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Building site	Operating theatre
Team leader	Team leader
Foreman	Chief surgeon
Team members and their different roles	Team members and their different roles
Bricklayers, electricians, labourers, carpenters, plumbers	Anaesthetists, theatre nurses, technicians, assistant surgeons
Warehouse	Bank branch
Team leader	Team leader
Supervisor	Branch manager
Team members and their different roles	Team members and their different roles
Forklift drivers, pickers, packers, order checkers	Tellers, supervisors, loan staff, back office staff

Types of ideas and information

The specific information you need to maximise your team's ability to achieve work responsibilities will vary according to the industry and organisation you work in.

Learn about different types of organisational information below.

Policies/procedures	Policies and procedures
	Organisational policies and procedures cover a wide range of subjects such as employment conditions, work health
	and safety (WHS), technical processes, communication procedures, performance reviews and security arrangements. Team members must be aware of the organisation's policies and procedures so they can consistently work within the organisation's requirements and help both the team and the organisation operate smoothly.
	Frontline managers need to induct new employees into the organisation by clearly explaining the organisation's policies and procedures, clarifying issues new employees are unsure of and explaining why this information is important. You may give a new staff member a folder of relevant material, such as the policies and procedures manual, organisational forms and information, or show the employee how to access the information via the organisation's intranet or library.

Information validity

Analyse information validity

You should consider several elements to determine if the information is valid.

- Source check where the information came from, who created it and if the source is reliable and widely accepted in the industry.
- Currency be wary of relying on information that may be out of date.
- Relevance check that the information relates directly to your research goals.
- Presentation look at how the information is presented, whether it has errors or is poorly organised.
- Authenticity make judgments about whether the information presented is accurate and authentic.
- Acceptability follow your organisation's policies and procedures when collecting and using information for work purposes.

Assemble information

Assemble information appropriately

Once you have the information, you may need to convert it into a form more suited to your needs. Categorise and file the material, cull it down to a few key documents, highlight relevant sections, make separate notes, draw up some charts or prepare a report. The method you choose will depend on the nature of the research and your information objectives; that is, what you or your audience needs to know from the information.

Review your material for information gaps or additional information to obtain a more balanced viewpoint. You may need to gather further facts or ask for clarification.

Your aim should be to evaluate the material effectively, extract the key facts, make sound decisions and keep organised records that enable you to verify your decision and refer back if the need arises.

Internal and external sources of information

You should gather information from a variety of appropriate internal and external sources.

Not all internal information is documented on files so you may need to approach key people within your organisation for advice. Knowing who to approach for information helps you to understand work roles and responsibilities and to form relationships with others in the organisation. Be clear about the advice you need and what the person can and cannot provide. Your audience could include:

- work colleagues
- your supervisor
- senior management
- colleagues within the organisation
- people in another division of your organisation
- existing clients or suppliers
- potential customers
- the general public
- specific target groups.

Communicate to your audience and purpose

The following table shows a range of communication methods appropriate to the intended audience and purpose.

Information	Audience	Purpose	Method
Production figures	Senior management, board of directors	To meet reporting requirements	Written report with spreadsheets and comments; a verbal report at a meeting
Information about company history, products and services, policies, personnel	New staff	To induct new staff members	Face-to-face contact, folio of information, group presentations
Details of new work requirements	Team members	To inform and train	Memo, email, group meeting
Warning about workplace safety	Staff members and visitors to the premises	To encourage safe workplace practices	Notices, emails, discussion at a team meeting
Promotion of product features and prices	New and existing customers	To generate sales	Brochures, new webpage, marketing letters
Performance review	Team members	Performance management	Written notes, face- to-face discussions, negotiation
Examples of customer service charters from other companies	Team members and colleagues	To compare customer service and make improvements	Circulation of material, invitation for comment, group meetings

continued ...

- customise your message to the listener's usual communication style and listening skills and adjust your delivery accordingly
- do not over-explain, speak aggressively or use a language your audience does not understand
- be confident and use a positive tone of voice
- provide your audience with an opportunity to ask questions.

Issue instructions

When training staff or issuing instructions, ensure your message is clearly conveyed and properly understood. You must be certain that your work colleagues can understand important work instructions. Seek feedback by questioning and practical demonstrations or testing. Make sure they understand the basics first, before moving on to something more complex. Misunderstood information about work responsibilities can result in lost productivity and may put someone's safety at risk or adversely affect workplace relationships.

When issuing instructions, use:

- plain English
- short sentences and paragraphs
- consistent terminology
- relevant information
- diagrams, pictures or photographs if appropriate
- demonstrations and role-plays to cater to specific needs.

Example: issue instructions

The tradespeople at a railway maintenance centre are given a written instruction outlining the process to replace a high-pressure fuel pump on a diesel engine. The instructors assume the tradespeople are familiar with details of the bolt torque set-out on a separate sheet.

When the pumps are fitted, the bolts are not tightened correctly. As a result, they break, which in turn causes an engine fire. The tradesperson concerned was not aware of the separate instructions and didn't fully understand all the requirements.

The engine fire results in damage worth many thousands of dollars. This damage could have been avoided had communication processes been better. The procedure has since been amended to include all of the torque data in each step of the process. Regular meetings provide the opportunity for questions and feedback from staff.

Various consultative forums help people to develop relationships, share information, understand each other's work and discuss issues related to the achievement of team goals.

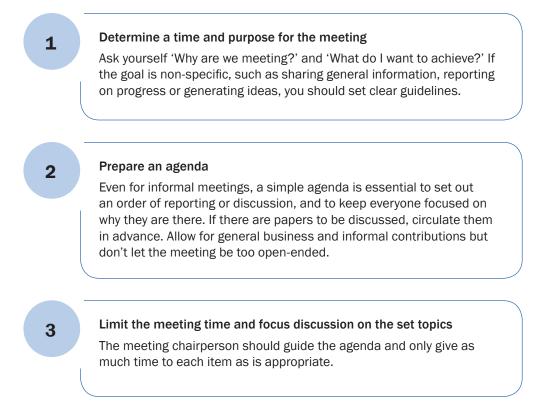
Forums providing opportunities for team input include:

- team meetings
- one-on-one meetings
- planning days
- performance appraisals
- conferences
- communications folders
- team diaries
- social get-togethers
- email, teleconferencing and intranet sites.

Team meetings

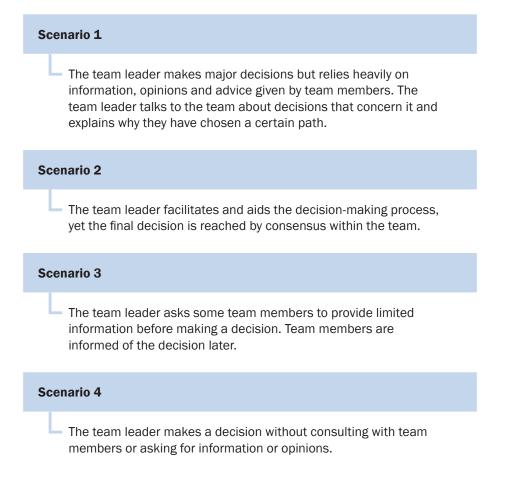
A popular two-way communication method to share information and facilitate teamwork is to hold a meeting. But, as most people know from experience, meetings can be frustrating, unproductive and waste time. Meetings must be well run if they are to fulfil the goals of effective two-way communication. Here are some tips for staff meetings.

Tips for staff meetings



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A team may use different decision-making methods in different circumstances. If this is the case, the team should understand why its advice may not be required in some situations.



Example: establish a communications framework

Phil is a corporate services manager in an insurance company. He oversees the human resources, IT, accounting and customer service departments. He has three staff members reporting directly to him. He holds regular divisional meetings in which he invites his team to provide updates on work in progress and to raise issues of interest or concern. In this way, the various departments are kept informed of each other's activities. In turn, the department heads report to their staff on what has been raised at each meeting. Phil also uses the meetings to report on the outcome of the board and management meetings he attends, and to encourage his team members to share their ideas about improving business practices.

1D Ensure that issues raised are resolved or referred on

Managers must develop and implement specific processes to ensure that any organisational issues raised are resolved promptly or referred to relevant

personnel. A functional consultative working environment underpins the effective resolution of workplace issues. Within this environment, frontline managers must ensure the organisation's consultation strategies help to raise, address and resolve issues promptly.

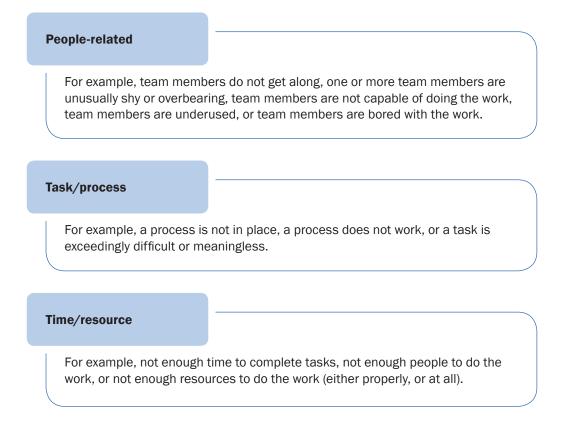
Different processes suit different types of issues. Make sure the processes are easy to follow and everyone is aware of them.



Identify problems

Problems take on many forms and have various levels of risk, severity and urgency. Typical problems may fall into a range of common categories. These are mentioned below.

When team members identify a problem, think proactively about solutions, or use their initiative to avoid potential issues, you should ensure they are recognised and possibly rewarded for their actions.



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Prepare an agenda, even for a short ad-hoc session, and circulate it in advance to all concerned. Invite people to submit other topics or suggest ways to address the issue under discussion.

If the topic is a sensitive one, reassure those invited they will be listened to and treated fairly. Cultivate a non-judgmental atmosphere that encourages participation and the sharing of views. The objective should be to establish the key facts and work toward a resolution.

Try to at least find a resolution that allows the parties to move forward, even if there is no perfect solution that will fully satisfy everyone.

Informal meeting process

- Identify the problem.
- Identify when and where it occurs.
- Consider each person's viewpoint.
- Explain what has been done to try to resolve the problem.
- Reach a solution that takes into account the overall objective of the organisation.

Conduct surveys

Surveying relevant stakeholders can help identify issues and ensure they are promptly addressed.

Surveys need to be carefully worded to make sure they fully cover the areas you want to explore. Use a combination of closed questions and open questions.

You can also provide scope for graded feedback, such as by asking respondents to circle excellent, good, fair, poor or unsatisfactory rankings.

Give participants the option of supplying their name or comments anonymously. If names are provided, you may decide to contact the person afterwards and let them know how their concerns are being addressed or ask for further explanation of the issues they have raised. Let people know their responses will be treated confidentially; that is, individual comments will not be shared with others in the organisation.

Customer service charter

A customer service charter sets out a code of best practice for servicing and dealing with the organisation's clients.

Brand or corporate image

A brand or corporate image is a tool for signifying to the outside world the identity the organisation aspires to and the essence of its products and services. This impacts on all areas of the organisation's operations (not just on marketing and sales). Staff must be aware of the image the organisation is trying to portray and the ways in which they are required to carry out their duties in line with the organisation's corporate image.

Adhere to relevant legislative requirements

Teams must work within relevant legislation, codes, national standards and work health and safety (WHS) rules. Managers should note that many laws and standards are complex and amended regularly.

National legislation exists on many issues, while states and territories also have their own laws. Your organisation should provide you with details of legislation and guidelines that are relevant to your team, although it is a manager's responsibility to ensure the team follows correct procedures.

Work health and safety	Work health and safety legislation (WHS) Employers have a duty to provide a safe work environment for their employees. A breach of the relevant Act may result in
	prosecution and substantial fines. Where a breach results in death or injury of a worker, the employer may also have to pay compensation to the worker or their legal representative. This is legislated at both the federal and state level.
	Further information on federal, state and territory WHS requirements can be found by visiting the Safe Work Australia website at: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au.

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Be aware	Prejudice and harassment have no place in a trust-based working environment. As a manager, you have a responsibility to ensure that you and those around you treat people with respect. Be alert to any signs of discrimination, alienation or bullying.Practise tolerance. Showing respect to those who are similar to you is not particularly difficult; it is more challenging to be faced with someone who is different or who seems to be acting unreasonably. A practical approach is to use these times to practise the art of tolerance.
Encourage input	Don't pre-judge or dismiss someone's concerns or ideas. Adopt the habit of expressing understanding of the other party's point of view, and be prepared to explain the logic behind your own issues. Accept that others have their own opinions, even if you disagree. Whether you prove to be right or wrong, or you both agree to disagree, each party will feel better for having been heard.
Take part	Try not to let your role as a manager prevent you from mixing socially with your team, and getting involved in initiatives such as tearoom rosters and the social club. Everyone should join in – especially in small business environments. Playing an equal part in social activities shows employees that you regard them as equals. Forming relationships with your team members on a personal level helps to generate a positive and trusting work environment.

Show empathy

Empathy is the ability to show compassion and sensitivity towards another's feelings, views and circumstances. It is an active process through which you show understanding of another person's situation as you have experienced it yourself. It is a way of understanding and relating to what others are thinking and experiencing. Treating people with empathy also refers to developing rapport and positive working relationships.

Encouraging empathy between team members promotes constructive teamwork through better consideration of each other's needs. However, remember that your team still needs a leader. Be careful not to undermine your leadership role by interacting too personally with employees. Good leaders establish a comfortable balance.

Coaching creates a learning environment

An effective coach creates an environment conducive to learning and has a positive effect on morale and productivity. A good coach is motivated to take on the role and must believe that another person can benefit from their assistance. As a manager, you may not need or be able to coach every team member but you do need to provide the support mechanisms for others to do any necessary coaching.

Mentor your team members

A workplace mentor is someone who is considered to have sufficient experience or expertise to be able to assist and counsel those who are less experienced.

A mentor can help an individual reflect, adapt and explore new approaches. They should give constructive feedback, offer practical advice and help the learner develop their unique skills and attributes. Mentoring is particularly useful for inducting new members into an existing team but it is equally important for increasing skill levels or modelling behaviour required from team members.

The mentor need not be the team leader. Yet the team leader can foster a system of mentoring within the team, pairing less-skilled and experienced people with more-skilled and experienced colleagues.

Role of the mentor

- The role of a mentor is to lead and act as a role model. The mentor provides informed advice and encourages and supports the individual over the longer term. Mentors need to respond to the individual employee's needs and treat them with respect and patience.
- The mentor may also offer emotional support to someone who is having difficulty fitting into the team by listening to their concerns and providing encouragement and support.

The mentoring relationship

The mentoring relationship should foster openness, trust and mutual respect between the two people involved. Both the mentor and the learner must be willing to participate in the process.

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Tips for expanding your contact circle

- Ask your friends if they can refer you to any relevant people.
- Get to know your colleagues more closely.
- Reach out to more people within your organisation by going along to company functions, taking part in working groups, committees and training sessions.
- Develop lists, databases or other records of contact names and details for easy reference.
- Ask your supervisor or colleagues if they can share their contact lists with you for a particular purpose.
- Develop a broad range of activities in your personal and professional life.
- Make a concerted effort to remember people's names and details such as where they work and what their interests are.
- Collect business cards and write key information on the back of them, such as where you met the person and who they are connected with.

Networking strategies

Your networks can be internal or external to your organisation, informal or formal, structured or unstructured, and individuals or groups of people.

Here are a range of formal networking strategies you can use.

Professional	Join a professional or trade association	
associations	Professional and trade groups are formed to promote the particular profession and represent the interests of	
	members. Individuals pay a membership fee and in return receive benefits including journals, access to industry information, opportunities to attend seminars or training, and contact names. Professional associates provide an ideal forum for networking so it pays to become a member if there is an association in your field. Alternatively, you may be able to attend events as a guest.	
	Examples of the vast range of professional associations include the:	
	Society of Automotive Engineers	
	Australian Human Resources Institute	
	Australian Library and Information Association	
	Australian Institute of Office Professionals	
	Association of Australia Rural Nurses	
	Institute of Chartered Accountants	
	Master Builders Association.	

Example: positive and negative networking actions

A small insurance company decides to improve its networking strategies by taking advantage of its location to promote its services. The company's office is in a high-rise building opposite a grand prix circuit. Each year at race time, staff invite their new and potential clients to an afternoon tea to watch the races in a relaxed atmosphere. They display their brochures, give a 10-minute talk about their products and services, invite employees to introduce themselves and give attendees a pre-prepared information pack to take with them at the end of the day. The event becomes a regular item on their marketing calendar and potential clients often sign up, staff make valuable contacts and everyone enjoys themselves.

Positive networkers	Negative networkers
Keep in touch on a regular basis	Contact people only when they need something
Build productive relationships over a period of time	Focus on own products, services or needs on first contact
Return favours whenever possible	Fail to reciprocate when others need help
Receive help graciously	Are discourteous or unappreciative of others' help
Act on advice and provide feedback	Fail to follow up on suggestions or referrals
Ask for something the contact can provide, such as advice or assistance	Ask for something the contact cannot provide such as confidential information
Acknowledge a person's expertise by approaching them as an authority	Make people feel uncomfortable by approaching them aggressively
Respect people's time	Expect too much help
Are clear about needs and requests	Make vague, indirect or ambiguous requests
Realise that every contact has something to offer	Aim only for the power brokers
Ask for permission before using a name	Abuse people's trust
Respect the privacy and personal space of others	Make inappropriate and unwelcome approaches and demands

People may distance themselves from a problem because they are worried it will reflect negatively on them, or that their involvement may cause further problems.

A person may be inclined to see problems as bigger than they are and the resultant anxiety can lead to inaction and hostility.

Manage work difficulties

An important objective should be for you, your team and organisation to become more resilient through the awareness and application of effective problemsolving skills. A five-step process for managing work difficulties is outlined in the following table.

Managing work difficulties		
Step	Action	
1. Recognise the symptoms of the problem.	 Be alert to early warning signs of potential problems. Establish a culture for regularly highlighting and addressing issues. 	
2. Identify the problem.	 Gather the facts. Determine who is involved and who should handle the issue. Talk to the relevant people. Establish the causes. 	
3. Analyse the problem.	 Evaluate the extent of the issue. Determine the potential implications. Consider the interests of those affected by the issue and its outcome. Ascertain the processes that need to be adhered to and any relevant legislative requirements. 	
4. Define the options for resolution.	 Define and evaluate options for resolution in consultation with those at the centre of the problem and any specialist personnel. Determine the best course of action. 	
5. Take action.	 Develop a plan of action. Implement the solutions within the organisation's processes. Follow up to ensure implementation. Monitor outcomes 	

Speak with relevant people

Once you have decided that you should handle the issue yourself, speak as soon as possible to the individuals at the centre of the problem. This must be done in a non-accusatory way, avoiding any inclination to jump to hasty conclusions.

Your aim at this stage should be to seek the views of those with first-hand knowledge of the problem and to be clear about what actually has occurred, taking into account each person's perspective.

Employ active listening techniques to encourage each party to speak openly without premature judgment. This includes listening to everything that is said with the intention to understand and asking open-ended questions, such as: 'What do you think happened that caused the equipment to malfunction?' Use your communication skills to manage uncommunicative employees. Do not interrupt unless you want to ask a question to clarify a point.

Use interpersonal skills	Use interpersonal skills Use your interpersonal skills to ensure your manner helps the person trust you and is inclined to explain the situation honestly.
Maintain trust	Maintain trust Make sure you do not betray an employee's trust in any way through the problem-solving process.
Different points of view	Listen to different points of view Give the person time to express their point of view. Remember, different people may have different ideas about what the issues are.
Avoid emotional reactions	Avoid emotional reactions Avoid reacting emotionally if the person becomes upset or angry.
Positive relationships	Promote positive working relationships People are more inclined to speak openly and positively about problems when a culture characterised by trust-based working relationships is already in place.

Be objective and constructive

If you are involved in conflict, you must aim to understand everyone's point of view and be willing to compromise and negotiate if the conflict appears difficult to resolve. In some cases, not everyone will be happy with the outcome. Learning to be flexible and cooperative does not mean that you have to give in. It implies you are willing to listen with an open mind and accept alternative ways of doing things, while being prepared to adapt and work as part of a team.

The secret to good conflict management is to handle the situation in a constructive way so it is resolved as positively and quickly as possible and does not become unmanageable. Sometimes a minor problem can escalate into a major crisis if it is not tackled promptly.

Think positively

Avoid thinking in terms of difficult people or demanding customers. It is more productive to focus on the behaviour or situation than to categorise and blame the person as a whole. A suitable approach is to sum up the situation with a statement such as 'this customer is angry because she believes she was entitled to a refund even though we offered to exchange the goods'.

Empathise with others

Recognise how others are feeling. Emotions should never be buried completely. Give each party the opportunity to explain any hurt, annoyance or frustration they may be experiencing. You do not have to agree with the person but you do need to acknowledge their point of view.

Defuse difficult situations

When emotions run too high, it may be time to take a break from the discussion. Anger and distress do not help you to solve problems effectively. Remember everything you've been told about 'counting to 10' to give you time to think about your reaction.

Consensus	Use a deferral technique
	If you are considering putting your feelings in writing, use a deferral technique: write down what you want to say but do not send it immediately; put a draft aside until you're feeling calm then reconsider your words and decide whether you need to send it at all.

4C Guide, counsel and support co-workers

Frontline managers should provide guidance, counselling and support to assist co-workers in resolving their work difficulties.

It is not a manager's responsibility to solve every problem that arises within the workplace. In fact, it is sometimes inappropriate for the manager to step in when an issue could have been contained by the individual or people involved. The organisation will operate more effectively if all parties are encouraged to resolve issues openly and directly, while aiming for a positive outcome for the employees and the organisation.

As a frontline manager, it is your responsibility to take the lead in training your staff members and other colleagues to use effective problemsolving techniques. You can do this by guiding, counselling and supporting those who are experiencing difficulties; establishing an environment conducive to positive communication and cooperation; and encouraging assertive rather than aggressive approaches to communication and dispute resolution.



Responsibilities of a frontline manager

You have an ongoing responsibility to guide, counsel and support team members in any problems they encounter. Providing encouragement, advice and help demonstrates your commitment to positive interaction, as well as your willingness to show loyalty and support to those who report to you and other colleagues.

If a team member tells you about a difficulty they are experiencing, such as a dispute with a colleague, you should first suggest they try to resolve the problem themselves by discussing the issue in a positive and open manner. If necessary, give them guidelines on alternative approaches that could lead to a positive outcome. However, make sure they know to approach you again if their efforts are unsuccessful. In this case, you need to investigate the problem and define the options for action to resolve it, using the problem-solving process.

Counsel your team

Problems may arise when team members act individually and without regard for one another. The team leader will need to act quickly and carefully to remedy the situation through counselling, discussion and coaching.

If a team member is not pulling their weight, counsel them to determine whether the reason is a personal one or something that is best managed one on one with you. If the problem is due to poor organisational skills or a lack of knowledge, enlist the help of more able or experienced team members to mentor them, or contact your HR department or an external provider to organise some training.



Coaching

Arranging for someone to coach a team member who is having difficulties in a particular aspect of their work responsibilities can be effective, time-efficient and positive for both parties. A coach can explain how to do something, give the person opportunities for practice and suggest different ways to resolve difficulties or approach the task.



Shadowing

Another strategy is to ask the person to 'shadow' a more experienced employee. This means someone observing how the employee tackles a task. This approach can be used for difficulties relating to customer service or time management.

4D Implement an action plan to address identified difficulties

Frontline managers are responsible for developing and implementing an action plan to address any identified difficulties. As previously mentioned, as soon as an action plan has been determined, you must ensure the resolution strategies are applied.

Develop an action plan



Documenting an action plan helps you and others think through all the details of the action plan and its implications. Make sure all relevant parties understand the proposed solution and are clear about what their responsibilities are in implementing it. Never assume everyone already knows how to undertake their tasks; perhaps training, counselling or further information will be needed. Each party should be aware of their responsibilities and should agree on how the situation will be monitored.

The plan may need to be altered if new issues arise or certain tasks prove to be inconsequential or impossible. However, the fundamental intent of the solution should always remain a focus.

Involve your team

Workplace issues should be addressed, as far as practicable, at the team level; discuss them in an open and honest way without recourse to external parties if possible. However, if your solution does not work, you may need to repeat the process of examining the issue and considering other possible solutions. This may need to be undertaken at a more senior level or in consultation with specialists.

Follow organisational and legislative requirements

 When taking action, you must always work within the requirements of organisational policies and procedures and any relevant legislation or regulations. Refer to the relevant award or enterprise agreement, legislation from all levels of government, and codes and standards from regulatory bodies that affect business operations.