list of agenda items ready so you can capture the discussion efficiently.

Arrive a few minutes early so you are settled before the meeting starts. In virtual meetings, join early enough to test your microphone and camera. Once the meeting begins, pay attention to the discussion, maintain a professional posture, and avoid distractions like checking your phone. If you need to contribute, wait for a pause and speak clearly. Keep your comments relevant to the topic at hand.

Taking and Distributing Minutes

Minute-taking is a common responsibility for interns and junior employees. The minutes are not a word-for-word transcript but a summary of what was discussed and the decisions made. A good set of minutes includes the date, time, and location of the meeting, the names of attendees and apologies, the main points discussed under each agenda item, the exact wording of decisions taken, the actions agreed upon, who will complete them, and by when. After the meeting, type up the minutes clearly and in a professional format. Submit them to the chairperson for approval before distributing them to all participants. Store them in the correct shared folder or filing system so they can be accessed later.

Understanding the Context Before You Take Minutes

Before you even pick up your pen or open your laptop, it's important to understand who's in the room, why the meeting is happening, and how meetings work in a professional setting.
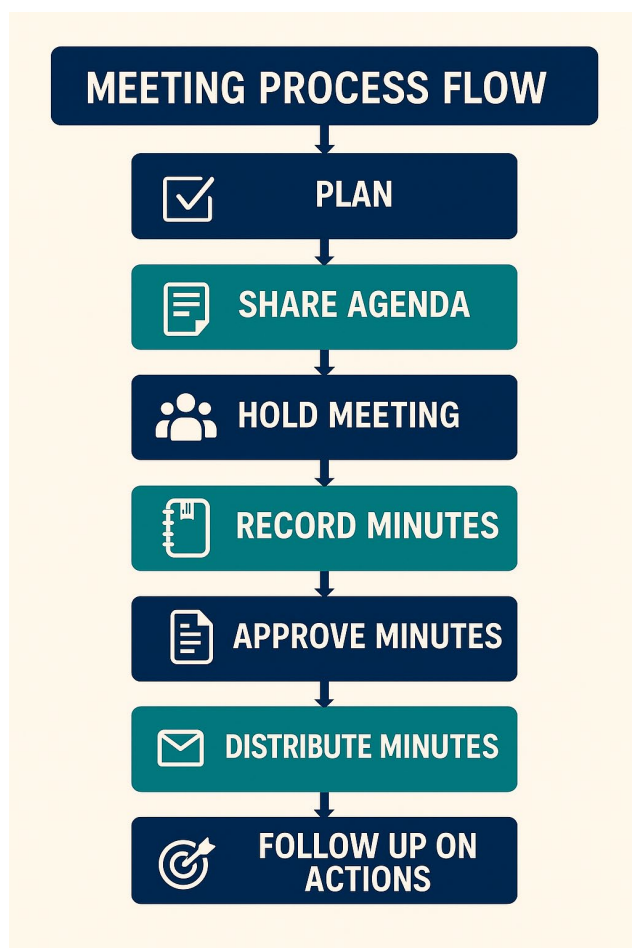
Before the Meeting

1. **Get the Agenda**

   Obtain a copy of the meeting agenda in advance. This helps you prepare a template for your notes with headings for each agenda item.

2. **Set Up Your Document**

   Prepare a header with the following fields ready to fill in:

   o   Meeting title (e.g., "Weekly Team Meeting")

   o   Date

   o   Time (start and expected end)

   o   Venue or platform (e.g., Boardroom A or Microsoft Teams)

   o   Chairperson's name

   o   Minute-taker's name

3. **Prepare an Attendance Table**

   Leave space to record:

   o   Names of attendees (present)

   o   Names of those who sent apologies (absent)

4. **Check Tools and Materials**

   Bring a charged laptop or notebook and pen. If you type minutes during the meeting, have a backup pen and paper in case of technical issues.

During the Meeting

1. **Record the Basics First**

   As soon as the meeting starts, note the actual start time and confirm the chairperson.

2. **Follow the Agenda**

   Use the agenda as your roadmap — create a section for each item so your notes are organized and easy to follow later.

3. **Capture Discussions, Not Every Word**

   Write down:

   o   Main points raised

   o   Different viewpoints (summarized)

   o   Key facts, figures, or dates mentioned

4. **Record Decisions Exactly**

   When the group makes a decision, write it down in full and clear wording as stated by the chairperson. This wording becomes the official record.

5. **Note Action Items Clearly**

   Every action item should include:

   - What needs to be done

   - The person responsible

   - The deadline for completion

     Example: *"Prepare updated client proposal – John Smith – due 15 August 2025."*

6. **Mark Follow-Ups**

   If a topic is postponed or requires more research, note when it will be revisited and by whom.

7. **Keep Track of Time**

   Note the closing time of the meeting.

After the Meeting

1. **Type Up the Minutes Promptly**

   Complete the minutes within 24 hours while the discussion is still fresh in your mind.

2. **Use Professional Formatting**

   - Clear headings for each agenda item

   - Action items in bold or a separate "Action Items" table at the end

   - Consistent fonts and spacing

3. **Review for Accuracy and Neutrality**

   Avoid personal opinions. Keep wording factual and objective.

4. **Submit for Approval**

   Send the draft minutes to the chairperson for review and sign-off.

5. **Distribute Approved Minutes**

   Once approved, email them to all attendees and relevant stakeholders. Include the date for the next meeting if known.

6. **File and Store Properly**

   Upload the final version to the correct shared folder, project management tool, or

document management system. Name the file consistently, e.g., *TeamMeeting_2025-08-09_Minutes.docx*.

Participating in Online Meetings

Virtual meetings on platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams require the same professionalism as in-person meetings. Always log in a few minutes early to check that your sound and video work. Keep your camera on, if possible, with a tidy and neutral background. Mute your microphone when you are not speaking to prevent background noise. Use platform features like "Raise Hand" if you wish to speak, rather than interrupting. Dress appropriately, as though you were in the office.

The Role of the Chairperson

The chairperson is the person who leads and controls the meeting. Think of them as the conductor of an orchestra — they don't play every instrument, but they ensure everyone plays at the right time, in the right order, and follows the same rhythm.

In the context of minute-taking, the chairperson:

- Opens the meeting formally, confirms that everyone has received the agenda, and checks that a quorum (minimum number of attendees required to make decisions) is present.

- Keeps the discussion on track and ensures the agenda is followed in order.

- Manages time so each item is discussed efficiently without overrunning.

- Calls for decisions or votes and announces the outcomes clearly — this is when you capture exact wording in your minutes.

- Assigns responsibilities by confirming who will take each action item and the deadline.

- Closes the meeting formally, notifying the next meeting date if applicable.

As a minute-taker, you will rely heavily on the chairperson's cues to know when an agenda item starts, when a decision is made, and when the meeting has moved on.

Other Key Meeting Terminology to Know

Understanding meeting terms will help you take accurate, professional minutes:

Term	Meaning
Agenda	The list of items to be discussed at the meeting, usually shared in advance.
Quorum	The minimum number of attendees needed for decisions to be valid.
Apologies	When someone cannot attend, they send an apology to the chairperson beforehand; you must record this.
Minutes	The official written record of what was discussed, decided, and agreed upon during the meeting.
Action Item	A specific task assigned to someone, with a deadline.
Matters Arising	Items carried over from the previous meeting that still require discussion or action.
Resolution	A formal decision made by the group, often after discussion or voting.
Adjournment	The formal end of the meeting.
In-Camera Session	A private part of the meeting where only certain attendees remain; the discussion may be confidential.

Handling Difficult Situations and Conflict

Differences in personality or opinion are normal, but poor communication can turn them into conflicts. The key to handling difficult people is to remain calm, focus on the issue rather than the person, and listen actively to their perspective. Use neutral, respectful language and look for solutions that meet everyone's needs. If the problem cannot be resolved informally, follow the organization's grievance procedures.

How Communication Shapes Workplace Relationships

Communication is one of the most powerful tools in the workplace. It can build trust, clarify expectations, and strengthen relationships — but it can also create tension, misunderstandings, and even hostility if used poorly or neglected altogether.

In the South African workplace, where teams may be diverse in culture, language, and professional background, communication becomes even more important. A single unclear email, a delayed response, or a misunderstanding of tone can create unnecessary conflict. When communication breaks down, small issues can quickly grow into major disagreements.

Common ways poor communication causes conflict include:

- **Incomplete Information** – If key details are left out, team members may make wrong assumptions and take actions that clash.
  Example: An intern is told to "prepare the client file" but not informed that the file also requires financial documents from another department.

- **Ambiguity or Unclear Instructions** – Vague instructions can lead to different interpretations.
  Example: A project manager says, "finish it soon," but one person assumes it means today while another thinks it means next week.

- **Tone and Non-Verbal Misinterpretation** – Written communication lacks facial expressions or tone, so a short reply can seem rude even if it was not intended that way.

- **Lack of Feedback** – If employees don't receive feedback, they might assume their work is unsatisfactory, leading to resentment.

Strong communication habits can stop conflict before it starts and make it easier to resolve when disagreements happen. This includes:

- **Clarity** – Giving precise, unambiguous instructions.

- **Active Listening** – Fully focusing on what the other person is saying without interrupting.

- **Openness** – Encouraging questions and being willing to explain decisions.

- **Feedback Loops** – Confirming understanding by repeating or summarizing what was agreed.

- **Neutral and Respectful Language** – Addressing issues without personal attacks.

HOW COMMUNICATION CAN CAUSE OR RESOLVE CONFLICT

POOR COMMUNICATION	GOOD COMMUNICATION
Vague or Missing Information	Clear, Complete Information
Assumptions Made	Shared Understanding
Misunderstanding Grows	Operestions & Clarifications
Frustration & Blame	Mutual Respect & Problem-Solving
WORKPLACE CONFLICT	CONFLICT RESOLVED / PREVENTED

Decision-Making and Communication

Good decision-making requires input from all relevant people, and a clear explanation of why the decision was made. This ensures that everyone understands the reasoning and can implement the decision effectively. Summarizing the discussion and confirming agreement before ending the conversation helps avoid misunderstandings.

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Building a Communication Culture

Strong communication in a workplace doesn't happen by accident – it's built through consistent practices. Organizations should link their communication strategies to their vision, mission, and goals. This includes using appropriate channels for different messages, encouraging feedback, and providing communication skills training.

Two-way communication is essential: employees should be able to raise concerns, share ideas, and receive feedback without fear of criticism. This is especially important for new employees and interns, who need to feel safe to ask questions as they learn workplace norms.

Training for Better Communication

Communication skills can be developed through training. This might cover professional writing, presentation skills, listening techniques, online meeting etiquette, and conflict resolution. For example, a new intern may attend a workshop on business email etiquette to ensure their written communication is clear, professional, and respectful.

Whether it's an informal chat, a formal meeting, or a detailed report, effective communication keeps work flowing smoothly. It is both a skill and a habit and learning it early in your career will make you more effective in your role, more confident in interactions, and more valuable to your team.

Module 10: Current Trends Influencing Work

Workplaces are changing faster than ever before. New technology, global events, social changes, and evolving business models are reshaping how companies operate. For a new employee or intern, understanding these trends is not just about "keeping up" — it's about learning how to adapt, stay productive, and remain relevant in a competitive job market.
In South Africa, these trends also interact with local realities such as the Employment Equity Act, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE), labour laws, and the need for skills development in line with the Skills Development Act.

Remote and Hybrid Work

Advances in technology (cloud systems, video conferencing, collaborative apps) and the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a shift to working from home. Many South African companies, from banks to marketing agencies, now use a hybrid model, where employees work some days in the office and some days remotely.

Key Adaptation Skills for New Employees:

- Learn to use tools like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Workspace effectively.
- Understand your company's Remote Work Policy (part of workplace procedures).
- Manage your own productivity without constant supervision.

REMOTE WORK TOOLKIT
FOR SOUTH AFRICAN EMPLOYEES

Internet Connectivity

Video Conferenccing

Time Management Apps

Communication Channels

Remote Work Toolkit Form South African Employees

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Virtual Team Building

In hybrid or remote environments, relationships still matter. Teams bond through online activities like virtual quizzes, shared WhatsApp groups, or remote project challenges.

This is important because it:

- Builds trust with colleagues you may rarely see in person.

- Helps you feel included and informed.

- Encourages collaboration across provinces or even internationally.

Employee Wellness

Modern workplaces recognise that mental, emotional, and physical health directly affect performance. Wellness programmes are not just about gym discounts — they can include counselling, financial planning workshops, and stress management training.

High commute stress, load-shedding, and economic pressures make wellness initiatives essential. A healthy workforce is more resilient.

Wellness programmes should be documented in HR policies, with clear processes for accessing them.

WORKPLACE WELLNESS

Flexible Working Hours

South African labour law sets the maximum working hours, but many organizations now offer flexi-time. This lets employees start earlier or later, as long as they meet their required hours and outputs.

For New Employees:

- Check if flexi -time applies to your role.
- Use it responsibly — meet deadlines and attend mandatory meetings.

Multi-Functional Workspaces

Office spaces are shifting towards hot-desking and adaptable layouts. Instead of one desk for each employee, companies provide shared spaces equipped for different tasks.

Some co-working hubs in South Africa rent desks by the day, with access to meeting rooms and high-speed internet.

Diversity and Inclusion

South African workplaces must comply with the Employment Equity Act and B-BBEE codes, aiming for fair representation and equal opportunity.

For New Employees:

- Respect diversity in culture, language, religion, and gender.

- Avoid stereotypes or assumptions — learn to work effectively with people from different backgrounds.

Ongoing Learning

The workplace is constantly evolving — new laws, new systems, new client expectations, and new technology are introduced every year. What you know today might not be enough to succeed tomorrow. Skills can become outdated quickly, and those who stop learning risk falling behind.

In South Africa, this reality is supported by the Skills Development Act (1998) and the role of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which aim to make training and development accessible to all workers. This includes learnerships, bursaries, and workplace skills programmes that can help you grow throughout your career.

As a new employee, it's tempting to wait for your employer to provide training. While companies should offer development opportunities, you are ultimately responsible for your own growth. Taking ownership means being proactive about identifying your skill gaps and finding ways to fill them.

Worker Safety

Workplace safety is about protecting the physical and mental health of employees while ensuring that work is done without unnecessary risk. This applies to all environments — from

corporate offices to remote work setups. In South Africa, safety standards are guided by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993 (OHSA), which places duties on both employers and employees to create a safe working environment.

Post-COVID Shift in Workplace Safety

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we think about health at work. In the past, showing up sick was sometimes seen as a sign of commitment. Now, it is recognized as a health risk — to you, your colleagues, and your clients.

- Stay Home if Sick: Inform your supervisor and follow sick leave policies.
- Work-from-Home Protocols: Use remote tools when you're contagious but able to work.
- Hygiene Measures: Sanitizing workstations, regular handwashing, and avoiding shared utensils.
- Ventilation & Air Quality: Offices may use better air filtration and encourage open windows.
- Wellness Checks: Some workplaces may have health screening policies before entry.

Your Role as an Employee in Safety

Worker safety is not just the employer's job — employees are also responsible for:

- Following safety instructions and training.
- Using equipment correctly.
- Reporting hazards immediately.
- Wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) where required.
- Maintaining a safe workspace, even if working from home.

Policies and Procedures

Every reputable workplace has written policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

These are your roadmap for safe and consistent work practices.

Why They're Important:

- Legal Compliance: Ensures your workplace meets OHSA and other legal standards.
- Consistency: Everyone follows the same steps, reducing confusion.
- Clear Roles: You know who is responsible for what.
- Preparedness: Policies outline what to do in emergencies.

> Examples of Workplace Safety Policies:
>
> - Office Health & Safety Policy
>
> - Remote Work Safety SOP
>
> - Incident Reporting Procedure
>
> - Fire Evacuation Plan
>
> - Data Security & Confidentiality Policy

Analyzing and Responding to Workplace Trends

Understanding workplace trends — like remote work, hybrid teams, or digital transformation — requires more than simply observing them. Employers and employees alike need tools to assess their impact, make informed decisions, and adapt processes. Four important tools and concepts work together here: SWOT Analysis, Performance Measurement, Delegation, and Control Charts.

Using SWOT Analysis to Understand Trends

A SWOT Analysis is a structured way to assess the effects of workplace trends on your organisation. It examines:

- Strengths: Internal advantages your company has that make it well-positioned to adapt to a trend.

  Example: A South African insurance firm with established remote IT systems can easily transition to hybrid work.

- Weaknesses: Internal limitations or challenges.

  Example: A small accounting firm in a rural area struggles with poor internet speed, affecting remote productivity.

- Opportunities: External factors that could benefit the organisation.

  Example: Expanding recruitment beyond Gauteng to hire skilled talent from Cape Town or Durban who work remotely.

- Threats: External risks that could cause harm.

  Example: Increased cybercrime targeting companies with less secure remote access systems.

Measuring and Improving Performance

Once you understand how a trend affects your organisation, the next step is ensuring it doesn't reduce productivity or quality.

In a remote or flexible work environment, employers can't always rely on visual supervision.

Performance must be tracked using clear, agreed-upon measures.

Common Metrics:

- **Output Quality**: Is the work meeting agreed standards?
- **Deadlines Met:** Are projects delivered on time?
- **Team Collaboration:** Are colleagues communicating effectively despite working apart?
- **Client Satisfaction:** Are service levels consistent?

The Continuous Improvement Cycle:

- Set KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) that are specific, measurable, and achievable.
- Monitor Performance using tools like project tracking software, CRMs, or shared task boards.
- Provide Feedback and Training to address any issues early.
- Reassess KPIs regularly to ensure they remain relevant as the workplace evolves.

Delegation in Modern Workplaces

Trends like multi-functional teams and flexible work arrangements mean that effective delegation is critical — especially when team members work in different locations or time zones.

Good Delegation Involves:

- Assigning tasks based on skills and current workload.
- Providing clear instructions, with measurable outcomes and deadlines.
- Tracking progress using CRM systems — not only for sales, but also for internal requests, project updates, and task follow-ups.

Control Charts for Quality Management

Control charts are visual tools used in quality management to monitor whether a process is performing within an acceptable range over time. Think of them like a health monitor for a process — they help you spot when something is going wrong before it becomes a serious problem.

A control chart typically has:

- A centre line – showing the average or expected performance.
- Upper and lower control limits – the boundaries of what's considered normal variation.
- Data points plotted over time – each point represents a measurement, such as how long it took to complete a task or how many errors were found.

If the points start moving outside these control limits, or if you see unusual patterns, it's a signal that the process may be "out of control" and needs attention.

In remote work environments, managers can't walk the floor to check quality — control charts give them data-driven insight.

In hybrid or flexible workplaces, they help ensure standards stay the same no matter where the employee is working from.
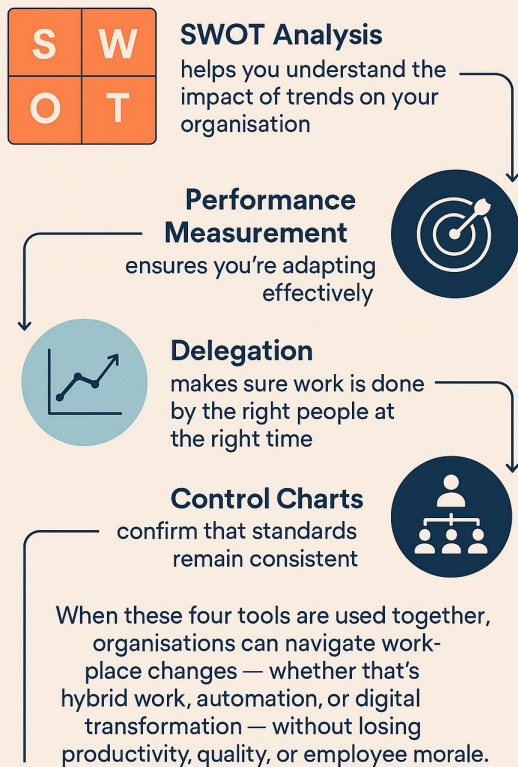
In times of rapid change (e.g., new software, automation, or restructuring), they act as an early warning system for drops in productivity or quality.

Example:

A customer service team uses a control chart to track average call handling time. If the time suddenly spikes above the upper control limit, it may mean there's a system issue or staff need more training. This allows the manager to address the problem before customers start complaining.

Control charts are not just for factories or engineers — they can apply to almost any workplace process. They help ensure quality, consistency, and client satisfaction in a changing work environment.

Bringing It All Together

SWOT Analysis helps you understand the impact of trends on your organisation

Performance Measurement ensures you're adapting effectively

Delegation makes sure work is done by the right people at the right time

Control Charts confirm that standards remain consistent

When these four tools are used together, organisations can navigate workplace changes — whether that's hybrid work, automation, or digital transformation — without losing productivity, quality, or employee morale.

Work in 2030: The Age of Artificial Intelligence

By 2030, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will no longer be a "new" technology — it will be deeply woven into almost every workplace. From automated scheduling to AI-powered legal drafting, the tools we use daily will be smarter, faster, and capable of learning. For South African employees and interns, this means more opportunities but also new responsibilities.

How AI Will Change Work

- **Routine tasks will be automated** – Data entry, report generation, compliance checks, and even some HR screening will be handled by AI systems, freeing employees to focus on complex, human-centered work.

- **Decision-making will be data-driven** – AI will analyze large amounts of information to recommend strategies, identify risks, and predict outcomes.

- **Personalized work tools** – AI systems will adapt to your preferences, learning your work style to suggest the most efficient way to complete tasks.

- **Human–AI collaboration** – Instead of replacing people entirely, AI will work alongside employees, handling repetitive processes while humans focus on creativity, relationship-building, and problem-solving.

Skills You'll Need by 2030

1. **Digital Literacy** – Understanding how to use AI-powered platforms, interpret AI-generated data, and troubleshoot basic tech issues.
2. **Critical Thinking** – Being able to question AI outputs and make ethical, well-reasoned decisions.
3. **Adaptability** – Comfort with frequent software updates, new tools, and process changes.
4. **Emotional Intelligence** – Skills that AI can't replicate easily, such as empathy, negotiation, and cultural awareness.
5. **AI Ethics Awareness** – Knowing the risks of bias, privacy breaches, and misuse of data, and applying responsible AI practices.

AI in the South African Workplace

- **Compliance & Regulation** – Financial services, legal practices, and healthcare will rely on AI for regulatory checks, but employees will need to ensure that outputs meet local legal standards such as POPIA and the FIC Act.
- **Skills Development** – SETAs and the Skills Development Act will remain relevant as workers retrain for AI-era jobs. Expect more learnerships in digital transformation, AI operations, and data analysis.
- **Entrepreneurship** – AI will lower the cost of starting and running a business, creating opportunities for small enterprises in rural and township areas.
- **Job Evolution** – Some job titles may disappear, but new roles such as *AI Workflow Specialist*, *Prompt Engineer*, and *Ethical AI Officer* will emerge.

Practical Steps for New Employees Today

- Learn to work with AI tools already in use in your industry (e.g., chatbots, predictive analytics, automated CRMs).
- Ask for training opportunities in digital skills and AI literacy.
- Keep a human edge — focus on skills that machines cannot easily replace.
- Stay informed on new laws and workplace policies that govern AI use.

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