Contents

Mission statement

A mission statement describes, briefly and broadly, what the organisation plans to do to reach its vision. Often, an organisation will display its mission statement prominently to remind employees of the overarching principles and objectives of the organisation.

Consider the mission statement of a large retail company: 'To provide solutions and engaging experiences that enable our customers to make the most of their leisure time'.

By referring to this mission statement, a frontline manager at this organisation can clearly identify the importance of providing efficient day to day running of the business, ensuring the customers' experience is of paramount importance.
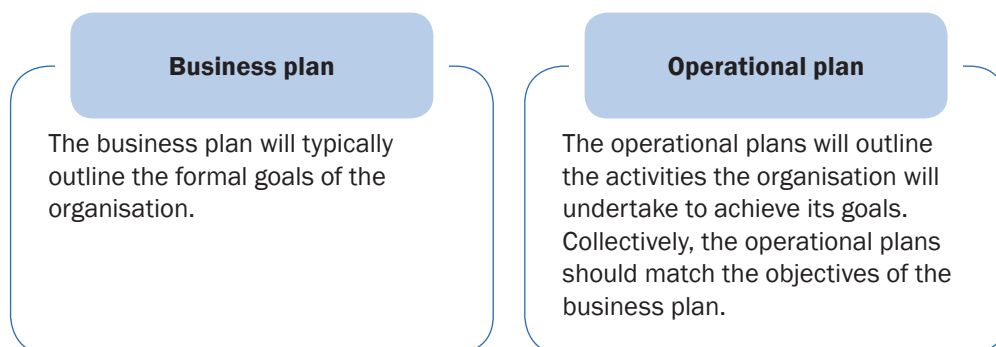
Be familiar with the organisation's business plan

Typically, each organisation will have a business plan. Supporting that plan will be a series of operational plans covering each component (for example, division, unit, department and team) of the organisation.

A frontline manager should have a clear understanding of how the team's operational plan contributes to the organisation as a whole. By effectively communicating the operational plan to the team, team members can see the broader importance of their work and the components that have the greatest priority. Team members will be more focused, have a heightened sense of achievement when successful and, with an understanding of the consequences should key measures be allowed to slip, be keener to address any problems that arise.

There is considerably more motivation for team members that feel like they belong and are valued because they are making a meaningful contribution to the overall success of the organisation.

The differences between a business plan and an operational plan are explained here.

Business plan

The business plan will typically outline the formal goals of the organisation.

Operational plan

The operational plans will outline the activities the organisation will undertake to achieve its goals. Collectively, the operational plans should match the objectives of the business plan.

Know organisational policies and procedures

Policies and procedures are implemented across organisations to enhance efficiency and fairness, promote a consistent image, and reduce the costs and trauma of injury or damage in the workplace. A frontline manager who knows the rules and openly supports them demonstrates to team members that they are a competent member of the organisation.

The following lists and describes the functions of leading a team.

Organising	Arranging and coordinating the people, materials, equipment, time and funding to get the job done.
Planning	Analysing, setting goals, establishing time lines, setting targets and performance standards, deciding what skills are needed to get the job done and how the work should be tackled.
Mentoring	Helping individuals gain deeper insights into the complexities and opportunities in the workplace through reflection, adaptation and exploration of new approaches. Mentors provide encouragement, support and constructive feedback.
Coaching	Knowing how to get the best out of another person. For example, sports coaches are not necessarily former superstars, although they are knowledgeable about their sport. A coach's expertise lies in understanding people and introducing processes that help to work through problems and encourage progress.
Staffing	Selecting the right people for the team, that is, individuals with the skills, knowledge and personal attributes necessary to get the job done. The team leader must also manage any staff absences to ensure their impact on the team's work is minimised.
Monitoring	Checking the team is meeting deadlines and targets, individual team members are performing well, budgets are adhered to, whether extra resources or help are needed, the relevant policies and procedural guidelines are being followed and health and safety standards are being met.
Leading	Providing support and guidance, and influencing and inspiring team members to get the job done. By providing a motivated environment, leaders make a difference to a team's performance.

Characteristics of an effective leader

Supporting team members is a vital aspect of any team leader's role. In a study that lasted seven years (cited in 'Establishing the credibility factor' in *Best Practice Magazine*, January 1994), executives were asked at regular intervals, 'What do you look for and admire in your leaders?' Their answers were consistent over the period of the study.

The study identified honesty as the most important quality, a major supportive behaviour. If a team member feels their manager is not being honest, they will question why their manager isn't more open with them or why the manager hides information. The team member doesn't feel supported because the manager appears to be focused on other, hidden agendas.

Similarly, demonstrating imagination may not seem to be a supportive behaviour but could be critical depending on the situation. For example, a team member may have devised an improved process, or have an idea for a new product. The manager will need to envisage how the idea might work in a practical sense. Only then can the manager give their full support to the team member's contributions.

Team members expect their leaders to be:

- honest
- competent
- forward-looking
- inspiring
- intelligent
- fair-minded
- broad-minded
- courageous
- straightforward
- imaginative
- dependable.

Support team members

Supporting team members is a vitally important aspect of any team leader's role. Team members will expect their leader to provide them with direction, motivate and inspire them, and lead by example. A good leader will recognise and nurture the talents of their team members, empower them and celebrate their success. A good leader will have confidence, commitment and ambition, and the ability to build teams committed to achieving common goals.

According to the Small Business Tool Kit, funded by the NSW Government, effective leaders exhibit the following characteristics.

Team members expect their leaders to have the following qualities:

- Integrity
- Self-confidence
- Commitment
- Enthusiasm
- Self-awareness and adaptability
- Future vision
- Creativity
- Ability to understand people
- Ability to inspire and motivate
- Openness
- Communication skills
- Business understanding
- Decisiveness
- Ability to build effective teams

... continued

Example: what kind of leader are you?

Meet Antonio, a participating leader

Antonio's team of four sales staff work for a freight company that is going through a large restructuring program. He and his team have been together for two years and although some members of the team are more experienced than others, they have developed a strong sense of who they are as a team and have in place a fairly informal yet effective method of working. Antonio doesn't tell his team what to do – everyone knows what their responsibilities are. Antonio's team members discuss things and make decisions together on what needs to get done and how they'll do it. Antonio facilitates this process and, by actively participating in the team, ensures everyone contributes, and time and resources are spent well.

Meet Jasreen, a selling leader

Jasreen is the manager of a team of 10 customer service staff who work in a large call centre for their employer, an insurance company. They handle queries from existing customers about changes to their policies. Jasreen's team members are all quite young and fairly inexperienced. She gives them plenty of direction and support. She directs them to do certain activities or tasks and spends a lot of time out of her office, talking to the team members individually and in groups. She improves their confidence levels and contribution to the team by asking for their opinions and feedback. The team also has strict performance goals to meet and Jasreen often feels she needs to convince her staff to contribute and work at their best, explaining why this is necessary for the team and beneficial to them. She builds a lot of reward and recognition activities into her operational plan to reinforce these issues.

Meet Stuart, a telling leader

Stuart runs a team of casual staff who help pack conference materials into bags for exhibitors at a major conference centre in the city. He has a pool of around 100 people he can call on to work and a large space where materials and bags are laid out. The main function of his job is getting enough people in at short notice to get materials packed on time and on budget. There may be different people working each day so he spends 15 minutes at the start of each day running through the jobs for the day, when they have to be finished and how they should be done. He also highlights any tricky items that need packing, such as pens or notebooks. Stuart has a system worked out that is explained to staff each day. They are assigned a section and start work. If major problems arise, or they have questions, they are encouraged to talk to him about it.

Practice task 2

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

Case study

Rhiannon enjoys her role as a frontline manager at Macintosh City Council. She is responsible for managing a group of eight administration officers who provide a range of services to local residents. Jakob has recently joined her team after completing his Higher School Certificate.

On Friday afternoon she invites Natiq, one of the more experienced members of the team, into her office for a chat. Rhiannon enjoys the opportunity each week to 'catch up on the gossip' with team members. She is keen to talk to Natiq about some rumoured changes that are likely to be introduced to the employee flexitime arrangements. She knows the team is going to be unhappy about the changes.

During their afternoon chat Natiq confides in Rhiannon that he will need to leave early on Friday to see a relationship counsellor. He and his partner, Thomas, have been having some problems lately. Rhiannon makes the appropriate diary entry and then proceeds to tell Natiq about the rumoured changes to the flexitime. She agrees with him that if the changes are implemented, team members are going to have to give more notice of their intention to take a flexiday. They are not going to be happy!

Later in the afternoon, Jakob asks to speak to Rhiannon. He would like to leave early on Friday. She explains to Jakob that Natiq has already booked the day as he has to see the counsellor. While Jakob is in the office Rhiannon takes the opportunity to show him a funny email that she received from her friend. Rhiannon assumed that Jakob would be pretty broad-minded as he was so young.

As he was leaving her office, Jakob asked Rhiannon if it would be okay if he used a CD from the office stationery to copy an assignment that he needs to work on over the weekend. Rhiannon told him to take a box of CDs from the cupboard – they wouldn't be missed.

1. Reflect on the actions that Rhiannon took that were not appropriate in her role as a frontline manager. Record the specific actions.

2. What advice would you give Rhiannon to help her to be more of a positive role model for her team?

- Feedback can be given verbally and in writing.
- Feedback can be given immediately.
- Feedback can be made public or kept private.
- Feedback can be informal or formal.
- Feedback can be positive or constructive.

Formal mechanisms for feedback

Give feedback when it is most needed, such as immediately after the team member has achieved a goal, when they handle a difficulty well, or if they fail to meet a deadline. Timely feedback ensures that what you say will be more relevant because it is still fresh in the person's mind. Thanking someone or explaining how they should have done something better is ineffective if it is delivered long after the event.

Consider the following ways feedback can be provided.

360-degree feedback

This is a highly structured method of giving feedback to an employee. A range of people who have frequent interaction with the person give them a rating or qualitative feedback on their performance. For example, Tom is in a team with five other people and also deals with the accounts payable clerk and two warehouse staff on a daily basis. He and his team leader agree that the team leader, two others from the team, the accounts clerk and one of the warehouse staff will provide his 360-degree feedback. Each of his five colleagues rate him using a score out of 10 on a variety of points such as teamwork, work ethic, contribution and preparedness at meetings. Sometimes this sort of feedback is done anonymously, and the team members receive a report showing the scores they received on each point. As 360-degree feedback can be very confronting, it needs to be managed carefully. However, it can be a useful tool, especially when plans are put in place to correct poor results.

Performance reviews

Any kind of performance feedback needs to be given carefully, especially if it is negative. Feedback that constitutes part of a performance review can have an impact on an individual's career and advancement prospects and, in many cases, their earnings (if performance reviews are linked to bonuses or salary). Positive and negative feedback needs to be given constructively. Try to give examples and be balanced in what you say. Link the feedback to key result areas, performance indicators or team goals and state the effect the positive or negative performance has on team outcomes. If feedback is negative, don't dwell on it; move on to ways you can work together to remedy the situation.

In many cases, less specific KPIs need to be set. This may be because the activity a person or team is working on is hard to measure, or because the activity itself is more qualitative in nature.

'Working well as a team' or 'producing high-quality work', may be measured through team reflection and discussion on how well the group worked together, or by using a set of criteria to measure high-quality work. In such situations, managers should not avoid using KPIs, but think of creative ways they can be evaluated and assessed. Tracking complaints, rework and warranty claims are examples that may help indicate quality.

Set and use KPIs

Setting, measuring and reporting on KPIs is a way of controlling the implementation of the operational plan so it remains within the parameters you have established. KPIs allow you to identify issues or problems, identify areas for improvement and introduce corrections when your progress is not what you expected.

Here are four key points to consider when setting KPIs.

Setting KPIs

1

Make sure KPIs are easily understood.

Don't establish KPIs that require you to give detailed explanations of their meaning. KPIs should offer a readily understood snapshot against the plan.

2

Communicate KPIs to staff and management.

Both the people who report to you and the people you report to should be aware of what your KPIs are. This helps staff understand the importance of their tasks, inspires and motivates them to achieve and builds a strong sense of team – everyone is working toward a common goal.

3

Make sure KPIs are appropriate.

Don't set a KPI that requires a complex activity to be completed within a week. KPIs must be relevant, appropriate to the task and achievable.

4

Make sure KPIs can be measured accurately.

For each KPI you put in place, note how it will be measured. Wherever possible, try to implement KPIs that are quantifiable (that is, they can be measured and reported on numerically).

Meet the organisation's goals and objectives

You will be measured on your team's contribution to the broader operational plan. Developing KPIs for your team and the individual team members represents a key opportunity to ensure alignment of the goals of the organisation, your team and the individuals in the team.

Summary

1. You need to be seen to understand and support the organisation's requirements, clearly communicate these to your team members and support them in their application and delivery of the set standards.

2. Team members will look to you for guidance as to how they should behave in the workplace. They will be constantly taking note of your behaviour and will quickly identify any inconsistency between what you say and what you do.

3. Properly written performance plans ensure alignment of individual, team and organisation objectives. They provide a valuable, formal feedback mechanism for each team member and a monitoring tool for you.

4. KPIs are usually a measure of profitability, productivity, output, or quality of services or goods produced.

Code of ethics

The code of ethics for the organisation will cover many of the same issues and will also often include provisions that management need to comply with. These may include:

- promoting open dialogue between team leaders and their team members about applying ethical standards in the workplace
- creating a learning-based environment
- promoting a culture of accountability on ethical matters
- encouraging environmentally-friendly work practices
- requiring participation in community programs or support for chosen foundations or charities.

Example: expectations of frontline managers

Peter is employed as an office manager for a major insurance company. This weekend he will be joining his colleagues in a semi-rural location doing grounds maintenance as a volunteer at an organisation that trains guide dogs for people with vision impairment. All managers in the organisation are expected to undertake community service on two occasions during the year.

His employer's mission statement identifies their commitment to contributing to the wellbeing of the local community. The performance plan for individual frontline managers identifies their participation in community service as a key performance indicator.

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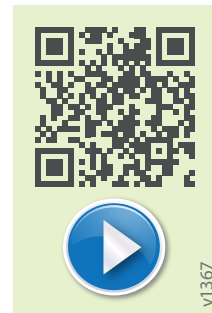
Practice task 5

Prepare a short report that outlines the expectations of your organisation in regard to the implementation of service standards. Address the following points:

- the purpose of service standards
- the process for developing service standards
- a description of the standards
- training for team members on service standards
- monitoring
- feedback.

2C | Contribute to organisational integrity and credibility

Organisations are increasingly seeking to develop a perception among stakeholders, including their clients, employees and the broader community, that they are responsible, ethical corporate citizens. Organisations that seek to promote this positive image are mindful that their actions and behaviour may be reported in the media. Medium, large and public-sector organisations develop advertising campaigns and take advantage of other media opportunities to share good news stories about the contribution they are making to the community.
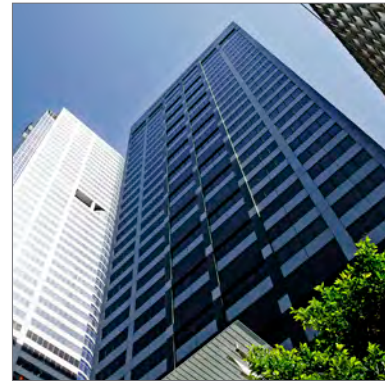
In some cases, the specific work performed in an organisation relies heavily on the public's perception that the organisation and its employees can be trusted. Health care, finance, law and charity organisations, for example, must have the trust of their clients and patients if they are to function effectively. Codes of conduct, codes of ethics and rules of professional associations apply to organisations in these types of industries to help engender public trust.

Frontline managers and other workplace leaders are well positioned in the organisation to develop and promote a desirable image for the organisation. You will need to demonstrate these standards of behaviour on occasions when you are dealing with people outside of your organisation, such as clients, suppliers and representatives of government departments.

Behave with integrity

Behaving with integrity means you perform your role and responsibilities morally and ethically according to both your organisation's values and those of the community. Remember that you are a role model for your team. Team members will look to you and follow your lead when confronted with situations that challenge their own integrity. Your workplace policies and procedures and codes of conduct will be your main references in the workplace to determine what your organisation expects of you in terms of your personal integrity.

The following outlines some points to consider.

Behaviours that help build your reputation as a person of integrity	
• Adopt workplace policies and procedures. • Be fair, equitable and courteous. • Communicate factually and objectively. • Comply with the organisation's code of ethics and code of conduct. • Do not accept gifts or benefits. • Do not criticise the organisation publicly. • Do not engage in gossip or rumours.	• Use the organisation's resources for their intended purpose only. • Do not promote your own career or professional development by undermining the performance of others. • Do not use distortions of fact, exaggeration or misleading information. • Handle grievances sensitively. • Maintain the security and confidentiality of workplace information. • Promote diversity in all business activities. • Treat people with respect.

Topic 3
Make informed decisions

All organisations rely on a wide range of information to assist decision making. For example, they need to know how many staff will be needed to complete a particular project, how a new product should be marketed so it stands out from the competition, and which resources are needed to make the team effective. Such decisions will affect the operation of the team and may ultimately determine the team's success or failure.

In this topic you will learn how to:

3A   Gather and organise relevant information

3B   Facilitate participation in decision making

3C   Examine options and assess risks

3D   Make and communicate decisions

3E   Prepare plans to implement decisions

3F   Use feedback to monitor decisions

External sources of information

Often it is necessary to go beyond sources within your own organisation in order to gather the information you need.

External organisations and other information sources that may be useful include:

- government departments or agencies (in particular, the Australian Bureau of Statistics)
- representative associations such as employer bodies, institutes, unions and professional associations
- major corporations
- newspapers and magazines (especially industry-specific publications)
- television or radio programs (industry- or subject-specific programs are often the most useful)
- the internet
- libraries.

Example: gather information from external sources

At a company that designs and builds new homes, Clare, who works in the marketing department, has been asked to write a report they can use when planning marketing campaigns for the next year.

Her first step is to identify data that she can then analyse and include in the report. She decides to search for two sets of information:

- data on population growth in specific areas
- information on how other companies are conducting their marketing campaigns.

Some of the sources she consults include:

- the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which can provide up-to-date population-trend data from the last census, and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
- local councils and state governments, which can provide localised data on population growth and demographic profiles in their area
- the library at her nearest university, where she can search for articles and books on population trends and housing requirements
- information packs from competitors to gauge their approach.

Using the data she collects from these sources, Clare prepares a comprehensive report and makes some good recommendations that help her organisation develop effective marketing plans for the forthcoming year.

Option 3		Option 4
The team leader asks some team members to provide limited information prior to making a decision. Team members are informed of the decision later.		The team leader makes a decision without consulting with team members or asking for information or opinions.

Decision-making process

Decision making typically follows a six-step process, as outlined here.

Decision-making process
1. Identify the problem or opportunity.
2. Gather relevant information.
3. Generate as many alternatives as possible.
4. Evaluate alternatives to decide which is best.
5. Decide on and implement the best solution.
6. Follow up.

Example: gather and act on information

Joshua has been appointed as the project manager for a team formed to develop training resources for the new customer service standards being introduced in both the regional and metropolitan outlets of a medium-sized credit union.

The team will need to meet regularly to discuss their progress. Joshua asked the team at their initial meeting to collaborate to identify the most effective methods for team communication. Each team member assumed responsibility for investigating a specific method for team communication that did not rely on face-to-face communication. They agreed to report back at the next meeting so that a group decision could be made and a communication plan developed for future meetings.

At the next team meeting, the efficiency and effectiveness of a range of communication methods were discussed including blogs, wikis, Skype and Breeze. The team evaluated these options and decided to develop a team blog that would be used for team communication and to share information with other members of the organisation. Breeze software would be used for online meetings on a fortnightly basis.

Streamline processes	Options to promote change for the better: • Review current processes and develop better alternatives. • Train staff. • Purchase new technology.

Improve sales	Options to promote change for the better: • Ask customers about their ideal products/services. • Develop new product/services or amend existing ones. • Develop new marketing strategies. • Access new markets.

Risk analysis

Once you have developed your implementation plan, you need to anticipate problems that could arise and impact your ability to meet your goals. This is called contingency planning, which involves identifying risks and how they could impact your ability to successfully implement your plans. Contingency planning also involves considering what you will do to avoid or minimise the impact of risks.

Risk identification

When identifying potential areas of risk in your plan, you should look at each event that is required in its implementation. What are some of the things that could go wrong? This includes both internal and external factors.

After identifying the internal and external risk factors, you can further categorise these potential risks into specific focus areas.

The following provides some specific examples.

Internal factors

- System failures
- Staffing issues, such as illness or lack of appropriate skills
- Budget adjustments
- Deadline changes; for example, deadline is brought forward
- Administration errors; for example, incorrect costs charged
- Security breaches; for example, break-ins

3D Make and communicate decisions

Decision-making is an important component of the role of a frontline manager. You will make decisions on a daily business that impact on the performance of the team and the organisation. To be an effective leader, you will need to have the confidence to make decisions in a timely manner.

You should not spend too much time making decisions about a simple or routine matter, that doesn't involve a significant expense, doesn't impact on the performance of other teams or work areas, or doesn't involve a risk to the reputation of the organisation, its image or branding.

Timing

You will also encounter situations where you are required to make decisions that will impact significantly on the organisation's operations. In those cases, you will want to invest more time and effort in reaching a decision. Although you will want to ensure that you have given careful consideration to all possible solutions, you should be mindful that in some decision-making activities, the timing is critical. In some cases, you may find you need to set a limit to the amount of time that is allowed to reach a decision.

You will encounter many situations where you need to make decisions either independently or in collaboration with team members or other colleagues, as outlined here.

Independent or collaborative decisions may include:

- determining project strategy
- determining team or section objectives
- developing estimates and budgets
- facilitating meetings
- handling disagreements and conflict resolution
- making purchases
- recruiting and selecting project team members
- resolving issues that impact on the team's performance
- resolving project issues
- scheduling work and allocating resources to tasks
- selecting external suppliers.

Examine the options

Decision analysis is used to help evaluate possible solutions, generate group problem-solving techniques and to make a decision. Formal decision analysis is designed to ensure that possible solutions are evaluated against a set of specific criteria.

3E | Prepare plans to implement decisions

Once a decision has been made to proceed with the change or innovation recommended by the team, you may be asked to coordinate the development of an implementation plan (sometimes referred to as an action plan). You should refer to your workplace policies and procedures for the format that is preferred in your organisation. Your organisation may have developed a template that is used for implementation plans.

Implementation plan

An implementation plan should outline:

- the nature of the change or innovation
- outcomes that will be realised in the short to medium term
- a goal that describes what the team will achieve in the longer term
- the resources required
- a budget
- the roles and responsibilities of key people
- communication strategies to inform staff and other parties outside of the team and organisation
- actions that will be undertaken to achieve the goal
- a time line for the completion of each action
- procedures for monitoring implementation.

SMART goal planning

The goals in the action plan should be SMART, as defined here.

Specific	Target and clearly define a specific area that you want to improve.
Measurable	Suggest an indicator of progress; quantify if possible. Determine how you will know the goal has been achieved.
Attainable	Agree what the goals should be and keep them achievable in the time frame.

3F Use feedback to monitor decisions

The process of communication within a team is a critical one. Team members are not being effective if:

• they don't communicate well between themselves

• they don't feed information to their manager

• their managers don't provide enough information to their teams.

One of the most important elements in the communication process is feedback. The process of providing constructive feedback within a team is a sign that the team is truly working together. People who don't seek or give feedback are running the risk of working in an information vacuum or isolating their colleagues. This includes managers as well as team members. Getting useful feedback from team members can be invaluable. As well as learning about what you could do to improve next time, you can benefit from the experience and insights others provide. Feedback can be sought and provided in many situations, both formal and informal.

Informal and ongoing feedback

Ask team members for feedback on your own performance as a manager. All team members can give each other feedback and recognition when individuals have worked hard, made an effort, or achieved a goal. The team can give itself feedback in sessions that are structured so that individuals assess the team's performance.

Feedback can be sought several times over the course of a project or activity and can be used to check how well work is progressing. KPIs are a form of impartial feedback that shows a team how progress is tracking against targets. Give your team feedback on what happens at management meetings or other projects you're involved in, as a representative of the team.

When instructions or requests are given, elicit verbal feedback as to whether team members understand the information provided. You may consider asking team members for a demonstration of how they will manage things in future. This feedback could be a mechanism for improvement, as well as reinforcing spheres of responsibility and encouraging team members to work together, perhaps devising alternative methods and work practices.

Monitor implementation

It is essential that you coordinate a regular review of performance during the implementation stage of your plan. You will find that this review is more effective when you actively involve team members in the review and gather their feedback.

You may gather feedback using a range of methods, such as the following:

• Printed and electronic surveys

• Customer feedback forms

• Focus groups

• Interviews (face to face and by telephone)

• Team meetings

Summary

1. To make informed decisions, it is essential that organisations have access to information that is not only relevant, but also accurate and current.

2. The key identifying feature of primary data is that it comes from first-hand experience and has not yet been analysed or changed in any way.

3. Secondary sources of information include reflection, review and interpretation of information after the events.

4. Good team leaders recognise that some team members may have a lot to share in the way of good experience or skills that other team members, including the team leader, may not have.

5. There is a range of methods that can be used by work groups and teams to solve problems and assist in making decisions.

6. To be an effective leader, you will need to have the confidence to make decisions in a timely manner.

7. The more opportunity individuals or groups have to participate in the decision-making process and planning stage, the more likely they are to be supportive and positive about the innovation or change.

8. Consider where the risks are when working out an implementation plan and have a contingency plan for addressing those risks.

9. As you write an implementation plan, ask 'Who is affected?' and consider clients, other parts of the organisation, suppliers and the wider community.

10. The process of providing constructive feedback within a team is a sign that the team is truly working together.