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Employability skills
Chapter 1: Establishing personal work goals

We are driven by our goals, whether they are conscious or not. Our personal goals and our professional goals overlap in our subconscious and form personal work goals. These are the objectives we want to achieve in our working lives and can range from immediate (goals we intend to complete this week or this month) through to career goals (where we want to be at the pinnacle of our career).

When you act as a manager, you serve as a role model for those around you. You must be willing and able to effectively plan, prioritise and maintain your personal performance in a work context. You also need to know and apply the techniques used in today’s businesses to help you become a positive role model.

This chapter will discuss the following theory:
1.1 Planning and organising personal work
1.2 Ensuring personal work goals reflect the organisation’s plans
1.3 Measuring and maintaining personal performance
2.3 Maintaining appropriate work/life balance

The term ‘work/life balance’ originated in the 1970s to describe the balance between an individual’s work and personal life. Today, with people's busy work schedules, personal commitments and family life, achieving this balance is crucial. The availability and suitability of various flexible work options is dependent upon the type of work you do, the needs of the work unit and your particular circumstances. Managers and supervisors may seek advice in this area from human resource specialists who are trained in applying policies and guidelines for an appropriate balance.

What is an appropriate balance?

In 2009, Australia topped the list of the hardest-working nations in the world. Specifically, Australian professionals were working approximately 48 hours per week; 70 per cent were contributing unpaid overtime after work hours; and they spent approximately six hours per week doing that unpaid work. (Source: CCH Australia, 22 June 2009)

According to research company IBIS World, there is likely to be a significant trend towards more part-time employment by 2020 as Australian workplaces see the benefits of allowing a more balanced work/life allocation.

Some of the options available for establishing flexible work arrangements include:

- job-sharing
- flexible working hours
- part-time work
- deferring salary
- telecommuting – home-based employment
- provision of breastfeeding breaks and facilities
- phasing retirement
- work-based childcare services.

The balance for each individual is different, but significantly, research shows that the key determinant of an effective work/life balance is not a company's policy in this area but the approach of its line managers. About 40 per cent are supportive of balanced initiatives, 40 per cent are mixed on the issue, and the remaining 20 per cent are non-supportive. Being a supportive manager means that you:

- understand the benefits of work/life balance for employees and the organisation
- commit to finding alternative arrangements if needed
- show empathy towards those who may be in need.

As a manager yourself, your own work/life balance depends on your particular situation. The appropriate choices for you should be determined by considering such factors as:

- your personal life goals
- the effects on your family of your time away from home
- your self-assessed ability to work smarter
In ACTION

After implementing the use of Blackberry technology among his outbound sales force (example 2.2), furniture retail manager Ahmad saw immediate results for his business in terms of increased profitability and productivity. His personal productivity also increased, as he was able to deal with information more efficiently. Overall, the decision seemed to fulfil the organisational goals, his personal work goals, and reduced the issues of competing priorities between him and his staff.

Unfortunately, as time passes, Ahmad observes that sales are starting to fall and the amount of successful sales calls completed by his reps is reducing. He calls a meeting for his reps and procurement staff and asks for suggestions as to the root of the problem. Ahmad states to his team that market statistics are showing no sales slump, so the issue must be within his business.

There is little useful input at the meeting, but later that night, Ahmad receives an email on his Blackberry from one of his reps. It says, ‘I think I’m burning out. Need to speak to you in the morning … Sharon.’

It became obvious to Ahmad that the introduction of the technology has had an unfortunate side effect; his staff members are dedicating much longer hours to the business than is required and their emotional and physical wellbeing is affecting their performance. Ahmad sets about writing a brief usage policy for all staff requiring them to leave their Blackberries at the office at the end of each day.

Discussion topics

Learners in a classroom can form a discussion group or have a debate. Those in the workplace might like to brainstorm these ideas with their colleagues. If you are learning independently, you might like to set up a chat room with other learners or ask a friend for their opinion.

- A flat organisational structure results in many direct reports for each manager; while a hierarchical organisational structure has fewer direct reports but more levels of authority below each manager. Consider the implications of competing demands for each of these structures. Which produces the least conflict? Why?
- ‘The introduction of smartphone technology, such as the Apple iPhone and the HTC Touch HD, has revolutionised business management.’ Do you agree with this statement? In what ways do you believe that this technology has revolutionised or could not revolutionise management? Give reasons for your response.
- Insomnia and premature ageing are among the many effects attributed to long-term exposure to a stressful environment. Have you, or do you know someone who has experienced symptoms of stress? Describe and discuss how it has affected work and family relationships.
Once this is done, you can provide a weighting to each criterion. If you’ve established five levels of priority, then your weighting can start at five for the highest and one for the lowest.

Go through and assess each skill and multiply your result (where expert = 1, not capable = 5) by the weighting factor. This way you’ll end up with the highest values assigned to those areas of weakness that have the highest priority.

Your summary will highlight those areas of development that need the most urgent attention through to those that would improve your overall performance, but may not be urgent.

At this stage, self-evaluation may prove to be inadequate if you are not used to being so self-analytical. It is recommended by many large employers that two people (at least) be involved in professional development planning. Talk to your supervisor or trainer to assist you in this area; this is discussed in the next section.

Transfer your findings to your development plan in order of priority. Most development plans can be set out in this way, and it is prudent to list your most important areas of improvement first, as those who may need to approve funding or leave shouldn’t have to search for your highest priority.

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**Example**

Brian served in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) for six years as a communications and electronics technician (CETECH). At the completion of his service, Brian applied for a role with a local communications provider. At that stage, Brian’s written qualifications were not nationally recognised so the employer asked Brian to provide evidence that met the new job requirements and the legislative guidelines of the industry. Brian prepared an evaluation of his skills against the position description given to him by the employer and recognised that he was unaware of the legal compliances (in this case a telecommunication cabling license). While Brian was unsuccessful in this application, his knowledge of industry requirements improved and he went on to complete a licensing course leading to employment within the industry.

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**Practice task 7**

This task requires you to refer to the job assessment you made in Practice task 2. You should have created a summary that included the following:

1. Potential area/s of improvement
2. A method for achieving improvement in the given area(s)
3. Time frames for achievement

Use the interview technique (including prioritising your original job competencies and weighting your results) to establish priorities for each of the areas of improvement you recognised. If you now believe there are other competencies you need, research existing nationally recognised units of competency or enterprise-specific units and include them in your assessment.

You should end up with a list of competencies you believe you need to develop, each with a score highlighting the priority of each. You can transfer this list to your journal when you’ve completed it.
Find out more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Why it is useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London, M 2008, <em>Job feedback: giving, seeking, and using feedback for performance improvement</em>, 2nd edn, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., New Jersey.</td>
<td>This text outlines the latest research into job feedback by one of the most qualified in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Based Learning Systems Inc. <em>Experiential learning theory: previous research and new directions</em> <a href="http://www.learningfromexperience.com/images/uploads/experiential-learning-theory.pdf">www.learningfromexperience.com/images/uploads/experiential-learning-theory.pdf</a></td>
<td>This article has background theory into why we learn through experience, and where these theories are heading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuro-linguistic programming <a href="http://www.nlp.com.au/">www.nlp.com.au/</a></td>
<td>Discover whether this technique of self development is all it’s advertised to be. It is becoming more popular, but it has many critics. You decide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisrich, R &amp; Peters, M 2006, <em>Entrepreneurship</em>, 7th edn, McGraw-Hill Irwin, Boston.</td>
<td>This text discusses how to learn to think like an entrepreneur by applying creative thinking techniques to your personal development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Checklist for Chapter 3

Tick the box when you can do the following.

- Determine development needs, priorities and plans
- Seek and use feedback to improve competence
- Identify development opportunities
- Participate in networks to enhance knowledge and skills
- Achieve and maintain a competitive edge
Assessment activity 3: Developing and maintaining professional competence

The following table maps the assessment activity for this chapter against the performance criteria of Element 3 in BSBWOR501A Manage personal work priorities and professional development. The activity has been designed for all learners to complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Performance criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part A: Theory review and application

1. Competency standards can be accessed via enterprise-specific or nationally recognised documentation. Find examples of each of these methods as they relate to your current job role. Read the standards and identify any skill gaps you have.

2. Multi-source feedback is considered a highly effective method of gaining personal insight. Why do you think this is the case, and what insights might you gain using this method?

3. 360-degree feedback involves input from employees, clients and colleagues. Locate and identify at least one example of each from your workplace.
   a) Internal customer
   b) External customer
   c) Colleague

4. Consider the use of open and closed questions when giving feedback to one of the people mentioned above. Describe, using examples, how the use of open and closed questions affected the outcome of your feedback.

5. Use a basic self-assessment to provide quantitative feedback on your current performance. Consider the methods of measurement, how the data is obtained, and what steps you will take to evaluate the data to avoid bias.

6. Mentoring, coaching, shadowing and structured training are all examples of development opportunities. Describe how you have participated in these or other development opportunities in your current or previous workplace.

7. What does having a ‘competitive edge’ mean to you? What methods of gaining a competitive edge can you use in your current workplace?

8. Brainstorming is a highly effective method for unlocking creative ideas. Using this and at least one other creative thinking tool discussed in this chapter, develop a list of development opportunities within your current role. Show your use of the tools to establish how you arrived at your list.
Final assessment: BSBWOR501A Manage personal work priorities and professional development

To be assessed as competent in *BSBWOR501A Manage personal work priorities and professional development*, you must provide evidence of the specified essential knowledge and skills. Details of the essential knowledge and skills can be found in the ‘Before you begin’ section of this workbook.

**Assessment mapping**

The following table maps this final assessment activity against the elements and performance criteria of *BSBWOR501A Manage personal work priorities and professional development*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Performance criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed mapping of this workbook against the methods of assessment, the elements, the performance criteria and essential skills and knowledge is available in the Aspire Trainer’s and assessor’s guide for this unit.

The following activity forms part of your assessment of competence. You may also need to provide various workplace documents or third-party reports. Your trainer will give you guidance in this area.

The following activity has been designed for all learners to complete.

**Part A: Essential skills**

The following skills have been identified as essential for this unit of competency:

- communication skills to receive, analyse and report on feedback
- literacy skills to interpret written and verbal information about workplace requirements
- organisational skills to set and achieve priorities.

You need to demonstrate your ability to apply these skills in your work. The following list provides some strategies you might use to demonstrate your competence in these essential skill areas:

- responding to case studies and scenarios
- responding to direct questions
Providing portfolios of evidence and third-party workplace reports of on-the-job performance by the candidate

• being observed participating in presentations

• responding to oral or written questions to assess knowledge of work methods and practices that can improve personal performance

• providing examples of personal work goals, plans and activities

• providing evidence of work/life balance

• providing examples of documentation assessing personal knowledge and skills against competency standards.

Part B: Essential knowledge

1. Read the case study, then complete the table that follows.

You have been selected to apply for a senior management position within your organisation based on the achievement of your personal development plan goals (refer to and complete Practice task 1 if you have not already done so).

By establishing your PDP, you have demonstrated the criteria for measuring your performance, your ability to set personal goals, and manage your time to achieve these goals. While this has impressed the directors, they require more insight into the different candidates they’ve earmarked for the position and have provided a form for you to fill out below. The senior managers like detail so ensure you research your answers thoroughly before submitting them.

Please fill out all sections of the form and submit it to your trainer/assessor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Detailed answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe your personal behaviour when you are interacting with your staff in a social work event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Honey and Mumford criteria, how would you best describe your personality? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What methods do you use to gain self-awareness? Name some of the testing tools you’ve completed in the past.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than this role, name at least one other management development opportunity you have identified.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>