PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE & DEVELOPMENT

Student Manual

CHCPRP003 REFLECT ON AND IMPROVE OWN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
# CONTENT

1. REFLECTING ON OWN PRACTICE ................................................................. 5
   1.1 SELF-EVALUATION ................................................................. 5
      Self-Evaluation in Conjunction with Supervisors and/or Peers .............. 5
      Ensuring Self-Evaluation is Successful ........................................... 6
      Differing Points of View ............................................................... 8
      ASSESSMENT 1.1 ........................................................................... 8
   1.2 VALUES, BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOUR IN PRACTICE .................... 9
      The Effect of Values, Beliefs and Behaviour ........................................ 9
      The Effect of Values, Beliefs and Behaviour in Practice ....................... 11
      The Consequences of Allowing Values, Beliefs and Behaviour to Affect Practice 14
      ASSESSMENT 1.2 ................................................................. 15
   1.3 TWO-WAY, OPEN AND EVALUATIVE FEEDBACK ....................... 16
      Feedback ............................................................................. 16
      Two-Way, Open and Evaluative Feedback with Co-Workers ................. 16
      Benefits .............................................................................. 17
      How to Receive Feedback ............................................................ 18
      ASSESSMENT 1.3 ....................................................................... 18
   1.4 SEEKING FEEDBACK ............................................................. 19
      Feedback from Clients, Organisations or other Relevant Sources .......... 19
      How to Obtain Feedback ................................................................ 19
      Questions to Ask Clients .................................................................. 22
      Reflecting on Feedback .................................................................. 22
      ASSESSMENT 1.4 ....................................................................... 23

2. ENHANCING OWN PRACTICE ................................................................. 24
   2.1 DETERMINING IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED ..................................... 24
      Determining What Improvements are Necessary .................................. 24
      A Step-by-Step Guide to Determining What Improvements Need to be Made .... 24
      ASSESSMENT 2.1 ....................................................................... 25
   2.2 POTENTIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS ............................................. 26
      Internal and External Support Networks .............................................. 26
      ASSESSMENT 2.2 ....................................................................... 27
   2.3 SPECIALIST ADVICE OR FURTHER TRAINING ............................ 28
      Seeking Specialist Advice or Further Training .................................... 28
      Things to Consider When Seeking Help ............................................ 30
      Don’t Just Seek Advice When You Are in Trouble .............................. 31
      ASSESSMENT 2.3 ....................................................................... 31
### 2.4 REQUIREMENTS FOR SELF-CARE
- Self-Care and Additional Support ........................................ 32
- Finding Additional Support ................................................. 38
- ASSESSMENT 2.4 ................................................................... 38

### 2.5 SELF-DEVELOPMENT PLAN ................................................. 39
- Developing a Self-Development Plan ..................................... 39
- How to Devise a Self-Development Plan ................................. 39
- Implement Your Plan ............................................................. 41
- How to Document a Self-Development Plan ............................. 42
- ASSESSMENT 2.5 ................................................................... 42

### 3. ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ......................... 43

#### 3.1 CURRENT AND EMERGING INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS ......... 43
- Staying up to Date with Industry Developments ..................... 43
- Other Sources of Information ................................................ 44
- Apply What you Have Learned ............................................. 45
- ASSESSMENT 3.1 ................................................................... 45

#### 3.2 ASSESSING OWN PRACTICE ............................................... 46
- Working Ethically and According to the Law ......................... 46
- Ethics ................................................................................. 46
- Sticking to the Law .............................................................. 47
- What’s Legal Isn’t Always Ethical ......................................... 48
- ASSESSMENT 3.2 ................................................................... 48

#### 3.3 EXPANDING OWN EXPERTISE .......................................... 49
- Opportunities to Extend and Expand Own Expertise .............. 49
- ASSESSMENT 3.3 ................................................................... 50

#### 3.4 UPGRADING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ............................. 51
- Review Processes ................................................................. 51
- The Importance of Review Processes for the Employee .......... 51
- The Importance of Review Processes for Management .......... 51
- In Summary ......................................................................... 52
- ASSESSMENT 3.4 ................................................................... 52
1. REFLECTING ON OWN PRACTICE

1.1 SELF-EVALUATION

Self-Evaluation in Conjunction with Supervisors and/or Peers

Self-evaluation is the process of assessing your strengths and weaknesses and identifying areas that require improvement. Whether you’re an employee or a manager, this process is integral to your personal and professional development and therefore both the quality you offer in your business, as well as your overall success in your business.

Although self-evaluation should be an ongoing process, it should – wherever possible – take place in conjunction with supervisors and/or peers. This is important for several reasons.

Firstly, if you are an employee, it will give you a chance to highlight or remind your supervisor and/or peers of your strengths and achievements, your importance to the team and the overall success of the business. Secondly, it will give you the chance to express and talk through any problems, anxieties or frustrations you may have regarding your ability to perform your role. For instance, an employee may feel that they have the potential to assume more responsibility.

Undertaking self-evaluation in conjunction with supervisors and/or peers is also important because doing so requires formal meetings and therefore record keeping. By maintaining records of meetings and self-evaluation, the employee and their supervisor and/or peers can hold each other to account going forward.

Whether you are an employee or run your own business, having a self-appraisal or reflection/evaluation is important to making sure you are continuing to grow and develop, and therefore continuing to refine and therefore improve what you can bring to your clients or customers.
Ensuring Self-Evaluation is Successful

Employees and managers often think of self-evaluation as a pointless activity – a gimmick that simply needs ticking off as part of the overall performance activity – and therefore do little more than go through the motions.

This shows a lack of respect for staff and also affects the bottom line. Continuously refining and improving your business should be an integral part of your operations. A self/employee evaluation process is a necessary part of this.

Thankfully, there are a number of ways to ensure that the self-evaluation process is both meaningful and successful.

As an employee, you should:

- Be honest
  - if you’re not honest, you’re wasting your time
- Ask yourself tough questions
  - tough questions yield useful answers
- Stay positive
  - comments should be positive as well as relate to areas requiring improvement
  - avoid criticising colleagues and bosses
- Document your achievements
  - provide specific examples, with evidence, of your achievements
- Seek a clear understanding of how the self-evaluation will be used
  - find out who the information will be shared with
  - find out whether the self-evaluation is linked to bonuses, promotions or rewards
- Consider your long term career plan and voice your ambitions
  - this can make expectations more real and tangible
- If needed, ask for direction, coaching and mentoring
  - this will prompt your organisation to commit to your development
As a supervisor/manager, you should:

- Ensure an open, two-way dialogue with the employee
  - allow the employee to ask questions
- Be positive
  - acknowledge and praise the employee’s achievements
- Be constructive and sensitive with feedback
  - this will help to encourage and motivate the employee
- Ask how you can help the employee with their job role
  - this demonstrates your commitment to the employee’s development

Questions to ask during your self-evaluation

It is useful to base the self-evaluation process on simple questions.

These questions include:

- How have you developed and what have you achieved since your last self-evaluation?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses or areas where you can further develop?
- Do you have the resources you need to perform your job?
- What additional resources would help you perform your job more efficiently?
- What skills would you like to acquire?
- What can you, your supervisor and the organisation do to increase your overall job satisfaction?
- How would you assess communication within the department or organisation as a whole?
- Are you supported in your job? If more support is needed, how could this best be provided?
- How well informed are you of the information necessary to perform your duties efficiently?
  - what additional information do you need?
• What are your long-term career objectives and what are your plans to accomplish these objectives?
• How can you bring added value to this organisation?

Differing Points of View

Occasionally, your self-assessment will be different from the opinion held by your supervisor and/or peers. This is likely a sign that you and your supervisor are not communicating enough and that you therefore need to talk through your differences. It is likely in this case that each person has something to add or bring to the other, and teams can learn and grow from working together in this way.

ASSESSMENT 1.1
1.2 VALUES, BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOUR IN PRACTICE

ELEMENT: 1. Reflect on own practice
PERFORMANCE CRITERIA: 1.2 Reflect on and recognise the effect of values, beliefs and behaviour in practice

The Effect of Values, Beliefs and Behaviour

Values, beliefs and behaviour all colour our interactions with each other, as people. It is important to understand what each of these is, so we can be aware how they can affect the way we are with clients and other professionals/workers.

**Values** are things that an individual hold as being important in their life. People may have values such as honesty, respect, open communication and the like. Values influence the way that people order their lives and how they make decisions.

A **belief** is formed when someone *accepts or decides that something is true*, based on perception or what is passed on from others. Beliefs can distinctly and greatly vary from one person to another.

Beliefs are formed in different ways. For example, a person can base a belief on:

- What scientific principles say, i.e. “Scientific evidence says this is so, so I believe it to be true”
- What someone thinks is *probably* the case (i.e. probabilities), i.e. “This is probably true so I believe it is true”
- What others have taught you to believe, e.g. in a culture, family, friendship group, religious group etc, and what you accept from that
- Something a person decides to hold true in accordance with their worldview, e.g. from faith

People go through life seeking sound reasons or evidence for these potential beliefs in their own way. They may question what they are told (when beliefs are transferred from one person to another) or they may not and simply accept it. Once they accept something as a truth (i.e. adopting it as their own belief), sometimes they are willing to defend it very strongly, as part of their belief system and people have shown they are willing to harm others over beliefs. This in itself says a lot about beliefs.

A **belief** and the **truth** are **not necessarily the same thing**. A belief is what someone chooses to hold true, but the very fact that the next person may actually hold something
completely different to be true, about the very same scenario or thing, exposes the fact that there can be a very big chasm between belief and truth. Beliefs are what we hold or decide to be the truth. Beliefs can vary from person to person, and group to group, and they often do, causing heated conflict, as we all have witnessed worldwide. Hence beliefs can relate to anything and there can be multitudes of different beliefs relating to the same subject matter.

Truth on the other hand, is always a one-unifying fact. There is always one truth, and it unites everyone and everything within it. This is very revealing – as it shows us that our beliefs are not necessarily truths at all. In fact, any time one person might believe one thing and another person might believe the opposite or a different thing (about the same subject matter or thing), it shows that there is something else going on and reveals that we are not talking about truth – we are talking about people’s versions of truth, or interpretations of truth, or partial views of truth, or views of the world or life, all of which are perceptions and choices as relate to a particular person or group and the way they see things. It is important to note that this presentation is not about right and wrong – it is about understanding that there are different perceptions.

A person will shape their beliefs according to the way they see the world, and the way they want life to be. Hence beliefs come with a perception, or an interpretation. It is easy to see from this how they do not necessarily represent the truth.

Beliefs should not be criticised or any person told they are wrong. They are entitled to see things how they want to – and they can choose the beliefs they want to hold. It is not for anyone to criticise those. Rather, it is important to discern and to see when there is a belief system in place, knowing that it can easily contradict someone else’s belief system. Awareness and observation are required, not judgement.

For this very reason, it is important that as a business owner or employee, you are very discerning about beliefs you may have when serving your clients/customers or interacting with other professionals. People can defend beliefs vehemently, but you should be aware of the fact that beliefs and truth are not necessarily the same thing, at all.

Also relevant to how you conduct your business/organisation is an understanding of behaviour. Behaviour can simply be defined as the way in which an individual conducts him or her self, especially around other people.
People across the board hold very different values and beliefs and we can all act in different ways. This combination of values, beliefs and behaviour has an enormous impact on our personal and professional development.

It is important, therefore, to pay particular attention to how your own values, beliefs and behaviour affect your professional practice.

The Effect of Values, Beliefs and Behaviour in Practice

Your values, beliefs and behaviour are inevitably going to affect the way you work. In some cases, when the values are positive, this is a good thing.

For example, if you value honesty, commitment and punctuality, then you’re likely to apply these qualities to your own work and this will only benefit the organisation and your clients/customers in the long run.

As well as honesty, commitment and punctuality, other positive values include:

• Accountability
• Integrity
• Consistency
• Personal growth
• Trust
• Excellence
• Achievement

However, applying your values and beliefs to your working life may not always be a good idea.

Avoid imposing your values and beliefs on others

It is important that you refrain from imposing your own personal set of values and beliefs on the people you work with, as this can lead to alienation and conflict. Your colleagues will have their own values and beliefs and only they should decide how to go about their work, within the requirements of the organisation. As explained above, beliefs have an element of interpretation or perception in them – how one person chooses to perceive things is not necessarily going to be the same as how someone else perceives them. If you choose to see things one way, and even if you have a firmly held belief around this,
thinking yourself to be ‘right’, you need to allow others space to have their own beliefs, and their own way of seeing things. Imposition is never the way.

Follow your organisation’s values

Your organisation will have developed its own set of values for guiding work practice and you should stick to these principles as much as possible. Doing so can assist employees to provide a quality service and support the organisation to operate efficiently and effectively. Values are reflected in the type and quality of service you offer. Having employees follow the organisation’s guiding principles can also support to foster a cooperative and productive workplace where people work together for the same objectives. You may also find that there is less chance of there being tension or conflict between employees.

Keep political, religious and spiritual beliefs to yourself

While everyone is able to believe what they wish, it is better to avoid expressing strong political, religious or spiritual beliefs in the workplace. What you believe may not be what your colleagues or clients believe and hence raising things that you think are true, but which others may hold different beliefs about, can cause division and friction. This is detrimental not only to workplace morale but also to the organisation’s performance levels and, therefore, profit margins. It is also disrespectful for any one person to be imposing their beliefs on others.

Be mindful of your behaviour in the workplace

Over a 50 year working life, the average person spends 35% of their waking hours at work. That’s a lot of time to spend with colleagues and customers, some of whom you know and some you don’t. It is important, therefore, to be mindful of your behaviour in the workplace and sensitive to others. If everyone does this, it helps to create a friendly, positive atmosphere, which helps the team to work more effectively and efficiently.

Being mindful of your behaviour means:

• Being aware
  o make an effort to be more aware of what you’re saying and how you’re coming across to others
• Observing your actions
  o we all have behavioural patterns, especially around the people we work with and for
  o think about what works for you and what doesn’t work, as well as what works for others around you
• Avoiding self-absorption
  o if you’re always thinking about yourself and your agenda, then you’ll rarely pause to consider anyone else
• Using language carefully
  o remember that words can be very powerful – both in a good way and a bad way, so use them carefully
  o avoid using words that may cause offence, however soft or trivial you might consider them to be
• Learning to handle disagreements with diplomacy
  o this does not mean being a pushover
  o it is about being direct and assertive without resorting to insults or aggression, and without imposing on others
• Not letting problems and frustrations impact your work
  o if you have a problem, try to speak to someone appropriate about it
  o don’t ignore the problem and let it affect your behaviour and performance
  o rather, deal with it in a responsible way so that you can get on with your work
• Accepting others for who they are, as much as possible
  o everyone is different; we are all products of our own backgrounds and experiences
  o no matter how much you argue with or berate someone, they are unlikely to change just for you, as they have their own way of seeing the world
  o try not to judge others, not just because it is wrong and harmful but also because when you judge others, you inevitably assume that others are judging you
• Respecting cultural differences
Australia is a diverse, multi-cultural nation and its inhabitants have diverse values, beliefs and behaviour. Everyone should be respected as equal. You don’t have to agree with or even understand the nuances of an individual’s culture, but you should at least respect the fact that some cultures are different, and that different groups or people can have differing beliefs, sometimes dramatically different.

The Consequences of Allowing Values, Beliefs and Behaviour to Affect Practice

Allowing your values, beliefs and behaviour to affect your work is unprofessional and can have serious consequences.

These consequences include:

- A decline in job performance levels
- Creating tension/conflict with co-workers and supervisors
- Offending customers or clients.

If you allow your values, beliefs and behaviour to affect your professional practice, it is quite possible that you will become a liability to the organisation. If you are influenced by beliefs in a workplace, you risk alienating your peers and harming your organisation’s reputation and therefore profit margins. On a personal level, you may also risk getting sacked, which could have a significant impact on your career. Above all, and looking beyond yourself, if you are coming from personal beliefs or indulging in behaviours that impact on others, then this has a detrimental effect on the quality within the organisation (as it causes division) and it also affects the quality provided to clients.

It is important to take full responsibility of the way you are with people at work, and this includes being open to others, and not imposing your way of seeing things on them. There is also an opportunity to reflect on why you see the world the way you do – and are the things you strongly consider to be ‘right’ or that you will absolutely not compromise on, actually based on truth, or on things you have been taught or have accepted from others? It is great to discern our own beliefs and decide for ourselves whether the ‘pictures’ we have of how life ‘has to be’ are actually truth, or not. This is something we can do for ourselves, if/when we choose to.
ASSESSMENT 1.2
1.3 TWO-WAY, OPEN AND EVALUATIVE FEEDBACK

Feedback

Effective feedback is integral to learning and development. Professor David Boud, education researcher at Western Sydney University and author of ‘Experience and Learning’ (1991), has described the act of giving feedback as “one of the most valuable contributions anyone can make to another person’s learning.”

In order to be effective, feedback must always focus on behaviour, it must identify the learner gap between actual and desired performance and it must provide the information necessary to close that gap.

Crucially, however, feedback must also be a two-way, open and evaluative process.

Two-Way, Open and Evaluative Feedback with Co-Workers

Two-way, open and evaluative feedback means information flows both ways, between the employee and their supervisor and/or peers. The exchange is honest and evaluative.

Evaluative feedback

Evaluative feedback is similar to the grading system used in schools, where skills, attitudes and abilities are given a rank based on their quality (for instance, from A to E). It is an important part of managing development and comprises the majority of feedback given during performance assessment.

Horizontal and vertical feedback

Horizontal feedback involves communication between people occupying the same rank or position in the company, whereas vertical feedback is when information is exchanged between superior and subordinate.

Overall, two-way, open and evaluative feedback is regarded as the complete communication process.

To foster this kind of feedback, it helps to stick to certain principles.

Talk with employees, rather than at them
Communication will be more successful if employees have the opportunity to talk back and share their impressions and experience. This facilitates increased understanding between both parties, as well as a greater exchange of ideas and advice. It also makes the employee feel valued and respected, which of course all employees deserve and should be an important part of your workplace culture.

Embrace negative feedback

A lot of organisations hesitate to allow two-way communication because they’re afraid of negative feedback. However, just because one party is unhappy, that does not necessarily mean the feedback is negative. In fact, negative feedback can be seen as constructive feedback – it can be hugely beneficial to an organisation – it’s an opportunity to see how employees might really be feeling and address any problems they might have, in order to develop the workplace further and enhance the service it is therefore able to provide. You have to get rid of deadwood before the ground can be clear to build a stronger/new foundation on.

If the employees don’t have the chance to speak their mind, you might not even know something’s wrong, and therefore how can it be corrected or addressed?

Use new forms of communication

Take a look at the way you’re connecting with your employees and consider how you could make small adjustments to open up the lines of communication. In the digital age, with the rise of social media, this has never been easier. You could, for instance, create a forum on your intranet or bring in the option to “like” and comment on posts. At weekly, fortnightly or monthly intervals, supervisors and managers could initiate discussions on certain topics and encourage employees to contribute their own thoughts and opinions. Given the opportunity, employees may not hesitate to tell you what they think or want.

Benefits

Two-way, open and evaluative feedback can have numerous benefits for your organisation.

These benefits include:

• Creating a ‘tighter’ organisation
two-way feedback is more dynamic and helps to foster relationship-building

- Clearer direction
  - proper understanding of messages and further clarification is possible in the presence of two-way communication

- Increased job satisfaction
  - two-way feedback makes it easier for employees and management to address problems

- Improved performance levels
  - managers can motivate employees better if they understand them personally and know what makes them tick

- A more democratic organisation
  - two-way communication allows employees to take part in decision-making.

How to Receive Feedback

Whether you’re a low-level employee or a managing director, feedback can be difficult to give. It is sometimes an awkward and sensitive task and can therefore be stressful. Anyone receiving feedback should bear this in mind.

Obviously, how you choose to respond/react to feedback is entirely up to you, but it is important that you try not to take things personally. If you disagree with anything, you can and indeed should say so, but do it respectfully. A discussion about feedback can be used as an opportunity to grow, personally, and for the team/organisation to grow as well.

You should always try to accept feedback graciously and thank people who deliver it. This will increase the frequency with which feedback is given and, in the long run, will do more for your personal and professional development.

ASSESSMENT 1.3
1.4 SEEKING FEEDBACK

Feedback from Clients, Organisations or other Relevant Sources

Analytics and data can provide all kinds of insights into how your organisation is performing but sometimes, it’s faster and more fruitful to just cut to the chase and ask your clients directly for their feedback.

Feedback from clients, organisations and other relevant sources goes further than simply demonstrating what’s happening. It can help you to understand why something is happening, too.

Matching client feedback with what you see in your analytics will create a much clearer picture of what’s really going on. It will help you to solve problems, plan for the future and look out for the right opportunities.

How to Obtain Feedback

There are a number of ways to obtain consistent and high quality feedback.

These include:

- Surveys
- Feedback boxes
- Speaking directly to clients
- Customer analytics
- Usability tests
- Social media channels

Surveys

Surveys are easy to set up, easy to send out and easy to analyse. They produce quantifiable data which can be presented and viewed easily in the form of graphs and charts.

There are two types of survey: long surveys, which are sent out to clients, and short surveys, which can be posted on the organisation’s website.
Long surveys aim to yield more information and therefore usually take around 15 or 20 minutes to complete. They are sent out to clients, organisations and other relevant sources (Twitter and Facebook followers, for instance) in the hope that each one is returned in a few days.

However, long surveys are often tedious, their length can cause the client to rush through their answers and they are sometimes set aside and forgotten about. Very rarely do they return the kind of in-depth feedback they are designed to capture.

To tackle these problems, organisations have started to limit the size of their long surveys to 5 or 10 essential questions. It is also a good idea, with your first survey, to include open-ended questions as scales and multiple choice questions will produce only a limited range of answers.

Short surveys, meanwhile, can be very useful when posted on the company website, Facebook page or Twitter account. These surveys are best kept to one or two closed questions which tackle a specific subject.

Often, you will see organisations offering a discount, voucher or incentive of some kind for providing your feedback, which can be an effective way of receiving more feedback.

Websites such as Survey Monkey.com, Qualaroo.com and Kwiksveys.com can help you to build these short surveys.

Feedback boxes

Organisations often include feedback boxes at the foot of website pages, or in a delivery package.

They usually ask questions such as:

- How easy was it to buy from us?
- How happy are you with the service we provided?
- How well did we understand what you wanted?

The point of a feedback box is to obtain information about little things – often things that the customer probably would not think of themselves. For this reason, feedback boxes need to be as simple and as user-friendly as possible. They are more likely to be effective if the user knows that inputting information will only take a few moments of their time.
Speaking directly to clients

If you really want to understand an issue, speak to people. It’s a bonus if you can do this in person. Try to arrange meetings, working lunches and conference calls to speak to your clients or other relevant sources directly. Even a quick, informal phone call can prove invaluable. Explain to your clients how you’re trying to get to the bottom of a problem and would greatly appreciate their help. Most clients will be more than willing to help if it means they are to benefit from a better service.

Customer analytics

Using customer analytics allows you to know which features and which sections of your website are working the best. Customer analytics show how often, and for how long, each individual is using specific functions. Knowing this, you can then tailor your online strategy accordingly.

The media exploit customer analytics with great success. A particular organisation, for instance, might share and promote their articles on social media at certain times, say between 8am and 10am, 12pm and 2pm and 5pm and 7pm. They do so in order to appeal to commuters during rush hour. They can then see from the number of hits they receive, which articles do particularly well.

Usability tests

Usability tests allow you to watch someone use your product or website. You can see what sections they’re drawn to, what catches their eye, and where they get confused.

There are services available that do this for you. First you choose the task that you want someone to complete. Then the company will record a random person completing that task and send you a recording of them doing it.

This process used to cost thousands of dollars, but is now reasonably affordable.

Social media channels

The ‘like’ buttons and comment boxes on social media offer businesses the chance to engage with customers, organisations and other relevant sources instantly. Nowadays, there is no excuse for not having a presence on social media. It is a cheap and easy way to reach out to clients and gain honest, succinct feedback.
Questions to Ask Clients

There are many questions you could ask in order to obtain feedback. It’s important, however, that you only ask questions which will generate relevant information. Do not waste the participant’s time. You might also want to consider offering an incentive for providing the feedback, especially if your response rate is low.

Questions to ask could include:

• Why did you choose us as your service provider?
• What service did we perform for you?
• How would you rate the service you received? (provide a rating scale)
• In what areas did we meet or exceed your expectations?
• In which areas can we improve?
• Would you recommend us to others?

Reflecting on Feedback

It is important to use feedback to help you improve your product/service over time and identify customer trends in your business.

While reflecting on feedback:

• Remind yourself of exactly what it is you want to learn
• Ask yourself what you most want to improve
• Remember to keep your results in perspective
  o be mindful that some feedback may be misinformed, irrelevant and overly-negative
• Focus on comparative data to understand results in context
• Use feedback to inform self-assessment
  o identify areas of growth
  o reflect on areas for improvement.

Thanking people for their feedback

Be sure to thank people for their feedback. It’s also a good idea to send them follow-up emails, detailing how their feedback helped you to improve your business.
If you've implemented suggestions based on customer feedback, you may seek follow-up feedback from the customers who made those suggestions. This is a good way to check that you've met their expectations, and ensure you have correctly addressed their need or want.

ASSESSMENT 1.4
2. ENHANCING OWN PRACTICE

2.1 DETERMINING IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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**ELEMENT:** 2. Enhance own practice  
**PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:** 2.1 Determine improvements needed based on own evaluation and feedback from others

Determining What Improvements are Necessary

The ability to interpret feedback and cross-examine the findings with your own self-assessment is an important skill. It will help you achieve a greater understanding of your work and how you can improve. Separating useful and relevant feedback from useless feedback is also a key skill and one that requires practice to master.

A Step-by-Step Guide to Determining What Improvements Need to be Made

Interpreting and cross-examining feedback with your own self-assessment is not easy. Often, it is hard to know where to start, when to trust yourself and when to trust external feedback.

Here is a brief step-by-step guide to determining what improvements you need to make.

**Collate and organise feedback**

Before starting, it can be helpful to gather all your feedback together and organise it into small, digestible chunks. Whenever possible, you should convert quantifiable data into easy-to-understand statistics, charts and graphs. Opinions should be grouped together according to the subject concerned and whether they’re positive or negative. If you’re collaborating with other staff members, make sure everyone has a copy or report of the feedback.

**Compare feedback with self-assessments**

Compare the feedback you have received with your self-assessments.
Ask yourself:

- Are there any similarities?
- How does the feedback differ from your own assessments?
- Has the feedback confirmed any of your estimations?
- Were your initial self-assessments realistic?

If there are vast differences between your clients’ feedback and your self-assessments, you will have to re-examine your own thoughts and feelings and re-set your estimations for the future.

Plan how you will go forward

Identify the improvements you need to make and rate them according to their urgency. In business terms, these ratings are often called ‘horizons’.

Horizon one improvements include:

- Improvements that need to be made immediately
- Improvements that are easy to make
  - e.g. website fixes
- Red-alerts.

Horizon two improvements include:

- Tactical/strategic improvements
- Improvements that may need to be made in order to cope with predicted trends.

Horizon three improvements include:

- Game-changing ideas and suggestions for the long term.

Set yourself deadlines

Setting yourself firm deadlines to meet these objectives will help to focus your mind on the objectives at hand. You will be more productive when you’re watching the clock.

ASSESSMENT 2.1
2.2 POTENTIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

ELEMENT: 2. Enhance own practice
PERFORMANCE CRITERIA: 2.2 Identify potential support networks both internal and external to the organisation

Internal and External Support Networks

A support network is a group of people who provide practical support in order to facilitate personal and professional development as well as the smooth running of the organisation.

Internal support networks

Internal networks are ‘in-house’. This means they are made up of people who are already employed by the organisation.

The network could be formal, consisting of HR people, IT technicians, mentors or buddies assigned by the organisation itself to help its employees; or informal, consisting of whoever you happen to build relationships with.

External support networks

An external network consists of people and groups outside of the organisation, including professional bodies, trade associations, service providers (lawyers, counsellors etc.) and freelancers.

How to identify and build support networks

It is important to identify internal and external support networks because doing so will facilitate personal and professional development, which will ultimately increase performance levels and therefore improve the organisation’s chances of achieving success.

Building support networks requires you to:

- Actively seek opportunities to make new connections and contacts
- Think about how your employees and contacts could help you and/or others
- Attend trade networking events, conferences and seminars
- Read the trade/industry magazines
- Stay up-to-date with the latest business trends.
Building support networks requires you to:

- Identify the right people for the right functions
- Offer assistance and or support to your contacts in order to build their confidence in you
- Ask contacts for information, advice and further connections that will benefit your work
- Evaluate how new contacts can add value to your service
- Establish boundaries of confidentiality between yourself and members of your personal networks
- Keep up-to-date with your networks and contacts, and identify improved ways of working with them.

ASSESSMENT 2.2
2.3 SPECIALIST ADVICE OR FURTHER TRAINING

Seeking Specialist Advice or Further Training

Due to the ever-evolving nature of work and business, it is important to take every opportunity to develop your knowledge, skills and performance levels. This supports you to be forever developing yourself and your business which in turn means that you are refining and developing the quality you offer to others. Besides assisting you to stay up to date with your particular industry, continuously refining and developing your own business makes good commercial sense.

This means making good decisions based on sound advice, and staying up-to-date with the latest trends and developments in your sector.

Training, of yourself and your staff, is also part of continuously developing your business. You should see training as an opportunity to invest in yourself, your staff and your business. All investments in the people of your business should be made for the purpose of growing them as people and the benefit that brings back to your business as a whole. Invest in them, and see the return come back. It is like watering and nurturing a young plant – give it lots of water, sunlight and fresh air, and ensure the soil is absolutely nutrient rich, and the plant will thrive, thus bringing so much more to the environment around it. You can treat your staff in the same way. In other words, don’t just hand them the basics and expect that it will all be okay.

Remember that a poorly-trained employee will make mistakes, work inefficiently and eventually prove costly, while a well-trained employee will boost performance levels, work efficiently and add value to your organisation. On top of this, of course, if you appreciate and value your employees, as the very important assets to your business that they are, then this supports them to bring more to the business.

**Seeking specialist advice**

Also relevant to allowing your business to grow, and to benefit from what others can bring you, is the topic of specialist advice. Whether you’re a low-level employee, or the CEO of the organisation, everyone has their blind spots and everyone can benefit from advice. Seeking advice from someone who specialises in a particular field will help you to cover
your blind spots and avoid making costly, unnecessary mistakes. It is also likely to improve your performance levels in the future. No one person ever has to do everything themselves – we can always benefit from what others bring. In the case of business, there is a whole wealth of advice that is available to be brought in, from people who specialise in different areas.

Sources of specialist advice include:
- Consultants
- Trade associations
- Trade unions
- Trade press
  - e.g. B2B magazines
- Specialist staff agencies
  - you can usually hire specialist staff from certain agencies
  - e.g. clerical or data process staff
- Specialist skills agencies
  - e.g. a PR company, law firm, accountancy firm
- Local councils
- National government
  - e.g. departmental websites.

Seeking further training

If you have identified a need for further training, you should first develop a training plan. This will help you to reduce and control how much you spend on the advice and/or training.

To develop a training plan, you should ask yourself:
- Who needs to be trained?
- Does the training align with the organisation's strategy and its objectives?
- Who will conduct the training?
- What form of training is best?
- How will the knowledge and skills learned be transferred to the job?
• How will the training be monitored and evaluated?

Internal and external training

When it comes to seeking further training, there are two options: internal and external training.

Internal training involves in-house employees training their peers. This method has the benefit of being cheaper and easier to control, organise and monitor.

Meanwhile external training involves outsourcing the training to external sources, which, although more expensive, can ultimately prove more valuable.

Employees often approach training with more enthusiasm if it involves a change of scenery and/or a change of personnel. They will also benefit from the external trainers’ greater breadth of experience as training professionals.

Types of further training include:

• Training courses
• Seminars and workshops
• Conferences
  o these will often feature talks by guest speakers
• Information exchanges with other organisations
• Training through membership of external organisations or associations.

Things to Consider When Seeking Help

When seeking specialist advice or further training from outside of the organisation:

• Make sure you clearly explain to the training organisation what it is that you need and check that they understand you
  o ask them to explain what they understand the work to be and what they will do, when they will do it and what they will charge you
• Examine their credentials
  o do they have the relevant training/knowledge, such as formal qualifications or practical experience of providing advice in your industry/area of work
o can they explain why they are competent to advise you on your particular problem?

- Shop around to find the right help for the right price
  - if you were buying equipment for your business, you wouldn’t always accept the first offer, so do the same with advice and training.

Don’t Just Seek Advice When You Are in Trouble

One of the biggest mistakes an employer can make is to only seek advice and/or training when they are in trouble. Although doing so may enable you to rescue the situation, it is far better to be proactive and identify the need for advice and/or training well in advance.

If you treat and see your team/employees as extremely valuable to the business, which they are (after all, you wouldn’t have a business without them!) then you will be wanting to develop them. Making your business focus all about people (both your staff and your clients/customers) is the key to keeping it real, keeping it on track, and truly meeting the needs of your customers/clientele.

If you are doing well, seek advice on how to take things even further. The most successful workers and employers are always on the look-out for how they can grow. Whilst this may provide an ‘edge’ over competitors, the absolute key to a successful business is one that is constantly willing to grow, refine and develop, both as an organisation in response to customer/clients’ needs, and also in terms of its people.

ASSESSMENT 2.3
2.4 REQUIREMENTS FOR SELF-CARE

**ELEMENT:** 2. Enhance own practice

**PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:** 2.4 Recognise requirements for self-care and identify requirements for additional support

### Self-Care and Additional Support

There are many ways that the concept of self-care can be described. For some self-care means personal grooming, for others it is about making healthy lifestyle choices. It may include care of physical and emotional health, or even pampering yourself with spa baths and massage. All these are or can be self-caring acts however, we must also seek the not so obvious when it comes to self-care, for it is also very self-caring to not take on the energy or emotions of others.

It is important to look after yourself because otherwise, you will begin to feel tired and rundown and your personal and professional life will suffer. Self-care is unique to each person and you will be drawn to parts according to what you feel you need to support yourself with.

Although it may not be so discernible at the beginning, the more we self-care the greater the tendency it is to self-care. In other words, it builds on itself. This is a factor that needs to be experienced. But the key to this building being active is the preceding element or factor and that is to be aware of the benefits. The more aware you allow yourself to be self-caring, the more you will enjoy the benefits and hence the tendency to increase and explore greater areas in which we can self-care.

Everyone will have their own flavour of self-care – their own way of doing it. It is about developing what is right for you.

Self-care is about developing a relationship with your body and understanding how to make choices which support you to stay connected, listen to, and live from your body’s inner-wisdom. This starts with listening to your body as it is through your body that inner-wisdom speaks loudly, through feelings.

Taking stock and stopping to ask ourselves ‘how are we feeling?’, whilst simple, is not necessarily something that we have been encouraged to do enough of. The task at hand and evaluation of one’s performance becomes the focus, rather than how a person truly is. This is how we can have totally burnt out university students who get great marks but used stimulants and or pushed their body and emotions way out of balance. Or a super
successful business person who has panic attacks or irritable bowel syndrome. As we know, these (and many more) examples are very, very commonplace.

We tend to ignore the physical symptoms if the person is ‘doing’ well. – if all looks great on the surface. Our first point of focus is generally on how people have performed.

It is with this emphasis that we ‘keep on keeping on’ and ignore our bodies. After all, if all looks great, then it all seems fine, right? However, in living like this, we lose sight of the impact all of this has on us, on our body.

It is very easy for our days to get caught up in a momentum where we are rushing about and stretching ourselves to the limit. In this momentum we do not stop long enough to ponder on the impact of our rhythm and choices on our body.

This is shown by the quantities of stimulants we consume in the form of caffeine and sugar (which includes alcohol) and how this has increased steadily in our attempts to cope with our levels of exhaustion.

Stimulants are essentially used for performance and to keep up our level of drive and productivity - but at what cost?

Whilst we may ‘get through’ from using stimulants, we continue the same behaviours which are exhausting us. Stopping is a way of arresting these behaviours or momentums which can include rushing, overriding our feelings, pushing ourselves and numbing our emotions through eating or drinking.

Once we have created the space through stopping, developing self-care is not some ‘airy fairy’ ideal; it is in fact a very active process. Self-care is not about becoming passive, submissive, docile or even less productive - quite the opposite - it is about connecting back to your body and finding your own true rhythm. This allows your body to work with you in making your choices. Self-care therefore becomes about developing the quality in which you live and work.

It is useful therefore to look at what gets in the way of making the space to stop and bring awareness to our body and to returning to our natural state of vitality.

Many people in our society are living with symptoms or conditions of ill-health that are now considered common place, such as:
• Fatigue, tiredness and exhaustion
• Poor sleep
• Low energy levels
• Mild to moderate, ongoing pain in areas such as the back, neck, knee, hip and shoulder
• Anxiousness, low self-esteem, self-doubt and general emotional ups and downs, e.g. mood swings

This list, whilst only including a few symptoms, relates to many. However, it does not even touch on whether someone is living with illness or disease. In fact, if you do not have a diagnosed illness or disease (such as cancer), but have ongoing symptoms (such as those listed above) then you may be considered to be ‘well’. It is really important to raise our awareness on our true health status and ask ourselves - Have we downgraded the meaning of the word ‘well’?

We also self-medicate, more than ever before, using pharmaceutical based or ‘natural’ based medicines such as vitamins, minerals and herbs (to name a few). We use stimulants such as caffeine and or copious amounts of sugar to get us up and going for the day; alcohol at night to help us unwind and relax. We are so over stimulated – a nervous system on overdrive from a combination of over-using technology and getting the ‘to do list ‘done. By the end of the day, it is no wonder many find it difficult to wind down and get a really good night sleep.

What change would occur if self-care were to be introduced as part of a daily practice in your personal and professional life?

A simple assessment would show that; if we were to take an active role in the responsibility for our health and wellbeing, our vitality levels would benefit, meaning more energy to be engaged throughout a day, which means greater productivity and less dynamics from moods, reactions and intolerances.

Most know that we do indeed have a role to play in our health and wellbeing, and the first step is to deeply consider all of the choices that we make, and what affect this has on our physical body, our energy levels, our mental health and our emotions.

What if our natural state is one where we are vital and energised most of the time, with plenty of energy to do what we need to do in our day - regardless of our age?
What if we are not meant to be living with constant pain and complaint? This is not a wishful hope, but a very possible reality from which it is important for us to challenge what we have come to accept as ‘normal’ when it is in fact not natural.

The choices that we make can either lead us to poor health, good health or vibrant health. By making self-caring choices we invest value in our health and wellbeing, so that we may feel truly vibrant and well.

Being truly well and vibrant is a part of responsible practice, which is to present your ‘best self’ to a client, customer, your colleagues or staff in a day’s work.

However, your ‘best self’ is not determined by the performance of your productivity, but by the quality of person you are in all of your interactions.

Self-care offers practical tools to support you in bringing the fullness of you to all your interactions personally and professionally.

This does not mean that we let go of the power and importance of the mind, the mind is actually sharpened and greater clarity of thought is felt when we are connected to our body as our foundation. This connection in fact supports the optimal functioning of our mind and quality of thoughts as it results in a body that is more in harmony as a result of its natural flow.

Is it normal to be tired or even exhausted on a regular basis? When we look around it seems everyone feels this way. We are all busy with work, family and friends. If you aren’t tired or stressed, it seems you aren’t working hard enough! Perhaps a great test of the real intelligence of our species is to see what happens if we had a single week where caffeine and or processed sugar was not consumed.

What would the result be......?

Do you fit into any of these pictures or can you recognise yourself in any of these?

- Are you exhausted at the end of the day to a point where you strive to get home as quick as you can so you can collapse on the couch?
- Are you even more exhausted at the end of the week where you literally need to do nothing all weekend so you can recover and prepare for the next week?
- Do you wake still feeling tired even if you have had a full night’s sleep?
• Do you need coffee, or some other caffeine fuelled drink just to get going in the morning?
• Do you need more caffeine during the day to stay with what you need to do?
• Do you often skip lunch or eat at your desk or workplace, or even forget to eat because you are so busy?
• Are there times when you put off going to the bathroom even though your body is desperate because you are too busy?
• Is your diet loaded with stimulants such as caffeine, sugar or do you crave carbohydrates?

Our body gives us very strong messages when we are at risk of burnout in the form of tiredness, exhaustion, overwhelm, anxiety, depression, pain and discomfort. And thus, listening to your body is the very best thing you can do for your health. Ignore this simple and age-old fact and you will have the ill consequences as the result of your choices.

Self-care is a very practical and simple way to wake up to your body’s messages and start to care for yourself more effectively. It is asking you to treat yourself with loving tenderness and to make the changes that best support you and your body. When you are already depleted this may take time, but in the end you will meet a new and vital self!

Stopping is a simple way to self-care; by creating space to come back to yourself so that you can listen to the messages from your body.

Whilst there is research and professional opinion that is of great value, day to day you need not look any further than your body for ongoing updates and information on what does and doesn’t support your well-being. Yes, in-built is our very own tutor, our wise guide, our very own accurate gauge that together with full medical check-ups can contribute to a truly healthy and cooperative way of being.

It is useful to look at what stops us from stopping - and therefore taking the simple steps to self care.

There are many reasons why we don’t stop to take stock and feel what our body is telling us. These are in the form of ideals, beliefs and roles that we play.

Some common ideals and beliefs include:
• “Just push on through”
• “Get on with it”
• “Stopping is failure”
• “If I stop I may not be able to get going again”
• “If I stop I am scared what I may feel or that the feelings will overwhelm me”.
• “I will get behind”
• “Others will judge me”
• “If I stop I won’t know what to do”

Stopping and feeling where we are at offers an empowered approach to your health and well being where you don’t let things get so far that illness and disease has to stop you in your tracks. The practice of self-care, by feeling your body through conscious presence, is something that you can build in your own time. Looking out for moments which we can build ‘stops’ into our day is a very supportive way to reflect on how you feel and what is working and what is not.

Refining our choices is a study of what works best for you. And ‘best’ meaning what is most loving and truly caring. This is not determined by rules – it is determined by a precious relationship that you develop with yourself through self-care. It is a valuing and a commitment to you.

We actually do it very naturally – we can discern what things satisfied us or not – from how much flavour we add to a meal and adding more next time, to the size of a blouse or shirt we buy perhaps getting a different size next time that fits and supports us better. We are constantly gauging and assessing how to meet our needs.

However, to do it from a marker of true connection makes it a very powerful exercise. Imagine if your every choice was self-loving and deeply self-caring, what would that look like, and feel like?

We can give ourselves the space to understand why we do what we do. We can observe in our lives when we are making choices which are not self-loving and look at how we can change. Treating ourselves tenderly brings an honesty and truth that we can work with. This assists us in becoming more in tune with our body’s needs and making the best choices to support ourselves in true self-care.
Your body feels everything . . . in fact this is its strength. Appreciate the sensitivity of your body and the great wisdom it offers.

Finding Additional Support

Occasionally, circumstances mean you will require additional support in your personal and professional life. When this is the case, there are a number of sources you can go to for help.

Additional support includes:

• Speaking to a supervisor
• Attending counselling sessions
• Speaking to mentors and buddies
• Arranging meetings with HR staff
• Leaves of absence
• Structured ‘back-to-work’ programmes

ASSESSMENT 2.4
2.5 Self-Development Plan

Developing a Self-Development Plan

Self-development plans are training and development programs, designed to help an individual to improve their skills, knowledge and abilities. They are important because they provide individuals with the clarity, motivation and structure to identify and make the improvements they would like to.

A self-development plan can help you to feel clear about the way you are going to approach different aspects of development within your job role.

Reasons for creating a self-development plan

There are three main reasons to create a self-development plan. They are:

• To improve the individual’s performance in their current role
• To address anticipated changes in their current role
• To address career aspirations towards a future role

How to Devise a Self-Development Plan

Analyse your skills

Prior to devising your self-development plan, you should analyse your skills, strengths and weaknesses and identify the improvements you would like to make. Ideally, you should do this alone and then discuss your findings with a supervisor or manager.

Set out your objectives

The next stage involves setting out specific and realistic objectives which enable you to meet the learning and development needs identified during the skills analysis.

For example, objectives might include:

• Mastering a new computer program
• Achieving a particular qualification
• Delivering a formal presentation to peers

Prioritise your objectives

This step requires you to rank your objectives according to importance.

For example, you may rank an objective as:

• Critical to your current role
• Beneficial but non-critical to your current role
• Critical to your progression into a future role
• Beneficial but non-critical to your progression into a future role

Identify activities

Next, you should identify any activities which may enable you to achieve your objectives.

For example, these activities might include:

• Formal training
• On-the-job training
• Shadowing another colleague

Outline support and resources

Outline any support and/or resources you might need in order to achieve your objectives.

For example, necessary support and/or resources might include:

• Extra support and understanding from your supervisor or manager
• Time away from your role to attend formal training courses
• Funding for training

Set deadlines for achievements

It is always important to set deadlines for achieving your targets. This will provide motivation and help you to focus on your development.

These deadlines will prove especially useful when you review your self-development plan, as they will enable you to identify any factors which may have prevented you from achieving your desired objectives. You will then be able to build contingency plans into future self-development plans.
Identify review dates

It is a good idea to include review dates in your self-development plan.

They will help you to:

- Assess your progress
- Reflect on your learning
- Assess whether your development objectives need to be amended
- Identify factors that may have prevented you from achieving your development objectives
- Build in contingency plans to enable you to meet your agreed deadlines in the future.

This can all be mapped out in a Personal Development Plan. A sample template is provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duties / activities currently undertaking or seeking to undertake</th>
<th>Skill Required</th>
<th>Self-Assessment of current level of skill</th>
<th>Objectives (what skill level would you like to be at / what would you like to achieve)</th>
<th>Priority L/M/H</th>
<th>Related activities (what do I need to do to achieve objectives)</th>
<th>Support &amp; Resource Required</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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Implement Your Plan

Once you have created your self-development plan, it’s time to act.

This means:
• Following through on your plan
• Being punctual
• Working hard
• Making sure you receive the support and resources you need
• Turning up to any scheduled training courses, seminars, workshops and conferences
• Making time to study
• Being honest and conscientious
  o there is no point in just going through the motions
  o if you’re not doing enough to meet your targets, acknowledge and address the situation
  o if you’re overworking yourself and can afford to take a break, do so
• Being enthusiastic

How to Document a Self-Development Plan

When following your self-development plan, make sure you regularly update your progress.

Maintaining weekly or monthly records of which objectives you have achieved – and which objectives you have not – will allow you to chart your progress and assess whether or not your self-development is going according to plan.

Keeping records will also allow your supervisor or manager to check up on your progress and help you out with any challenges you might be struggling with.

ASSESSMENT 2.5
3. **ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

3.1 **CURRENT AND EMERGING INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS**

Staying up to Date with Industry Developments

If you want to stay ahead of the curve and maintain a competitive edge, it is vital to stay up to date with current and emerging industry developments. Doing so will not only help you to make good decisions but also spot threats and opportunities early on. Plus, if you’ve always got your finger on the pulse, you’ll acquire a reputation as an industry leader, someone to trust and respect.

**In order to keep your finger on the pulse, you should:**

- Make time for research and investigation
  - treat research and investigation as part of your job description
- Make trend spotting part of your daily routine
  - you could, for instance, set aside 15 minutes a day to catch up on the latest industry news and analysis
  - train yourself to spot trends
  - listen to colleagues when they talk about something they’ve seen, heard or noticed
- Investigate competitors
  - analyse their success and failures
  - are they offering something you aren’t?
- Use the power of the internet
  - e.g. use ‘Google Alerts’ to notify you of any new stories relating to your industry.
Other Sources of Information

As for where to go to specifically in order to access and view information, you have a number of options.

Subscribe to trade journals and B2B magazines

Trade journals and B2B (Business to business) magazines exist to provide those in the trade with the latest information on current and emerging industry developments. You should find some that you like, subscribe to them and set aside time to read them closely. Journals are usually fortnightly, monthly or quarterly.

Read and engage with forums

There are forums and discussion boards for nearly every topic you can think of. If you search for some online, read them and join in, you will meet friendly people with lots of hints, tips and advice relating to the latest industry trends. This is also a good way to make contacts.

Read websites and blogs

The majority of trade journals and B2B magazines will also have websites with fresh content uploaded daily. Blogs are also a good source of industry information – just be mindful that you can’t always trust the author’s credentials.

Read newspapers

Although journalists often report on subjects they personally know little about, most newspapers will have sections dedicated to specific sectors, such as health, education or finance. For more niche industries, try searching for the latest trends and information online with the tag, ‘News’.

Listen to/watch podcasts and videos

Listening to/watching a podcast or video, whether it’s for an hour or just 10 minutes, can give you a greater understanding of the subject. There are podcasts and videos available to download or stream on every conceivable topic and many features interviews with influential industry leaders. If you’re struggling for time during the day, you could listen to/watch the podcast or video during your commute.
Networking

You can always learn a lot from discussing your industry with fellow professionals. Make sure you attend seminars, workshops, conferences and training courses whenever you can and speak to the peers and experts present.

Apply What you Have Learned

Make sure you apply the information you learn to your own practice. Factor in the trends when making decisions and ensure that your peers, employees or employers are aware of the reasons why you’re making that decision.

It’s also a good idea to share anything you have learned with the rest of the organisation.

You can do this via:

- Email
- Newsletters
- Intranet posts
- Meetings.

ASSESSMENT 3.1
3.2 ASSESSING OWN PRACTICE

Element: 3. Facilitate ongoing professional development
Performance Criteria: 3.2 Assess and confirm own practice against ethical and legal requirements and opportunities

Working Ethically and According to the Law

Whether you’re an employee or an employer, it is important to always make sure you are working ethically and according to the law – and not just because it is the right thing to do. At the very bottom line, engaging in immoral or illegal behaviour could result in serious consequences for you and/or your employer. You might risk your job and career, you could jeopardise your integrity and any criminal conduct could result in prosecution. However, compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, and following ethical standards also relate to far more than what personal consequence a breach could have for you – they pertain to the quality of your business and for this reason should be a fundamental aspect of your business.

Ethics

Assessing and confirming your own practice against ethical requirements is also important. Ethical principles set out a commonly accepted set of norms, which may apply to an industry, or may even apply across society as a whole. For instance, in the massage industry, it is now commonly accepted and part of standard practice that a client be draped appropriately and that privacy, decency and respect be afforded to a client at all times. Underpinning this is the importance of those three things – privacy, decency and respect. These are ethical principles. If you put your clients first, and make your business about people and the quality of service you provide, then meeting ethical principles/requirements becomes a natural consequence of the way you choose to do business.

Ethical conduct:

- If you focus your business on making it all about people, then treating them ethically is going to be a natural part of the way you run your business. This in turn promotes the way people feel about your business. Thus it promotes a strong public image for the organisation
  - people respect an organisation that makes ethical choices.
people especially respect an organisation that makes it all about the quality of service that is provided to them – how they are treated, what their experience is like with you

customers like doing business with an organisation they can trust

Behaving ethically also:

- Makes the best use of resources
  - money, time, and effort are put into productive activities rather than diverted for questionable purposes or personal gain. Whilst cutting corners, dodging or sideling requirements may appear to produce a short term gain, it never pays off in the end

- Helps maintain quality and productivity
  - when employees follow ethical standards, they do not cut corners or short-change the company or its customers. The key is to build into the culture of the workplace a real and genuine value for and focus on people. That starts with the way you treat your staff, and that is then passed onto all that your business serves/provides for

- Helps build valued and genuine relationships with customers and vendors

- Boosts morale and promotes teamwork
  - when employees can trust one another and management, they can work together more harmoniously and effectively. Build an environment where people know they are valued as working together as a team

Sticking to the Law

As part of your job responsibilities, you should make legal requirements a baseline part of your operations. Legal requirements are not optional, they are mandatory, i.e. they are requirements. Hence making sure you are aware of what they are, and that you are meeting them, is all part of running a smooth, efficient and effective business. For instance, things you can do to support yourself in this area include:

- Learn about the relevant laws, rules and regulations that affect your job role and your organisation
- Attend periodic training and seek to keep up on any legal developments
• Consult with the legal department or external legal experts if you have any questions about the applicability, existence or interpretation of any law or regulation.

What’s Legal Isn’t Always Ethical

It’s also worth remembering that just because something is legal doesn’t mean it is ethical. For instance, it is not against the law to lie, break a promise or cheat at cards but most people would consider these things unethical.

Keeping your focus on quality of service you provide in your business, and putting in the investment from the ground up to ensure you build things in a way that supports your staff, your organisation and your clients, will help and support you to run your business in an ethical and legal manner. When you make your business about people, then cutting corners, taking the easy route, trying to save a buck for yourself, or compromising on the quality that is delivered to your clients/customers, does not even enter the picture. Why would you compromise? The true success of your business is measured by the way people feel about you – so make your business about people and the quality of their experience. Investing in this is a worthwhile investment, as it helps the business to truly grow.
3.3 EXPANDING OWN EXPERTISE

Opportunities to Extend and Expand Own Expertise

Identify the experts

Ask yourself:

- Who is really good at what you want to do?
- Which experts are held in high regard by their peers and immediate supervisors?
- Who do you see as role models in your area?

Assess the gap between the assessments and yourself

This requires an honest-self assessment. Ask yourself how much work it would take to bring yourself up to the level of the experts you’ve identified and whether you’re prepared to take this work on. Remember that with every forward step you take, the gap between yourself and the expert shortens.

Studying on your own

Whatever your skill level, taking things forward and closing the skills gap will always involve self-study.

Ask people to share their expertise

Most experts will be glad to share what they know, especially if you’ve done your homework and can show them that you have potential. If there are those who are a bit resistant to sharing, you can focus on how helping you can benefit them. For instance, you could offer to take over some of the more mundane parts of their job but which might be new to you.

Learn at every opportunity

Train yourself to learn whenever you can. Pay attention to those you want to learn from and watch and listen to the way they do things. Don’t just expect experts to reveal their most valuable knowledge at the drop of a hat, and sometimes we learn a lot from them by just watching the way they do things.
It is also worth remembering that two of the most important questions you can ask in your learning are:

- Why?
- Can you give me an example?

**Shadow experts and take part in their activities**

Ask the experts if you can sit in on meetings, accompany them to conferences and workshops and pick their brains as you do so.

**When observing their behaviour, ask yourself:**

- Why did the expert do what they did?
- What was the effect?
- Would I have done it differently?

**Arrange work experience**

Regardless of your skill level, it is always worthwhile identifying opportunities to experience the environments, situations or roles that have led to the expert achieving such knowledge and success. Any experience that gives you a greater understanding of how they make judgements and decisions is going to be invaluable to your development.

**Be patient**

Developing expertise takes time. The main thing is to not see it as an end goal. Your ‘ultimate aim’ is not to ‘be an expert’! It should be to grow and learn so you can develop within yourself and offer more and more to other people. Hence, it is not a race and it is not about an end point. There actually is no end point.

Because of this, you can relax – let the learning be ongoing. There is no reason to ever stop learning and developing. Hence, be patient with yourself, stay open to continuously learning and be honest about where you are at and how things are going. Welcome the opportunity to work hard and take every chance to extend and expand yourself, growing all the time as you do.

**ASSESSMENT 3.3**
3.4 UPGRADING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Review Processes

Organisations use performance reviews to evaluate and assess the performance of individual employees. Performance reviews are usually used to explore each employee’s job growth and to set goals and benchmarks to strive for during the next appraisal period. Understanding the benefits of review processes can help employees, supervisors and managers to make the most of them.

Review processes include:

- Informal group discussions
- Focused, one-on-one discussions
- Appraisals with a supervisor and/or management
- Team meetings
- Self-assessments
- Exams, questionnaires and surveys.

The Importance of Review Processes for the Employee

Review processes are integral to your personal and professional development. By participating in them, as an employee, you will be more likely to stay on track, you will be able to identify any tweaks you need to make to your job performance and/or self-development plan, and you will demonstrate to your peers and superiors that you are committed to upgrading your skills and knowledge.

The Importance of Review Processes for Management

As a supervisor or manager, it is also important to commit to upgrading the skills and knowledge of your employees – review processes are a great way to demonstrate this commitment.
By speaking to staff about their performance, you can create a culture of open and honest communication, discuss any weaknesses or problems your staff have and then help them to develop them, and help them to grow and learn. Review processes help you ensure that you’re taking care of your staff and giving them the best chance of developing and achieving success in their roles. This is a very important part of your business.

Implementing review processes will help to generate a positive culture of feedback and staff development. This in turn will support your team to want to contribute more – to bring more of what they are capable of, and to build their understanding of, and commitment to, your business.

In Summary

To summarise, review processes can:

- Chart an individual’s progress
- Highlight an individual’s strengths and weaknesses
- Help people to understand any changes they need to make to their job performance and/or self-development plan
- Give employees a chance to demonstrate their commitment to developing and learning
- Give employers the chance to demonstrate their commitment to the employee
- Create a culture of open communication
- Help to take care of staff
- Give staff the best chance of success
- Increase positivity, motivation and commitment.

ASSESSMENT 3.4