

# Human Resources for Operations Managers



# HUMAN RESOURCES FOR OPERATIONS MANAGERS

CONNIE PALMER

Fanshawe College Pressbooks  
London, Ontario



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## Collaborators

This project was a collaboration between the author and the team in the OER Design Studio at Fanshawe. The following staff and students were involved in the creation of this project:

- Lianne Gallie – *Project Leader*
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# PREFACE

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Human Resources for Operations Managers – First Edition highlights the essential Human Resources functions that Operations Managers need to be aware of to perform their job. This OER encourages Operations Managers to work closely with their Human Resources partners to provide a positive employee experience while ensuring legislative compliance. The photo on the cover of the OER depicts two individuals in a scull, representing the importance of the Operations Manager working closely with their Human Resources partner. Both must work in unison and row in the same direction.

## Accessibility Statement

We are actively committed to increasing the accessibility and usability of the textbooks we produce. Every attempt has been made to make this OER accessible to all learners and is compatible with assistive and adaptive technologies. We have attempted to provide closed captions, alternative text, or multiple formats for on-screen and off-line access.

The web version of this resource has been designed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, level AA. In addition, it follows all guidelines in Appendix A: Checklist for Accessibility of the *Accessibility Toolkit – 2nd Edition*.

In addition to the web version, additional files are available in a number of file formats including PDF, EPUB (for eReaders), and MOBI (for Kindles).

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# CHANGES FROM ADAPTED RESOURCE

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This book is largely a mashup of Human Resources Management – 2nd Ontario Edition by Elizabeth Cameron and Health and Safety in Canadian Workplaces by Jason Foster and Bob Barneston, which are both licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, unless otherwise noted. Below is a list of changes made from these sources.

<b>Chapter 1: Human Resources Management: An Introduction</b>	<p>Source: “Perspectives on Human Resources Management” in Human Resources Management – 2nd Ontario Edition by Elizabeth Cameron.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modified chapter title</li> <li>• Removed High Quality Industries case study</li> <li>• Removed HRM A Short History</li> <li>• Changed chapter learning objectives</li> <li>• Removed Skills needed for HRM</li> <li>• Removed HR Competencies</li> <li>• Removed the HR Professional: The HRP</li> <li>• Removed HRM and Business Challenges</li> <li>• Added introduction, summary, toolkits, knowledge checks</li> <li>• Modified/deleted existing content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added new content to align with new OER</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 2: HRM Related Legislation</b>	<p>Newly created chapter.</p> <p>Incorporated “Labour Relations” in Human Resources Management – 2nd Ontario Edition by Elizabeth Cameron.</p>
<b>Chapter 3: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion</b>	<p>Source: Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5 in Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Organizational Culture by Andrea Bearman.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed title from OER book title to a chapter title</li> <li>• Removed “strategies” article</li> <li>• Added new learning outcomes</li> <li>• Removed some existing graphics and added new graphics</li> <li>• Removed section on Evaluating your organizations EDI</li> <li>• Removed section on Putting it all together</li> <li>• Added a YouTube video from another OER on creating cultural competency</li> <li>• Added introduction, summary, toolkits, knowledge checks</li> <li>• Modified/deleted existing content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added new content to align with new OER</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 4: Talent Acquisition</b>	<p>Source: “Recruitment” and “Talent Acquisition” in Human Resources Management – 2nd Ontario Edition by Elizabeth Cameron.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removed Zendesk case study</li> <li>• Modified learning outcomes</li> <li>• Added introduction, summary, toolkits, knowledge checks</li> <li>• Modified/deleted existing content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added new content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Removed some videos, key learnings and knowledge checks</li> </ul>

<b>Chapter 5: Training</b>	<p>Source: “Training and Development” in Human Resources Management – 2nd Ontario Edition by Elizabeth Cameron.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modified learning outcomes</li> <li>• Removed some graphics, videos, key learnings and knowledge checks</li> <li>• Added the business case for training</li> <li>• Added introduction, summary, toolkits, knowledge checks</li> <li>• Modified/deleted existing content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added new content to align with new OER</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 6: Performance Management</b>	<p>Source: “Performance Management” and “Compensation” in Human Resources Management – 2nd Ontario Edition by Elizabeth Cameron.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modified learning outcomes</li> <li>• Removed some graphics, videos, key learnings and knowledge checks</li> <li>• Added introduction, summary, toolkits, knowledge checks</li> <li>• Modified/deleted existing content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added new content to align with new OER</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 7: Employee Development</b>	<p>Source: “Training and Development” in Human Resources Management – 2nd Ontario Edition by Elizabeth Cameron.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modified learning outcomes</li> <li>• Removed some graphics, videos, key learnings and knowledge checks</li> <li>• Added introduction, summary, toolkits, knowledge checks</li> <li>• Modified/deleted existing content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added new content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added business case for employee development</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 8: Communication and Conflict Resolution</b>	<p>Source: Unit 1, 4, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 30, 43 in Communication @ Work Seneca Edition by Jordan Smith.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modified learning outcomes</li> <li>• Removed some graphics, videos, key learnings and knowledge checks</li> <li>• Added introduction, summary, toolkits, knowledge checks</li> <li>• Modified/deleted existing content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added new content to align with new OER</li> </ul>

<b>Chapter 9: Operations Management Career Readiness</b>	<p>Source: Chapters 4, 6 and 7 in Working in Play: Planning for a Career in the Recreation and Leisure Industry in Canada by Linda Whitehead.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added introduction, summary, toolkits, knowledge checks</li> <li>• Modified/deleted existing content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Added new content to align with new OER</li> <li>• Removed learning objectives and section 6.1</li> <li>• Removed videos</li> <li>• Changed graphics</li> <li>• Modified the content of sections 6.4 and 6.5</li> <li>• Removed links to associations</li> <li>• Added section on micro-credentials</li> <li>• Removed sample interview questions and answers</li> <li>• Removed interview dress code by interview type</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 10: Occupational Health and Safety Legislation</b>	<p>Source: “Legislative Framework of Injury Prevention and Compensation” in Health and Safety in Canadian Workplaces by Jason Foster and Bob Barneston.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modified chapter title</li> <li>• Added new images</li> <li>• Removed gas station case study</li> <li>• Removed boxes 2.1 – 2.7</li> <li>• Added in additional resources: knowledge checks</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 11: WHMIS 2015</b>	<p>Newly created chapter</p>
<b>Chapter 12: Hazard Recognition, Assessment and Control</b>	<p>Source: “Hazard Recognition, Assessment, and Control” in Health and Safety in Canadian Workplaces by Jason Foster and Bob Barneston.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added new images</li> <li>• Added new learning outcomes</li> <li>• Added the business case for hazard recognition</li> <li>• Added in additional resources: knowledge checks</li> <li>• Removed hierarchy of control critiques</li> <li>• Modified some risk assessment wording</li> <li>• Removed boxes 3.1 to 3.5</li> </ul>

<b>Chapter 13: Incident Investigation</b>	<p>Source: “Incident Investigation” in Health and Safety in Canadian Workplaces by Jason Foster and Bob Barneston.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added new images</li> <li>• Created new learning outcomes</li> <li>• Added an introduction to incident investigation</li> <li>• Added a business case for incident investigation</li> <li>• Added contents of an investigation toolkit in a graphic</li> <li>• Removed some discussion around root vs proximate cause</li> <li>• Removed boxes 9.1 and 9.2</li> <li>• Added in additional resources: knowledge check</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 14: Disability Management and Return-to-Work</b>	<p>Source: “Disability Management and Return to Work” in Health and Safety in Canadian Workplaces by Jason Foster and Bob Barneston.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added new images</li> <li>• Created new learning outcomes</li> <li>• Added the business case for disability management</li> <li>• Deleted box 10.2 and 10.3</li> <li>• Added in additional resources: a knowledge check</li> <li>• Changed the discussion questions</li> </ul>





# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

## Chapter Outline

- 1.0 Learning Objectives
- 1.1 Human Resources Management
- 1.2 HR Activities
- 1.3 HRM and Business Challenges
- 1.4 Summary



# 1.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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## Learning Objectives

- Explain the role of HRM in organizations.
- Discuss the major HRM activities.
- Outline how the business context influences HRM.

As an Operations Manager, it is important to understand the role of Human Resources in your organization. Whether it is assistance with performance management, compensation or safety issues, you will want to seek the assistance of the Human Resources Management (HRM) professionals in your organization to help you navigate these matters efficiently, effectively and legally.

In some organizations there may not be a Human Resource department; in these cases, as an Operations Manager, you may need to take on the responsibilities of people management. In this chapter you will gain an understanding of what these responsibilities might be.

# 1.1 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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**Human Resource Management** (HRM) or Employee Relations is an integrated set of processes, practices, programs, and systems in an organization that focuses on the effective deployment and development of its employees. These processes include employing people, training them, compensating them, developing policies relating to them, and developing strategies to retain them. It is, by most accounts, one of the most critical functions of an organization, because for an organization to be efficient, it needs employees and systems that support them.

## Top Organizations & HRM

Think of an organization that you admire (you can use Fortune's ranking of the World's Most Admired companies and Canada's Top 100 employers, an annual ranking). If you look closely at these companies, you'll find that they are all built, without exception, around efficient, strong, and innovative HR processes.

## The Role of HRM in Organizations

HRM is an 'umbrella' term for many different and interrelated functions. It is necessary to point out at the very beginning of this text, that every manager has a role relating to Human Resource Management. Just because we do not have the title of HR manager, it does not mean we won't perform all or at least some of the HRM tasks. For example, most managers deal with the selection, compensation, and motivation of employees—making these aspects not only part of HRM but also part of management in general.

## Legislation and the Law

It is very important that Human Resource Managers are aware of all the laws that affect the workplace and they ensure that the processes in place abide by them.

An HR Manager will work under the following legal frameworks:

- Federal Government
- Provincial Government
- Health and Safety Requirements
- Labour Laws
- Employment Standards

The legal environment of HRM is always changing, therefore, HRM must always be aware of changes taking place and then communicate the changes to the entire management team of the organization.

## Corporate Policies

In addition to having to comply with the requirements mandated by law, every organization may have their own set of unique policies. These policies can be set to ensure fairness (e.g., vacation policy above and beyond those legally mandated), to enhance effectiveness (e.g., internet usage policy), or simply to reinforce the culture (e.g., dress code). Some of the roles of HRM are to identify issues that can be addressed by implementing a policy; these can range from chronic tardiness of employees to a lack of decorum in meetings. HRM, management and executives are all involved in the process of developing policies. For example, the HRM professional will likely recognize the need for a new policy or a change of policy, they will then seek opinions on the policy, write the policy, and then communicate that policy to employees. The range of policies that can be designed is endless. Some examples of innovative policies include giving time-off to employees to volunteer in community organizations (to promote well-being and group work) and eliminating job titles.

### Additional Resources

10 Examples of Innovative HR Practices and Policies that Amplify Success

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## 1.2 HR ACTIVITIES

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The Human Resources function in a business is responsible for: job analysis and design, talent acquisition, training and development, performance management, compensation, labour relations and health and safety.

### Job Analysis and Design

Organizations rely on the execution of numerous and varied tasks. These tasks, which are often carried out by employees, have to be structured in such a way to maximize efficiency. They should be clear and distinct from each other. They should also be performed by capable employees. HRM supports the definition, documentation and organization of these tasks through the processes of job analysis and job design.

### Talent Acquisition

You need the right people to perform tasks and get work done in the organization. Even with the most sophisticated machines, humans are still needed, therefore, one of the major tasks in HRM is talent acquisition.. Talent acquisition involves the entire hiring process from posting a job to negotiating a salary package.

Within the talent acquisition function, there are four main steps:

- Talent Management Strategy
- Human Resource (Capital) Plan
- Recruitment Plan
- Selection Process

# The 4 Steps of Talent Acquisition



“The Steps of Talent Acquisition” by Alyssa Giles, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

The dynamics of today’s business world and constant challenges ultimately equate to increasing demands on recruiting, selecting, training and retaining the necessary talent to compete. This is where HRM plays a critical role. There is no shortage of business challenges – these are forever changing and so to must the strategies, capabilities, processes and skills of HRM to keep pace.

The nature of work has changed dramatically in the past couple of decades. The ‘full-time one employer career’ of the past has given way to a ‘gig’ economy supported by a myriad of employment configurations – permanent part-time, fractional, contract, casual, on-call. As the business world and challenges evolve, so must HRM.

Hiring challenges persist in North America. Many employers continue to face a skills gap with a core focus on dependability and flexibility. It seems clear that employers need to focus both on attracting the right people and then keeping them in the organization. The COVID-19 situation placed even more stress and focus on employers as they struggled to fill positions and retain employees. Lockdowns, wage subsidies, and vaccination mandates are some examples of the issues during the COVID-19 pandemic that made employment more challenging for organizations.

## Training and Development

Once we have spent the time to hire new employees, we want to make sure they are trained to do the job and

continue to grow and develop new skills. This results in higher productivity for the organization. Training is also a key component in employee motivation. Employees who feel they are developing their skills tend to be happier in their jobs, which results in an increase of employee performance, productivity and retention.

Examples of training courses and programs might include the following:

- Job skills training, such as how to use a computer program
- Training on communication
- Team-building activities
- Policy and legal training, such as sexual harassment training, safety training and ethics training
- Time management skills

## Performance Assessment and Management

Employee performance is a support role provided by HRM to the organization and management. HR has the responsibility of designing, maintaining and administering an organization's performance management policies and systems. Basically, people have to be good at what they do. In a coffee shop, baristas have to produce a great cup of coffee, within a certain amount of time, and serve it to the customer in a pleasant manner. Every job is different and quite complex when you think of the different ways in which performance is defined. It is the role of the HRM professional to devise systems to measure this performance with precision and use this information to help the employee and the organization. Performance appraisal systems may include appraisal processes, annual employee performance appraisals, or performance improvement plans to name a few.

However, assessing performance is only the beginning. Once a measure of performance is obtained, the HRM professional uses it for multiple purposes, including:

- Provide feedback for employees
- Determine compensation (e.g., bonus, raise, etc.)
- Take disciplinary measures
- Support career development

## Compensation and Benefit Administration

HRM professionals need to determine that compensation is fair, meets industry standards, and is high enough to entice people to work for the organization. Compensation includes anything the employee receives for his or her work. In addition, HRM professionals need to make sure the pay is comparable to what other people performing similar jobs are being paid. This involves setting up pay systems that take into consideration the



number of years with the organization, years of experience, education, and also considers the results of external salary surveys, e.g., Hays Canada.

Total compensation (package) may include the following:

- Pay
- Group Life and Health Insurance
- Retirement pension plans
- Stock grants and purchase plans
- Vacation time
- Sick leave and benefits
- Bonuses
- Tuition reimbursement

## What can be included in a Total Compensation Package?



Pay



Vacation Time



Bonuses



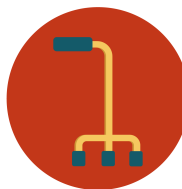
Tuition Reimbursement



Sick Leave  
& Benefits



Group Life &  
Health Insurance



Retirement  
Pension Plans



Stock Grants  
& Purchase Plans

“Compensation Package Contents” by Alyssa Giles, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

## Labour Relations

A **labour union**, also called a trade union or worker’s union, is an organization that represents the collective

interests of employees. HRM professionals are involved in the negotiation (collective bargaining) and management of union contracts. These contracts typically cover compensation, work schedules, benefits, discipline, and other work-related processes. Unions are very prevalent throughout Canada. As such, an understanding of labour unions is very important to be effective.

## Health and Safety

Safety is a major consideration in all organizations. Often times new laws are created with the goal of setting federal or provincial standards to ensure worker safety. Unions and union contracts can also impact the requirements regarding worker safety in the workplace. It is up to the Human Resource Manager to be aware of worker protection requirements and ensure the workplace is meeting federal, provincial, industry specific and union standards.



“Woman Wearing Protective Goggles And Mask” by Cedric Fauntleroy, Pexels License

Worker protection issues might include the following:

- Chemical hazards
- Heating and ventilation requirements
- Use of “no fragrance” zones
- Protection of private employee information

## HRM as an Integrated Set of Process

HRM relies upon a sophisticated set of integrated process to help the organization manage human capital. The effectiveness of HRM lies in how well integrated these processes are and how well aligned they are with the mission and strategy of the organization. For example, a new policy on workplace safety protocols will only be effective if employees are trained to understand and respect it. In addition, that policy has little chance of taking hold if it is not part of the performance appraisal process. Finally, in a unionized environment, any policy will have to be designed with the cooperation of the labour union so that it is integrated into the collective agreement.

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## 1.3 HRM AND BUSINESS CHALLENGES

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**HR processes** are designed to improve the effectiveness of an organization through professional human resource management, for example, by ensuring that the right people are hired, trained, and fairly evaluated and compensated. While HR processes are internal to the organization, these same processes need to have an external focus and help organizations overcome the challenges that they face. The HR manager needs to consider the many external forces that may affect HR processes and the organization as a whole. In this section, we describe how HR management has to be in tune with changes in the environment.

Every organization must have the capacity to adjust to changes in its environment. Thus, it is important for organizations to be aware of outside factors, or external factors. These factors are beyond their control but could positively or negatively impact the organization and their human resources. External factors might include the following:

- Globalization
- Offshoring
- Changes to employment law
- Health, safety, and employee protection
- Employee expectations (e.g., compensation, standard hours)
- Diversity of the workforce
- Changing demographics of the workforce
- Changes in education profile of workers
- Layoffs and downsizing
- Advanced technologies
- Evolving industry

Basically, HRM professionals have to be aware of external factors, so they can develop policies that meet not only the needs of the company but also the needs of the employees. Any manager operating without considering outside forces will likely be out-of-step with their company and industry and alienate employees, resulting in unmotivated and unhappy workers. Not understanding the external factors can also result in breaking the law, which has a concerning set of implications as well. In this section, we list four broad categories of external factors faced by organizations today.

## Crisis Management

Of course, organizations have had to deal with crises in the past, such as in 2008, where the economy was hit with a massive financial crisis. The relaxing of credit lending standards by investment banks and a significant increase in subprime lending was the cause of this crisis. This resulted in the collapse of the financial system. In just a few weeks, the S&P 500 lost half of its value and housing prices lost 20% of their value in the US. Companies, banks, and even countries, went bankrupt. The impact of this event on HRM was immediate: the economy slowed down considerably which led to massive layoffs (unemployment in the US shot up to 10%).<sup>1</sup>

We now know that pandemics and the rapid spread of infectious diseases represents an external factor affecting organizations and HRM. It is an understatement to say that the COVID-19 crisis had an impact on organizations in a major way. The COVID-19 crisis made health and safety a priority for governments and organizations. It has brought to the fore a myriad of HR issues such as turnover, absenteeism, and burn-out. It has also accelerated the transformation of HR processes such as telework, remote training, and fair compensation (consider all of the controversy around the salaries of nursing home staff).

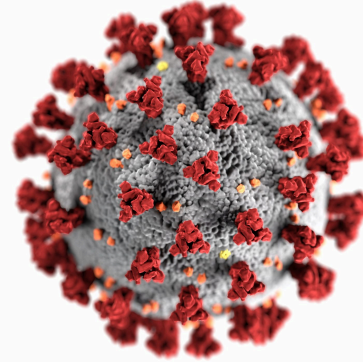


Image by CDC, Pexels License

As we write this chapter, these changes are unfolding and it's hard to predict how they will evolve over time. This article All the things COVID-19 will change forever, according to 30 top experts summarizes the views of top HR executives on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected HRM.

## Globalization

In 2020, it would be almost impossible to find an organization that does not have some part of its activities outside of its national border. You can look at any local success story and you will see how these organizations have deep international connections. The same is true of smaller businesses: your local coffee shop buys its coffee from an organic grower in Haiti and its paper cups from the US. For organizations, globalization is found in their supply chains, core activities, or customer base. Canada's economy is one of the world's top ten trading nations, with a highly globalized economy. In 2018, Canadian trade in goods and services reached CA\$1.5 trillion. Canada's exports totaled over CA\$585 billion, while its imported goods were worth over

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1. Kosakowski, P. (2021, November 30). The Fall of the Market in the Fall of 2008. *Investopedia*. (<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/09/subprimemarket-2008.asp>)

CA\$607 billion. The US is our most important trade partner with approximately CA\$391 billion of these imports originating from the United States (CA\$216 billion from non-U.S. sources). The recently signed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), now called the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, updates the original NAFTA (1994). It has stronger protections for workers and the digital economy, expanded markets for American farmers and new rules to encourage auto manufacturing in North America.

The implication of globalization is significant for HRM. For HRM professionals, globalization means dealing with people from different cultures and adjusting to different employment laws and business practices. Watch the video: Running a Global HR Team by LinkedIn Talent Solution [6:46] to learn about how globalization has affected HR practices.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=572#oembed-1>

## Cost Containment and Efficiency

Factors such as global competition and increasing costs puts an enormous pressure on organizations to maximize their efficiency and productivity and remain viable. All departments of the organization must be focused on operational efficiencies and costs. For HRM, this means that the processes it manages contribute to the ‘bottom line’ in an objective and measurable way. For example, an HR manager who asks for \$20,000 for a training budget will have to make their business case, and show that this investment will lead to better employee performance and productivity and, ultimately, more profits (or less costs).

The role of HRM is complex and impactful when you consider that human capital typically represents 60% to 65% of an organizations total annual budget. Consider the implementation of a wellness program as an example. Investments in a company gym, a healthy menu at the cafeteria, or ergonomically-sound workstations can make a serious financial commitment, but if designed wisely, this investment can lead to a significant decrease in health-related issues. In the early 2000’s, Johnson & Johnson estimated that, for every dollar invested in their wellness program, they obtained a return of \$2.71, for total savings of over \$250 million in health care costs.<sup>2</sup> Here is a short article how of HRM can help save costs for small businesses.

2. Berry, L. Mirabito, A.M. & Baun, W.B. (2010, December). What's the hard return on employee wellness programs? *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2010/12/whats-the-hard-return-on-employee-wellness-programs>

## Technology

Technology has greatly impacted human resources and will continue to do so as advanced technologies are developed. Technology can impact HRM in many ways. From an employee perspective it eliminates jobs, changes job requirements, and alters the demands on the employee and employee expectations. It influences skills and competencies that employees need to perform their job. Technology also creates a workforce that expects to be mobile. Due to the ability to work from home or anywhere else, many employees may request and even demand a flexible schedule to meet their own family and personal needs. Productivity can be a concern for all managers in the area of flextime, and another challenge is the fairness to other workers when one person is offered a flexible schedule.

Technology also creates the need for HR policies related to employee privacy and the protection of a company's data. The major challenge with technology is the rapid pace at which it evolves and the need to continuously up-date employees' knowledge. Technology also creates additional stress for workers. Increased job demands, constant change, constant e-mailing and texting, and the physical aspects of sitting in front of a computer can be not only stressful but also physically harmful to employees. According to an article in *Fast Company*, the ability to manage your personal brand (because of the increasing importance of social media), digital fluency, and resilience are some of the 'super skills' that are needed for the new world of work.<sup>3</sup>

From an HRM perspective technology impacts how HRM is delivered. Increasingly, jobs are being replaced by robots or artificial intelligence. Most companies now use social media platforms for recruiting employees.

Interviewing and training are being done on Zoom or other specialized platforms. More and more organizations now use virtual reality (VR) technology to onboard and train their employees. This is especially useful for jobs that are particularly dangerous or high-stress. Here is a short article on how VR can be used for onboarding employees. Payroll and benefits management are now fully automated. All of these processes are centralized in Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), and as a result, the large variety of databases available to perform HR tasks is mind boggling. These systems can be very useful to track recruiting and hiring processes, compensation, and training.

Today, a vast amount of information is collected about employees via Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS). This information, in turn, can be used to support management decisions using sophisticated analytical tools. For example, a financial institution can implement quarterly employee satisfaction surveys and investigate predictors of 'dips' and 'jumps' in satisfaction. It could uncover that those employees working on the investment side of the business tend to be very stressed during the preparation of end-of-quarter fund performance reporting. Knowing this, they could implement special communication efforts and improved processes or training for those employees during critical business cycles of the year.

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3. Vozza, S. (2018, June 20). These are the 5 super skills you need for jobs of the future. *Fast Company*. <https://www.fastcompany.com/40584248/these-are-the-5-super-skills-you-need-for-jobs-of-the-future>

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## 1.4 SUMMARY

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### Summary

Human Resources Management is an umbrella term that covers numerous areas such as compensation, safety, performance management and training. The focus of Human Resources Management is always on the people. As an Operations Manager, you need to understand the scope of HRM and work closely with this group of business professionals to lead your team, your department, and your organization. In organizations without HRM, you may need to take on many of these responsibilities yourself.



# CHAPTER 2: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

## Chapter Outline

- 2.0 Learning Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety Legislation
- 2.2 Rights and Responsibilities
- 2.3 Powers, Authority and Legal Implications
- 2.4 Related Legislation
- 2.5 Summary



## 2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

1. List the three rights of the worker.
2. Explain the intent of the Internal Responsibility System.
3. List the legal responsibilities of the employee, employer, and supervisor.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

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Image by [Craig Clark](#), Pixabay License

All 14 of Canada’s jurisdictions have occupational health and safety legislation—laws that grant rights to and impose duties upon workers and employers in order to reduce the level of workplace injury. In this chapter, we will review the responsibilities and the rights of workers, the legal implications of the legislation, and the relationship between safety laws and other pieces of legislation.

Beginning in the 1970s, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments enacted legislation that regulated occupational health and safety (OHS). The distribution of powers under the Canadian constitution means Canada has 14 jurisdictions (federal, ten provincial, and three territorial) regarding health and safety laws. Most employers and workers are covered by the occupational health and safety law of the province or territory in which they work. However, about 10% of the workforce is covered by the occupational health and safety provisions in the federal government’s *Canada Labour Code*. The *Canada Labour Code* covers employees of the federal government. It also covers workers in industries that are, by their nature, interprovincial, such as

banking, telecommunications, interprovincial transport, and uranium mining. Each jurisdiction has its own amalgam of acts, regulations, policies, and guidelines.

An **act** is a federal, provincial, or territorial law that sets out the broad legal framework around occupational health and safety in each jurisdiction.

A **regulation** typically sets out how the Act's general principles will be applied in specific circumstances and is enforceable. Guidelines and policies are more specific rules about occupational health and safety. Other supporting guidance can be found in standards and codes. These documents provide employers with direction on health and safety implementation in the workplace. An example would be CSA Z795-03 which refers to the Coding of Work Injury or Disease Information and is published by the Canadian Standard Association (CSA).<sup>1</sup>

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1. Employment and Social Development Canada. (2016, July 14). *Psychological Health in the Workplace*. Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/psychological-health.html>

## 2.2 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Occupational health and safety legislation consists of rights and responsibilities. Let us look at the foundation of health and safety the internal responsibility system and explore the topic of due diligence. In addition, we will take a closer look at the rights and responsibilities of employers, employees, supervisors and joint health and safety committees.

### The Internal Responsibility System (IRS)

Canadian OHS is based on the **Internal Responsibility System** (IRS). The IRS assumes workers and employers are responsible for workplace health and safety. Employers must take steps to ensure that workplaces are as safe as reasonably practicable.<sup>1</sup> Employers are also required to advise workers of hazards and to require workers to use mandated safety equipment. The decision by governments to give employers the power to determine how to address workplace hazards bolsters employers' broader management rights to control and direct work.

It can be difficult for employers to know when they have met their duty to make work as safe as reasonably practicable. Meeting the **reasonably practicable** standard means taking precautions "that are not only possible but also suitable or rational, given the particular situation."<sup>2</sup> The generally accepted test is that of due diligence.

### Due Diligence

**Due diligence** is taking reasonable precautions and steps to prevent injury, given the circumstances. It is assessed using a three-part test:

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1. For example, Section 3-8(a) of the Saskatchewan Employment Act (2013) states: "3-8 Every employer shall: (a) ensure, insofar as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all of the employer's workers;"
  2. Government of Canada, Labour Program. (1993). *Labour Standards Interpretations, Policies and Guidelines 808/819-IPG 057* (p. 4). <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/laws-regulations/labour/interpretations-policies/057.pdf>



1. *Foreseeability*: Reasonable employers are expected to know about the hazards of their business. Injuries that arise from events that other operators in the industry expect might occur are foreseeable events.
2. *Preventability*: Reasonable employers are expected to take steps to prevent injury. The normal steps include identifying hazards, preparing and enforcing safe working procedures, training and monitoring worker safety, and ensuring compliance with safety procedures. Injuries that arise because an employer did not take these steps are preventable injuries.
3. *Control*: Reasonable employers are expected to act on hazards they can control. Injuries that arise from such hazards suggest the employer failed to control these hazards.<sup>3</sup>

Employers who have taken steps to address the hazards within their control to prevent foreseeable injuries have exercised their due diligence. This matters for two reasons. First, due diligence prevents injuries by controlling hazards. Second, if an injury occurs, employers who have completed the steps can use this due diligence as a defence to avoid penalties under OHS legislation.

## Three Rights of the Worker

To offset the power of employers under the IRS, governments have granted workers three safety rights:

1. **Right to know**: Workers have a right to know about the hazards they face in their workplace. While many hazards are readily apparent, chemical and biological hazards may not be. The right to know has given rise to systems such as the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System discussed below, which provides workers with information about hazardous materials and their safe handling.
2. **Right to participate**: Workers have the right to participate in workplace health and

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3. LeBlanc, B. A. (n.d.). *Labour Standards and Equal Pay*. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/laws-regulations/labour/interpretations-policies/057.pdf>

safety activities. Participation most often occurs through joint health and safety committees (JHSCs) but can be through other means.

3. **Right to refuse:** Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. The right to refuse represents one of the few instances where workers can disobey their employer. A refusal requires employers to investigate and remedy unsafe work. Although the right to refuse sounds like a powerful right, it is one workers rarely use.

## Employer Responsibilities

Employers have specific responsibilities when it comes to health and safety legislation. In Ontario, for example, some of the employer responsibilities include:

- Establish and maintain a health and safety committee or cause workers to select at least one health and safety representative.
- Take every reasonable precaution to ensure the workplace is safe.
- Train employees about any potential hazards and in how to safely use, handle, store and dispose of hazardous substances and how to handle emergencies.
- Ensure workers know how to safely and properly handle the equipment.
- Make sure workers use any necessary personal protective equipment.
- Immediately report all critical injuries to the government department responsible for OH&S.
- Appoint a competent supervisor who sets the standards for performance, and who ensures safe working conditions are always observed.

## Employee Responsibilities

There exists a misperception that only the employer has responsibilities under occupational health and safety legislation. Employees, however, have specific responsibilities under the law. Some of the employee responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* include:

- Work in compliance with OH&S acts and regulations.

- Use personal protective equipment and clothing as directed by the employer.
- Report workplace hazards and dangers to the supervisor or employer.
- Work safely as required by the employer and use the prescribed safety equipment.
- Tell the supervisor or employer about any missing or defective equipment or protective device that may be dangerous.

## Supervisor/Manager Responsibilities

Individuals with titles such as supervisor or manager have specific responsibilities under occupational health and safety legislation. In Ontario, for example, supervisors and managers are to:

- Make sure workers work in compliance with OH&S acts and regulations.
- Make sure that workers use prescribed protective equipment and/or devices.
- Advise workers of potential and actual hazards.
- Provide workers with written instructions as to the measures and procedures to be taken for protection of the worker.
- Take every reasonable precaution in the circumstances to protect workers <sup>4</sup>

## Joint Health and Safety Committee

**Joint health and safety committees** are an important mechanism by which workers exercise their right to participate in occupational health and safety matters. Joint health and safety committees are comprised of employer and worker representatives who regularly meet to discuss health and safety issues. The “logic” of these committees is that they marry the job-specific knowledge of workers with the broader perspective of managers to identify and resolve OHS issues. The legislative requirements for JHSCs vary by jurisdiction and organization size. Unions may also negotiate mandatory JHSCs into their collective agreements.

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4. Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. (n.d.). OSH Answers Fact Sheets: OH&S Legislation in Canada - Basic Responsibilities, <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/legisl/responsi.html>. Reproduced with permission.

A joint health and safety committee may not be required in smaller workplaces. Be sure to refer to your federal, provincial or territorial legislation to determine if your workplace needs a safety committee or a safety representative. Here is a quick reference from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:

CCOHS: Joint Health and Safety Committee – What is a Joint Health and Safety Committee?

Among the tasks joint health and safety committees perform are conducting hazard assessments, providing education and training, and investigating incidents. While a joint health and safety committees can propose hazard mitigation strategies, occupational health and safety legislation empowers the employer to determine how to control such hazards. In this way, joint health and safety committees are advisory rather than decision-making committees. Research suggests that worker participation in occupational health and safety tends to be more effective in larger workplaces and in the presence of trade unions.<sup>5</sup> Workers in smaller firms and in workplaces reliant upon various subcontracting and outsourcing arrangements are less likely to have access to joint health and safety committees.<sup>6</sup>

How workers behave on joint health and safety committees can influence the effectiveness of worker participation. Worker representatives who collect their own information about occupational health and safety assert their knowledge about hazardous conditions, mobilize their co-workers to support demands for improvements, and propose alternative solutions appear to be more effective than more passive representatives.<sup>7</sup> The effectiveness of this more activist orientation suggests employer occupational health and safety behaviours can be shaped by workers' behaviour in the workplace, as well as by external enforcement by the state.

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“Legislative Framework of Injury Prevention and Compensation” in Health and Safety in Canadian

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5. Nichols, T., & Walters, D. (2009). Worker representation on health and safety in the UK – Problems with the preferred model and beyond. In D. Walters & T. Nichols (Eds.), *International perspectives on representing workers' interests in health and safety* (pp. 19–30). Palgrave Macmillan.
  6. Johnstone, R. (2006). Regulating occupational health and safety in a changing labour market. In C. Arup, P. Gahan, J. Howe, R. Johnstone, R. Mitchell, & A. O'Donnell (Eds.), *Labour law and labour market regulations* (pp. 617–634). Federation Press.
  7. Hall, A., Forrest, A., Sears, A., & Carlan, N. (2006). Making a difference: Knowledge activism and worker representation in joint OHS committees. *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 61(3), 408–436.

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## 2.3 POWERS, AUTHORITY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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The state's role in the Internal Responsibility System is primarily one of education and enforcement. Governments often run safety awareness campaigns aimed at workers. Governments also employ OHS officers who perform **worksite inspections** to identify health and safety violations and ensure their remediation. Inspections may be random or targeted (e.g., focusing on high-injury industries, such as residential construction). Worker complaints may also trigger inspections.

Inspectors will also investigate serious workplace injuries and fatalities. Where inspectors find violations of OHS rules, they may order employers to remedy the situation. This is the most common response of OHS inspectors and can sometimes include issuing a **stop-work order**, which halts operations at the worksite until an unsafe situation is resolved. Some jurisdictions also give OHS inspectors the power to issue tickets or other financial penalties to workers and employers who are in contravention of OHS rules. The government can also seek to prosecute those who violate the law. This most often occurs when there has been a severe injury or fatality or a pattern of non-compliance with the law. Conviction can result in fines, jail time, or other penalties. Prosecutions are relatively rare in Canada.

Canada's *Criminal Code* was amended in 2004 to allow for the criminal prosecution of individuals and organizations that direct the work of others when a worker is injured and the employer failed to meet its due diligence requirements. Criminal prosecution is designed to address cases of profound moral failings, such as the wanton disregard for safety that cost 26 workers their lives in 1992 at the Westray Mine in Nova Scotia. Only a handful of prosecutions under the *Criminal Code* have occurred, with few resulting in convictions.<sup>1</sup>



“A Day in the Life of an Inspector” by Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, Public Domain

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“Legislative Framework of Injury Prevention and Compensation” in Health and Safety in Canadian

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1. Bittle, S. (2012). *Still dying for a living: Corporate criminal liability after the Westray mine disaster*. University of British Columbia Press.

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## 2.4 RELATED LEGISLATION

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Occupational health and safety laws are part of a broader web of rules that regulate employment. Other laws passed by legislatures that impact OHS include fire and building codes, occupational-specific regulations, laws regulating hazardous materials (both in the workplace and the broader environment), employment (or labour) standards, human rights, and workers' compensation schemes.

### Hazardous Products

The federal *Hazardous Products Act* established the **Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System** (WHMIS). WHMIS protects workers by requiring employers to label hazardous materials and provide **safety data sheets** (SDS) which outline the hazards of the substance. This information assists workers in exercising their right to know about workplace hazards. Each of Canada's 14 jurisdictions have included aspects of WHMIS in their own OHS systems.<sup>1</sup>

Governments also regulate aspects of certain occupations. For example, workers whose job requires them to handle or use explosives may be required to undertake specific training and hold a permit. Governments have also enacted environmental laws that regulate air, water, and soil pollution, waste management, and climate change. While environmental regulations are not normally considered a part of occupational health and safety, there is no clear boundary between environmental hazards and workplace hazards.

### Employment Standards

All Canadian jurisdictions have enacted laws setting out the minimum terms and conditions of work. These **employment standards** (or labour standards) acts often outline maximum hours of work and required rest breaks. These requirements prevent workers from becoming overly tired, which increases the risk of injury. Employment standards legislation also usually contains limits on the employment of minors, reflecting their greater vulnerability to occupational injury due to their physical and intellectual immaturity. Such laws preclude employers from recovering the cost of customer theft from workers' wages. As the vignette at the beginning of this chapter suggests, though, employment standards laws are unevenly enforced, thereby reducing their contribution to injury prevention.

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1. Learn more about WHMIS at <http://whmis.org>



## Human Rights

It is important to consider the impact of **human rights legislation** on OHS. Human rights acts preclude discrimination on various grounds, such as gender, family status, age, sexual orientation, and disability. The duty to accommodate injured workers that flows from human rights legislation. In short, employers are expected to modify work and workplaces, up to the point of undue hardship for the employer, so as not to discriminate against workers with temporary or permanent disabilities.

## Workers' Compensation

Being injured on the job affects workers in many ways. Historically, injury has often meant poverty, because injured workers frequently can't work. At the beginning of the 20th century, provincial governments enacted **workers' compensation** systems to provide injured workers with wage-loss benefits, medical treatment, and vocational rehabilitation. Prior to the creation of workers' compensation, workers injured on the job were forced to sue their employers for compensation. Workers often could not afford to sue, and if they did sue they rarely won, which meant injured workers often ended up financially dependent upon their families or charity. The unfairness of this system was a source of significant social instability, and governments enacted workers' compensation laws to partly address workers' needs and thereby stave off industrial and social conflict.<sup>2</sup> In exchange for immediate, predictable, and stable compensation, injured workers gave up their right to sue their employer for workplace injury. This exchange is often called the historic compromise.

The Ontario workers' compensation system, which was Canada's first, was based upon the recommendations of a 1913 Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation headed by William Meredith.<sup>3</sup> The Meredith principles underlying workers' compensation remain the basis for workers' compensation in Canada:

1. No fault: How the injury occurred is irrelevant. Compensation is paid on a no-fault basis and workers cannot sue their employer.
2. Accident fund: The WCB maintains an accident fund to guarantee the availability of

2. Risk, R. (1983). This nuisance of litigation: The origins of workers' compensation in Ontario. In D. Flaherty (Ed.), *Essays in the history of Canadian law* (Vol. 2, pp. 418–491). University of Toronto Press.

3. View the Meredith Report at [http://awcbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/meredith\\_report.pdf](http://awcbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/meredith_report.pdf)

benefits over time.

3. Collective liability: All employers pay premiums and thereby share the cost of injuries collectively.
4. Independent administration: The WCB—which operates independently of employers, workers, and the state—administers the workers' compensation system.
5. Exclusivity: The WCB is the only provider of workers' compensation. This differs from arrangements in some US states where multiple private insurers offer compensation. The WCB is also the final arbiter of all claims.

Every province and territory has established a WCB that operates under these principles. When workers experience a serious work-related injury (e.g., the worker requires medical aid or can't go to work the next day), the worker, employer, and doctor are all required to report the injury to the WCB. In assessing whether an injured worker is eligible for benefits, the WCB uses the two-part “arises-and-occurs” test. To be compensable, an injury must be caused by an event arising out of, and occurring during the course of, employment.

Where it is not possible to determine if an injury arose or occurred, workers' compensation legislation generally gives the benefit of the doubt to the injured worker. Some workers' compensation systems also grant presumptive status to certain types of injury. Certain diseases, for example, are so closely linked with certain kinds of work (e.g., farming and farmer's lung) that claims are presumed to have arisen and occurred unless there is evidence otherwise.

Once an injury has been found to be compensable, workers are eligible to receive wage-loss, medical, and vocational rehabilitation benefits. **Wage-loss benefits** provide financial compensation to workers whose income is reduced by an injury. The level of wage-loss benefit and when wage-loss benefits commence varies by jurisdiction, although rates are set so that workers ordinarily receive less than their regular wage. Injured workers can also receive medical and vocational rehabilitation benefits. **Medical benefits** cover the costs of treating an injury, thereby relieving workers and the taxpayer-funded health care system of these costs. **Vocational rehabilitation benefits** include programs designed to increase the probability of a worker returning to employment. When a worker dies as the result of a workplace injury, the worker's dependents are eligible to receive **fatality benefits**, including funeral costs and wage-loss benefits.

While workers' compensation entails significant benefits to injured workers, the administration of these benefits has come under heavy criticism. Injured workers often report that their interactions with the WCB—wherein workers' claims are often met with skepticism and workers are sometimes surveilled—can

be psychologically damaging.<sup>4</sup> Injured workers are also more likely to live in poverty.<sup>5</sup> In some jurisdictions, workers face having their wage-loss benefits reduced because the WCB deems them to be employable, even though they have been unable to find a job.<sup>6</sup> These concerns are often related to the way workers' compensation is funded and, in particular, to the operation of experience-rating systems.

Employers fund workers' compensation by paying premiums. Premiums are based upon an employer's payroll multiplied by the assessment rate the WCB has set for the industry in which the employer operates. Typically premiums are expressed in the form of X dollars per \$100 of payroll. Some provinces further modify individual employer's premiums based upon the employer's claims record. These experience-rating systems reward employers that have low claim costs and penalize employers that have high claim costs. As we saw in Chapter 1, experience rating is a controversial system. Linking claim costs to premium rebates does reduce the number and duration of claims, but it is unclear if this means an actual reduction in the number or severity of injuries or reflects employer gaming of the experience-rating system.<sup>7</sup> Gaming may include suppressing claims as well as disputing worker claims, thereby undermining the no-fault basis of workers' compensation.

Many injured workers can perform productive work while they are recovering from injuries. Providing workers with an opportunity to return to work (RTW) by, for example, modifying their duties may help workers recover. The idea that return to work is rehabilitative is hotly contested. Less controversial is that RTW programs help employers minimize their claims costs.<sup>8</sup> Such programs also ensure that employers meet the duty to accommodate workers found in human rights legislation.

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4. Lippel, K. (2007). Workers describe the effect of the workers' compensation process on their health: A Québec study. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 30, 427–443.

5. Ballantyne, P., Casey, R., O'Hagan, F., & Vienneau, P. (2016). Poverty status of worker compensation claimants with permanent impairments. *Critical Public Health*, 26(2), 173–190. doi: 10.1080/09581596.2015.1010485

6. Barneston, B. (2010). *The political economy of workplace injury in Canada*. Athabasca University Press.

7. Tompa, E., Hogg-Johnson, S., Amick, B., Wang, Y., Shen, E., Mustard, C., Robson, L., & Saunders, R. (2013). Financial incentives for experience rating in workers' compensation: New evidence from a program change in Ontario, Canada. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 55(3), 292–304.

8. Tompa et al. (2013).

## 2.5 SUMMARY

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### Summary

This chapter outlined the legal framework the state has enacted to prevent and compensate work-related injuries. To fully appreciate how injury prevention and compensation laws operate we have to be prepared to understand both the technical requirements of the laws and the political economy of their enforcement.

Canadian governments have made employers and workers jointly responsible for OHS via the IRS. In addition to OHS laws, governments have passed other legislation that makes workplaces safer, including fire and building codes and hazardous materials and environment protection regulations. It is essential that every employer understand the occupational health and safety legislation that applies to their workplace(s) and implements the essential components of a safety program including training, hazard identification, incident investigation and controls.



## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=46#h5p-1>*

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## Discussion Questions

1. What are the occupational health and safety (OHS) rights and obligations of workers and employers?
2. How does the internal responsibility system (IRS) operate? What challenges does the IRS face?
3. How effective are state OHS enforcement efforts? What might states do to make enforcement more effective?

## Exercise

Go online and find your jurisdiction's rules around the workers' right to refuse. Write a 500-word answer to the following questions:

1. Explain the circumstances in which workers can refuse unsafe work or the tests applied to determine if work is unsafe.
2. Outline the process by which workers refuse unsafe work.
3. Explain what an employer must do when faced with a worker refusal.
4. Identify the consequences if an employer coerces an employee to perform unsafe work.
5. If you were a worker, why might you be reluctant to refuse unsafe work?

# CHAPTER 3: WHMIS 2015

## Chapter Outline

- 3.0 Learning Objectives
- 3.1 An Introduction to WHMIS 2015
- 3.2 Hazards Groups, Classes and Categories
- 3.3 The Three Elements of WHMIS 2015
- 3.4 Routes of Entry
- 3.5 Roles and Responsibilities
- 3.6 Transportation of Dangerous Goods
- 3.7 Summary





## 3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

1. Explain the three elements that make up WHMIS 2015.
2. Identify the pictograms associated with product labels.
3. Describe the difference between a workplace label and a supplier label.

## 3.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO WHMIS 2015

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As part of the workplace safety program, employers are responsible for ensuring their workers are protected from hazardous products, previously referred to as controlled products. WHMIS, or the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, is designed to protect workers from the health effects of exposure to hazardous products.

Globally, there has been a move to align all hazardous product legislation to create uniformity. As such, the GHS, or the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, was created to support such uniformity. In 2015, Canada updated its WHMIS legislation to what is known as WHMIS 2015 to align with GHS. Throughout this chapter, we will review the three elements of WHMIS 2015, look at hazard classification and the transportation of dangerous goods. Take the time to complete this activity that highlights the transition to WHMIS 2015.

### GHS and Transition to WHMIS 2015



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=216#h5p-5>*

## 3.2 HAZARDS GROUPS, CLASSES AND CATEGORIES

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Within WHMIS 2015, there are two types of hazard groups; physical and health hazards. Additionally, these two hazard groups are further broken down into hazard classes and hazard categories.

### Hazard Classes

Within each group, there are classes which are essentially groupings of like chemicals. There are 19 classes of chemicals within the physical hazards group and 12 classes of chemicals within the health hazard group. Review the Hazard Class provided by the Canadian Centre of Occupational Health and Safety.

### Hazard Categories

Each hazard class contains a hazard category. A **hazard category** identifies the severity of hazard and tells us just how hazardous the product is. Although each hazard class contains a minimum of one hazard category, it is possible for a hazard class to contain numerous hazard categories.

## Hazard Groups Drag-the-Words Activity



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=218#h5p-6>*

## 3.3 THE THREE ELEMENTS OF WHMIS 2015

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There are three essential elements that make up WHMIS 2015.

- (a) Labels
- (b) Safety Data Sheets
- (c) Education and Training

Let's explore each of these elements individually to fully understand their importance for your workplace safety program.

### Labels

The first element of WHMIS 2015 focuses on the label attached to a hazardous product. There are two types of labels in WHMIS 2015. The supplier label is affixed to the hazardous product by the supplier prior to the product arriving at the workplace. The workplace label is affixed to the hazardous product if the original supplier label falls off, or if a worker decants the product into a new container.

See the poster by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety to review the required content of a supplier label and a workplace label. In addition, below you will find a WHMIS label activity you can complete to assist with your understanding of hazardous product labels.

## Workplace Label Drag the Words Activity



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=221#h5p-7>

Pictograms are graphics that help the worker to instantly recognize the type of hazardous product they are working with and the immediate hazard, such as a corrosive material. Pictograms can be found on the safety data sheet, or on the supplier label attached to the hazardous product.

WHMIS 2015 consists of 10 pictograms. Review the pictogram poster from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety as it highlights all 10 pictograms every worker needs to be familiar with.

### Signal Words

Every label is to contain a Signal Word.

- “Danger ” and “Warning” are the two signal words used to emphasize hazards.
- The appropriate signal word, “Warning” or “Danger”, is determined based on the hazard classification of the product.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Health Canada. (2016, June 29). *Information Elements Required on a WHMIS 2015 Label*. Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/occupational-health-safety/workplace-hazardous-materials-information-system/whmis-2015/labelling-chemicals-workplace-chemicals/new-hazardous-products-regulations-requirements/information-elements-required-whmis-2015-label-health-canada.html>

## Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

The second element of WHMIS 2015 focuses on Safety Data Sheets. Before a supplier ships a hazardous product to a workplace, they are responsible for attaching a Safety Data Sheet. Once received by the workplace, the employer must make the new data sheet available to all workers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in an accessible area. This might include a hard copy of the data sheet in a binder and/or an electronic copy of the data sheet on an accessible computer.

Each safety data sheet consists of 16 sections, and in Canada, the safety data sheet must be available to workers in both English and French. Review the handout from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety which details the 16 sections of the safety data sheet.

## Education and Training



Photo by [rawpixel.com](https://www.rawpixel.com), CCO

The third element of WHMIS 2015 is education and training. Whether it is an existing employee or a new hire, everyone must have WHMIS 2015 training. Equally important is the training record. Every employer must

ensure they can quickly and easily access training records for all safety training programs, including WHMIS 2015. These records may be required by a court, a government agency, workers compensation, an inspector, or the joint health and safety committee to name a few.

During the WHMIS 2015 training session, it is important to instruct workers on the location of the Safety Data Sheets (SDS), and how to read the data sheet as it contains important first aid, usage and storage instructions. In addition, workers need to know how to read a workplace and a supplier label. Should an employee decant a hazardous product from a labelled container into a new container, the individual must immediately advise their supervisor so a workplace label can be created and attached to the new container. Lastly, every worker must understand the WHMIS 2015 pictograms so they can recognize the type of risk they are handling.



## 3.4 ROUTES OF ENTRY

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Workers may not think about the ways in which a hazardous product could enter their body. There are four routes of entry: inhalation, ingestion, absorption and injection. Review the information provided by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) on the 4 routes of entry.

### How Chemicals Enter The Body



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=223#h5p-8>*

## 3.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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In WHMIS 2015, the supplier, the employer and the employee each have specific roles and responsibilities that support keeping workers safe while handling a hazardous product. Let's review each role individually as it is meant to support the Internal Responsibility System.

### The Supplier

The supplier is responsible for correctly categorizing the product they supply to the customer, and if it is found to be a hazardous material, the supplier must attach a supplier label to the product and provide the customer with a Safety Data Sheet (SDS).

### The Employer

As with most safety legislation, the employer has specific requirements under WHMIS 2015. If a hazardous product is used in the workplace, the employer is required to:

- Educate and train workers on the hazards and safe use of products.
- Ensure that hazardous products are properly labelled.
- Prepare workplace labels, as needed.
- Prepare SDSs, as necessary (e.g., if an employer manufactures a hazardous product that is used on-site).
- Provide access to up-to-date SDSs to workers.
- Ensure appropriate control measures are in place to protect the health and safety of workers.<sup>1</sup>

### The Employee

As workers are part of the Internal Responsibility System (IRS), they have responsibilities under WHMIS 2015. Some of the workers responsibilities include participating in training sessions, wearing the provided

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1. Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. OSH Answers Fact Sheets: WHMIS 2015 - General. [https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/whmis\\_ghs/general.html](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/whmis_ghs/general.html)

personal protective equipment when working with hazardous products and reporting any containers that are missing labels to their supervisor.

## 3.6 TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS GOODS

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Photo by Decaseconds, CC BY-NC 2.0

While WHMIS 2015 addresses the handling of hazardous products in the workplace, it does not cover the transportation of dangerous goods. Specific legislation, known as the *Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act* is designed to address the movement of dangerous goods from one location to another. As stated by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), “The purpose of the Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) Act and Regulations is to promote public safety when dangerous goods are being handled, offered for transport or transported by road, rail, air, or water (marine).”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. OSH Answers Fact Sheets: Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) - Overview.  
[https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/legisl/tdg/tdg\\_overview.html#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20purpose%20of,%2C%20or%20water%20\(marine\)](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/legisl/tdg/tdg_overview.html#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20purpose%20of,%2C%20or%20water%20(marine))

## 3.7 SUMMARY

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### Summary

If an employer is to ensure an employee's "right to know" as describe in occupational health and safety legislation, WHMIS 2015 knowledge is an important part of that responsibility. An employee must be informed of the hazardous products they are working with, how to handle them, the PPE to be worn around them, how to store them, and the first aid to be administered in case of a workplace incident. WHMIS 2015 must be a part of every new employee onboarding session and part of every employee's ongoing safety training.



### Check Your Knowledge





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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=230#h5p-9>

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## Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between a workplace label and a supplier label?
2. Explain the three elements that make up WHMIS 2015.
3. What are the four routes of entry for a hazardous product to enter your body?
4. What is the responsibility of the employer and the employee under WHMIS 2015?
5. What does GHS stand for and why did Canada update their WHMIS legislation to include GHS?

## Exercise

1. Imagine you have 3 new hires starting work next week. Create an outline for your new hire safety orientation training session that includes everything a new worker needs to know about WHMIS 2015.







# CHAPTER 4: HAZARD RECOGNITION, ASSESSMENT, AND CONTROL

## Chapter Outline

- 4.0 Learning Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction to Hazard Recognition, Assessment and Control
- 4.2 The Business Case for Hazard Recognition, Assessment and Control
- 4.3 Hazard Recognition
- 4.4 Hazard Assessment
- 4.5 Hazard Control
- 4.6 Summary



## 4.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

1. Explain how to identify a workplace hazard.
2. List hazard assessment techniques.
3. Explain how to control hazards at the source-path-employee.

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION TO HAZARD RECOGNITION, ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL

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The key to preventing workplace injuries and fatalities is to identify hazards and control them, otherwise known as **Hazard Recognition, Assessment and Control (HRAC)**. This chapter examines how workers and employers identify, prioritize, and control workplace hazards. A workplace hazard is anything that might harm, damage, or adversely affect any person or thing under certain conditions at work. It can be an object, process, context, person, or set of circumstances which has the potential to create injury or ill health. While this definition may seem vague, it is intentionally vague in order to ensure that anything that could potentially harm a worker is included.

**Hazard recognition** (which is sometimes called hazard identification) is the systematic task of identifying all hazards present, or potentially present, in a workplace. It is the first step of any HRAC process. The second step is **hazard assessment** (which is sometimes called hazard analysis). In a hazard assessment, workers and employers determine which of the hazards needs to be addressed most urgently. Finally, the **hazard control** process sees preventive and corrective measures implemented to eliminate or mitigate the effect of the hazard(s). Let's review a mobile workplace incident to see how hazard recognition, assessment and control measures may have prevented such a tragedy.

### Story: Interlake Paving in Stony Mountain

On July 25, 2008, 15-year-old Andrew James was working as a labourer for Interlake Paving in Stony Mountain, Manitoba. Interlake, a small company owned by Gerald Shepell, had been contracted to pave a parking lot. James was standing on the box of a semi-trailer, scooping out asphalt with a shovel. The trailer gate unexpectedly swung open, shaking the truck. James lost his footing and fell into the asphalt in the trailer, which quickly poured out through the trailer gate onto the ground, burying him. James died almost immediately from the intense heat of the asphalt.

Shepell tried to dig James out, sustaining severe burns to his own hands, arms, feet, and legs.<sup>1</sup> Shepell later pled guilty to breaches of the *Workplace Safety and Health Act* and the *Employment Standards Code* (James was under-age) and was fined \$34,000.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of Andrew James, the process of hazard recognition, assessment and control would have identified the risks posed by the trailer's inadequately latched gate, the unsafe unloading practices, the absence of an emergency plan, and other issues. It might also have raised questions about the adequacy of the training provided to James, the legality of his employment, and the OHS complexity of mobile workplaces—workplaces where the hazards are ever-changing.

The core purpose of HRAC is to methodically identify and control workplace hazards. Some hazards are easier to identify than others. For example, it is easy to see that an extension cord lying across a busy hallway may cause someone to trip. It is more difficult to determine if a cleaning agent is toxic or if a machine is producing too much noise. Even more challenging is identifying factors that are increasing stress among workers or are the precursors of harassment. Similarly, some hazards are also easier to control than others. Eliminating the hazard posed by the extension cord is a quick and easy fix. Other hazards may be much more expensive to control or may reflect a core aspect of the production process. Some controls may be complex, requiring multi-faceted solutions. Further complicating the HRAC process are the conflicting interests between workers and employers around hazards. Employers and workers might disagree over what constitutes a hazard, how serious the hazard is, and what the most appropriate control should be.

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1. James, R. (2011). 15-year-old Andrew James loved his dream job. *Threads of Life Newsletter*, 9(4), 3.

2. McIntyre, M. (2010, November 30). Asphalt firm fined \$34K in teen's death. *Winnipeg Free Press*, A7.

## 4.2 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR HAZARD RECOGNITION, ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL

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Hazard recognition or identification is perhaps that most important function of an employer, a safety program, a health and safety representative/committee. Let's review the business case for making hazard recognition a key activity at work.

**Reduce Risk.** The best way to reduce the number of workplace incidents is to avoid the incidents completely. Get ahead of the hazards, be proactive, identify hazards, assess risk and implement the controls necessary to minimize or eliminate the risk. An example, if the employer identifies low-lighting in the parking lot, have the lighting fixed, updated, replaced to reduce the chance of a workplace incident in the parking lot such as a slip and fall or a theft. The goal of the hazard recognition activity is to eliminate or reduce the risk of future incidents.

**Financial.** The investment in hazard recognition is low compared to the cost of a workplace incident. Employees that will assist with hazard recognition are already on the payroll. The employer needs to task employees to complete a thorough review of the workplace. Don't forget meeting rooms, washrooms, eating areas, storage cabinets and parking lots. The employer may choose to hire a third-party company to assist or lead the hazard recognition activity. Either way, the cost of these pro-active activities is less than the cost of a workplace incident.

**Participation.** In some jurisdictions, the legal system talks about the "rights of the worker" which includes the right to know and the right to participate. There is no easier way to provide workers with the right to participate than to involve them in the identification of workplace hazards. An example, strike a small committee consisting of members of the health and safety committee and employees that work in the maintenance area to perform a walk through of the maintenance area to identify hazards that others may not see.

**Training.** Once an employer identifies workplace hazards, it is easy to establish a safety training program. An example, a wheelchair manufacturer recognizes they cannot eliminate the use of sharp objects and metal in their work process. They implement a "sharps" training program that emphasizes the use of proper PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) such as gloves, to every employee and re-trains employees on the sharps safety program annually.

**Due Diligence.** At the center of each safety program is due diligence, or the act of doing everything possible to ensure the safety of individuals in the workplace. An example, employers should the appropriate safety signage is located throughout their workplace in languages that represent the diversity of their employees.

**Internal Responsibility System.** The IRS or Internal Responsibility System suggests everyone is responsible for safety. An example, at the monthly staff meeting, the leadership team encourages employees to report hazards in the workplace and reviews safety concerns identified in the past 30 days, as well as the actions taken to eliminate or minimize each hazard.

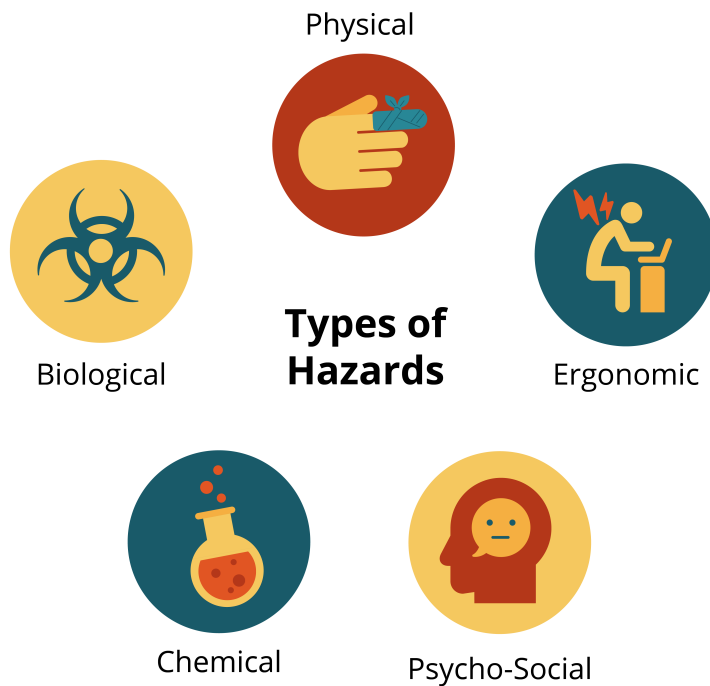
**Compliance and Record Keeping.** Should an employer need to provide evidence of their safety program and compliance with safety legislation, keeping hazard identification forms on file is a required practice. For example, should an organization receive unplanned visit from their government safety agency or ministry, the organization must be able to retrieve hazard identification records that demonstrate a pro-active approach to safety.

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## 4.3 HAZARD RECOGNITION

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“The five categories of hazards” by Alyssa Giles CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

The HRAC process starts with comprehensively identifying all the hazards in a workplace. The five categories of hazards include physical, ergonomic, chemical, biological and psycho-social. Let’s review each one in detail.

1. **Physical hazards** typically entail a transfer of energy from an object, such as a box falling off a shelf, which results in an injury. These are the most widely recognized hazards and include contact with equipment or other objects, working at heights, and slipping. This category also includes noise, vibration, temperature, electricity, atmospheric conditions, and radiation. All of these hazards can create harm in certain contexts.
2. **Ergonomic hazards** occur as a result of the interaction of work design and the human body, such as work-station design, tool shape, repetitive work, requirements to sit/stand for long periods, and manual handling of materials. Ergonomic hazards are often viewed as a subset of physical hazards. For the purposes of hazard assessment, it is useful to consider them separately because they are often overshadowed by more obvious physical hazards.
3. **Chemical hazards** cause harm to human tissue or interfere with normal physiological functioning. The



short-term effects of chemical hazards can include burns and disorientation. Longer-term effects of chemical hazards include cancer and lead poisoning. While some chemical substances are inherently harmful, ordinarily safe substances can be rendered hazardous by specific conditions. For example, oxygen is essential to human life, but in high doses can be harmful.

4. **Biological hazards** are organisms—such as bacteria, molds, fungi—or the products of organisms (e.g., tissue, blood, feces) that harm human health.
5. **Psycho-social hazards** are social, environmental, and psychological factors that can affect human health and safety. These hazards include harassment and violence but also incorporate issues of stress, mental fatigue, and mental illness.

Recognizing each type of hazard requires different methods and approaches. Analyzing each category of hazard separately allows us to consider the specific issues associated with the category. There are many ways to identify hazards in a workplace. There are many companies and consultants offering commercial hazard assessment packages to employers for a fee. The pre-prepared packages can help establish a framework upon which to build. There are also free resources available from reliable organizations, such as the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety which allow the hazard assessment process to be tailored to specific workplaces. A common feature of robust hazard recognition systems is that they examine the workplace from multiple perspectives to ensure that all hazards are identified.

It is useful to start the hazard assessment process by considering the nature of the work and workplace. The context of work affects the type of hazards in the workplace. For example, recognizing that work takes place at a remote workplace—such as a tree-planting operation or oil-field drilling site—raises issues of emergency response times, travel hazards, and working alone. Similarly, if workers are hired on a part-time or temporary basis, this may affect communication and training. Vulnerable workers—such as newcomers to Canada or youths—may be reluctant to identify hazards for fear of losing their jobs. These examples demonstrate that hazards do not merely reside in the task of working but also in the wider context of the employment relationship. One of the common omissions in hazard recognition is ignoring the underlying factors that lead to the creation of hazards. A narrower scope of recognition fits the employer's interests in limiting safety to proximate causes but it can undermine the effectiveness of the HRAC process.

## Hazard Identification Techniques

There are a variety of hazard-identification techniques, and these are often used in combination to create a fuller picture of a workplace's hazards:

- **Inspecting the workplace:** Physically observing the workplace and how work is performed within it is a powerful step in identifying hazards. The inspection should not be limited to considering physical objects, such as machines, tools, equipment, and structures, but should also include observing processes,

systems, and work procedures.

- Talking with workers: Passive observation can miss many important aspects of how work is performed. Getting the perspective of the people conducting the work will reveal other insights. This can be done informally through discussions or through more formal means such as surveys or interviews.
- Job inventory: Acquiring job descriptions and specifications can also reveal hazards. Mapping out the flow of work to create a task analysis allows for a systematic examination of how a job is supposed to be conducted. It is important to compare this data with worker interviews to identify instances where work practices differ from formal procedures.
- Records and data: Reviewing records of previous workplace incidents, safety reports, and other documentation can yield useful information about the hazards in a workplace.
- Measuring and testing: Sometimes, to discover if something is a hazard, you will need to measure or test it. This is particularly true for noise, chemical hazards, and biological hazards.
- Research: Knowing something is present in the workplace may be insufficient to determine if it is a hazard. You may need to conduct research on a substance, material, design, or environment to assess its potential for harm.

The hazard identification process must be carefully documented. Hazard identification forms should break the identified hazards into their main types as well as by work area, job, or process performed. There are many generic forms available online. It will be necessary to adapt these to reflect the nature of the work and the workforce.

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## 4.4 HAZARD ASSESSMENT

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Once hazards have been identified, it is necessary to prioritize which hazards will be controlled first. Much like hazard recognition, hazard assessment is not just a technical practice. Through prioritizing, certain hazards will be brought to the forefront, and will therefore be more likely to be controlled, while others will be downgraded and likely receive little or no attention. It is important to be mindful of who benefits and who is harmed by the prioritization decisions.

Risk assessment is a common tool used by those determining the priorities in hazard assessment. **Risk** is the likelihood that a hazard will result in injury or ill health. A **risk assessment** quantifies the likelihood of injury or ill health by assessing the probability, consequences, and exposure posed by the hazards:

- **Probability** is the likelihood that the hazard will result in an incident.
- **Consequences** refers to the severity of injury or ill health that will result from an incident.
- **Exposure** refers to how often or regularly workers come in contact with the hazard.

### Simplified Risk Assessment Tool

This is an example of a simplified tool for assessing the probability, consequences, and exposure associated with a hazard. Assessors use the description (e.g., rare, possible, probable, or likely). Each descriptor is then assigned a numerical value (e.g., 1, 2, 3, or 4).

---

**Probability:** Likelihood hazard will result in an incident.

☐

Rare (1)

☐

Possible (2)

☐

Probable (3)

☐

Likely (4)

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**Consequences:** Severity of injury/ill health caused by the incident.

☐

Negligible (1)

☐

Marginal (2)

☐

Significant (3)

☐

Catastrophic (4)

**Exposure:** Frequency workers contact the hazard.

☐

Rare (1)

☐

Occasional (2)

☐

Frequent (3)

☐

Continuous (4)

Once the probability, consequences, and exposure of a hazard have been quantified, they can be inputted into a mathematical formula to quantify the risk:

$$\text{risk} = \text{probability} \times \text{consequences} \times \text{exposure}$$

The greater the final number, the greater the risk posed by the hazard. Quantifying risk allows us to compare the relative risk of several hazards. For example, workers in a gas station face all manner of hazards, including slippery surfaces, gasoline fumes, and the potential for robbery. Without looking at the assessment below, which of these three hazards should the employer control first? Most people tend to say robbery. Yet quantifying the risks suggests that robbery poses the least risk of the three hazards:

1. Slippery surfaces: Possible (2) × Significant (3) × Frequent (3) = 18
2. Exposure to gasoline fumes: Possible (2) × Significant (3) × Continuous (4) = 24
3. Robbery of cash on premises: Rare (1) × Catastrophic (4) × Continuous (4) = 16

Risk assessment tools allow the assessor to compare hazards, either overall or on a factor-by-factor basis, to identify which hazards should have the highest priority for control. It may be important, for example, to note that robbery poses the least risk of the three hazards but has the highest level of consequence and is a hazard to which workers are continuously exposed. These features may influence the type of control that is appropriate.

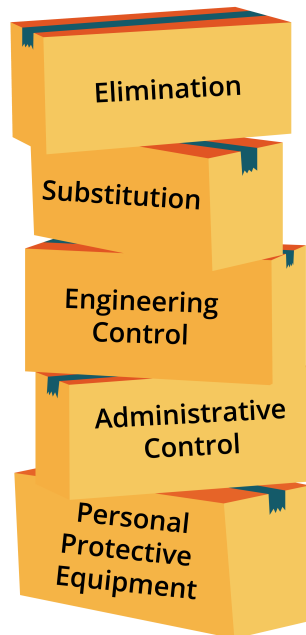
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## 4.5 HAZARD CONTROL

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### Hierarchy of Controls



“The hierarchy of controls” by Alyssa Giles CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

The final step in the HRAC process is to determine and implement the most appropriate control for each hazard. Hazard control is a regulatory requirement in every Canadian jurisdiction and entails implementing measures to eliminate or reduce the potential of a hazard causing an incident. Employers must exercise due diligence in the HRAC process in order to avoid prosecution for any workplace injuries under OHS law. Some forms of hazard control are more effective than others, and, consequently, a hierarchy of controls (with five levels) has been established:

- **Elimination** removes the hazard from the worksite. For example, relocating work performed at a height to ground level eliminates the risk of falling. This control is most easily implemented at the design stage, thereby preventing the hazard from entering the workplace.
- **Substitution** entails replacing something that produces a hazard with something that does not. For example, we might replace chemical-based cleaning solvents with plant oil-based solvents. Substitution is similar to elimination but is less effective because the new object or process may introduce different hazards or fail to completely remove the original hazard.

- **Engineering controls** are modifications to the workplace, equipment, materials, or work processes that reduce workers' exposure to hazards. For example, installing guards on machinery, building guard rails, installing ventilation systems, or purchasing ergonomically designed workstations all isolate workers from hazards, but they do not eliminate the hazard. These controls can be incomplete, become inoperative due to lack of maintenance, or be overridden and therefore are less effective than elimination or substitution.
- **Administrative controls** are changes to work process, policies, training, or rules designed to reduce exposure to hazards. For example, policies restricting the time workers spend in contact with a chemical hazard, "no-go" zones that restrict workers' movements in certain locations, mandatory training sessions, permit systems to control access to equipment or spaces, changes to schedules to prevent excessive shift work, or working-alone procedures that require regular check-in are all administrative controls. Administrative controls do not actually control a hazard. Rather, they attempt (via rules and processes) to limit workers' exposure to the hazard.
- **Personal protective equipment(PPE)** is equipment worn by workers that is designed to protect them should they come into contact with a hazard. For example, helmets, goggles, gloves, and fall protection systems are forms of PPE. PPE is considered the least effective control because it does not control the hazard or restrict workers' contact with the hazard and is heavily reliant upon human action for its effectiveness. PPE places the burden of implementation on the worker. Workers may choose not to wear or be pressured into not wearing the PPE.

Multiple controls can be combined to provide a higher degree of control. Different levels of control may be appropriate at different times. For example, when first addressing a hazard it may be necessary to use PPE until a more permanent engineering control can be implemented. It is important to not unduly delay the implementation of the (likely more effective) engineering control. Employers have flexibility in how they control hazards, but that flexibility should not be interpreted as permission to disregard their due-diligence obligation to implement the most effective hazard control.

## Types of Control



“Types of controls” by Alyssa Giles CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

A more worker-centered approach is to consider the **location of the control**. In this approach, the focus is on where and when the hazard is controlled in the context of where the worker is in the production process. In this approach, hazards can be controlled at three locations:

- **Control at the source** addresses the hazard where it first occurs. This type of control prevents the hazard from entering the workplace via elimination, substitution, or some types of engineering controls.
- **Control along the path** addresses the hazard at some point between its source and when workers encounter the hazard (i.e., it prevents the hazard from reaching the worker). Some types of engineering controls (e.g., machine guards, local ventilation) control the hazard along the path.
- **Control at the worker** implements controls over the hazard only after it reaches the worker. These controls are designed to prevent or reduce the consequences of the hazard, rather than control the hazard itself. PPE and administrative controls are both examples of control at the worker because they both require that the burden of the control be placed almost exclusively upon the worker.

Examining controls by considering their location relative to the worker changes how we assess whether a control is effective by emphasizing the burden placed on workers with each control option. Note how the effectiveness of the control increases as the control moves closer to the source of the hazard.

The location approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how different groups of workers can be differentially affected by a hazard. When attention is turned to the worker, rather than the hazard, differences



between workers become more evident. For example, administrative controls are less effective for new workers, because they are less familiar with the rules and have not yet developed the skills required to work safely. Looking at how those administrative controls are located relative to the worker makes it more likely that their shortcomings for new workers will be identified. Similarly, the location approach draws more attention to the consequence of control failure and emphasizes the harm that can occur to workers when the system fails.

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## 4.6 SUMMARY

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### Summary

Fifteen-year-old Andrew James died under a pile of hot asphalt because his employer failed to identify, recognize, and control workplace hazards. While the HRAC process doesn't guarantee that workers will never be injured on the job, it can dramatically reduce the incidence of workplace injuries and fatalities. Following the HRAC process should have changed the work processes James's employer used and, in turn, would likely have saved James's life despite the challenges posed by the mobile nature of the worksite.

HRAC is not immune from the conflicts inherent in the employment relationship. Employers and workers each have vested interests in the outcomes of an HRAC process. Collaboration is key to the hazard recognition, assessment and control process. Stakeholders from various areas of the business need to be included in the hazard identification, assessment and control process in order to eliminate or reduce workplace incidents.



## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=64#h5p-2>*

*Image Credit: Photo by Skitterphoto is licensed under Pixabay License*

## Discussion Questions

1. What are the main steps in the HRAC process? What is the underlying goal of HRAC?
2. Why is it necessary to prioritize hazards? What are the potential concerns about applying a risk analysis perspective?
3. How would employers and workers perceive the relative merits of PPE versus engineering controls?
4. How might looking at the location of hazard control affect the decisions made about which

control is most appropriate?

5. What challenges arise in hazard control for telecommuters?

## Exercises

1. Reread the case that opens this chapter and write 150-word answers to the following questions. Be sure to save your answers as we will return to this vignette later in the book.
  - What hazards were present at the worksite?
  - How would you prioritize the identified hazards?
  - What controls should have been implemented?

2. Write two to three paragraphs providing your opinion on the following statement:

*“Some accidents are unavoidable. There is only so much we can do to control hazard.”*

# CHAPTER 5: INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

## Chapter Outline

- 5.0 Learning Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction to Incident Investigations
- 5.2 The Business Case for Incident Investigations
- 5.3 Who Investigates Workplace Incidents?
- 5.4 The Incident Investigation Toolkit
- 5.5 Essential Incident Investigation Steps
- 5.6 Summary



## 5.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

1. List the steps in an incident investigation.
2. Articulate incident investigation reporting requirements.
3. Identify forms to complete during and after an incident investigation.
4. List the materials needed for an incident investigation toolkit.

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION TO INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

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Employers are responsible for investigating workplace incidents. Before the formal incident investigation begins, the employer needs to take the necessary steps to meet both internal and external reporting requirements.

### Pre-Investigation

- Has the employer provided the injured parties with the necessary level of first aid and called 9-1-1 if required? Don't forget that witnesses may need support as well.
- Has the employer notified internal stakeholders of the recent incident? These stakeholders may include human resources, health and safety representatives or committee members, union representatives, and the leadership team.
- Has the employer notified the external stakeholders of the recent incident? These stakeholders may include family members of the injured parties, third party contractors/employers, temporary agencies, legal counsel, head-office personnel, law enforcement, workers compensation and necessary government agencies.

### Workers Compensation

Regardless of an employer's location, there are reporting requirements following a known workplace injury or illness. In Ontario, for example, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) requires an employer to submit a Form 7 within three days of being notified of an individual's work related illness or injury. Review the "Injured at Work" brochure to become familiar with the injured worker reporting expectations of WSIB.

#### Additional Resources

Injured at Work? A Guide to Reporting Injured Workers and Employers



## Government Agencies

When preparing the emergency contact sheet at work, employers need to ensure they include information relating to government agencies that need to be contacted in the event of a workplace incident or death. In Ontario, for example, employers must submit a written report to the Ministry of Labour (MOL) within 48 hours of a critical injury. Refer to the Ministry of Labour's website to become familiar with their definition of a critical injury.

**Incident investigations** are intended to uncover all of the key facts about how and why an incident occurred so that action can be taken to prevent it happening again. Not conducting the investigation in a careful and thorough manner can undermine the results and create the risk of a repeat incident. Any incident where significant injury occurs should be thoroughly investigated, but there is value in investigating minor injury and near miss events as well, as they can reveal important insights that might prevent a future injury. Let's look at the incident at a Canadian sawmill to learn more about the impact of workplace incidents.

### Story: Incident at a Canadian Sawmill

On January 20, 2012, a massive explosion at the Babine sawmill in Burns Lake in northern British Columbia killed two workers and injured 20 others. The explosion, powerful enough to blow off the mill's roof and send a giant fireball into the sky, was caused by a buildup of wood dust in the mill's atmosphere. Ryan Clay, a worker at the mill, said the dust had built up to dangerous levels. "You couldn't see across the mill, that's how bad the dust levels were. Even with the fans going full blast, the dust was just horrendous."<sup>1</sup> It was the largest sawmill explosion in BC history until the Lakeland sawmill in Prince George exploded three months later.

In incidents this serious, the investigation becomes the responsibility of the provincial government, in this case WorkSafeBC. It took 19 days for WorkSafe investigators to gain access to the site, first because of RCMP investigations of criminal acts and then because of unsafe conditions. The investigation was finally completed on November 29, 2012, with a recommendation to lay charges against the employer under BC's health and safety legislation. Nevertheless, the Criminal Justice

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1. Adams, C., & Rowney, M. (2014, October 8). What was behind the deadly B.C. sawmills explosions? *Global News*. <http://globalnews.ca/news/1604346/16x9-investigation-what-was-behind-the-deadly-b-c-sawmills-explosions/>

Branch (which makes all final decisions about prosecutions) decided it could not proceed with charges due to significant flaws in the investigation procedure. A review of the investigation found it had failed to collect all pertinent information, interview certain key witnesses, and follow due process in interviews with managers. It also came to light that WorkSafe inspectors had been to the mill a month before the incident and, while they issued citations for violation of safety rules, they did not highlight a risk of explosion from the wood dust.<sup>2</sup>

Government investigations serve a different purpose than incident investigations conducted by employers, as government investigators have a legal mandate to determine if penalties under the Act are warranted. Nevertheless, the failures of the Babine investigation show what can go wrong if an investigation is not conducted properly. This chapter will explain how to conduct an incident investigation.

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2. Dyble, J. (2014). *Babine Explosion Investigation: Fact Pattern and Recommendations*. Government of British Columbia.

## 5.2 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

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Some employers may not realize the benefits of conducting a thorough incident investigation. The Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety suggests the top reasons for conducting incident investigations include:

- Most importantly, to find out the cause of incidents and to prevent similar incidents in the future
- To fulfill any legal requirements
- To determine the cost of an incident
- To determine compliance with applicable regulations (e.g., occupational health and safety, criminal, etc.)
- To process workers' compensation claims
- Root cause discovery and the discovery of contributing factors is a significant reason for conducting an incident investigation. Once an employer identifies the root cause and contributing factors, it may result in training or re-training individuals, policy change, signage, PPE just to name a few. An employee cannot work towards avoiding or minimizing the risk of a similar incident without the identification of the root cause and contributing factors.
- Meeting legal expectations and compliance is essential for every employer. A workplace incident may involve government workplace inspectors and, in some instances, law enforcement.
- Understanding both the direct and indirect costs of a workplace incident allow an organization to justify additional safety measures that will eliminate or reduce these financial costs going forward.
- Employers must ensure they have gathered the correct information needed to accurately report workplace incidents to Workers Compensation in a timely manner.<sup>1</sup>

**REMINDER.** Incident investigation is not limited to employees of the company. Should a visitor (family member, guests, co-workers from other locations), delivery person, contractor, temporary worker, contract employee, or customer be injured at the employer's workplace, the

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1. Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. (n.d.). OSH Answers Fact Sheets: Incident Investigation. <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/investig.html>

employer needs to provide the appropriate level of first aid and medical attention prior to the formal incident investigation.

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## 5.3 WHO INVESTIGATES WORKPLACE INCIDENTS?

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Who investigates an incident is a particularly important question. The lead investigator should be someone with investigative experience, knowledge of the work and work processes, and an understanding of how incidents are caused. Many workplaces will task a senior health and safety official or senior manager with managing incident investigations. No one should investigate an incident alone, and other people should be selected to assist, to provide different perspectives, and to divide the workload. Other possible participants should include joint health and safety committee members or some other worker representative, people linked to the work that had been performed, and, in most cases, the direct supervisor of the work (although there are cases when inclusion of the supervisor may not be appropriate). Union agreements often stipulate that a union steward or representative participate in incident investigations. Anyone who is identified as an investigator should be properly trained beforehand.

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## 5.4 THE INCIDENT INVESTIGATION TOOLKIT

Creation of an **investigation kit** is also an important pre-incident task. An incident investigation kit is a pre-assembled box or tote containing the tools, forms, and material needed in an investigation. It is recommended the employer place a piece of sealing or tamper proof tape around the investigation kit. This sealing tape can easily be cut open and it allows the employer to quickly identify when the kit has been used in order to restock any missing items. Investigators can then act quickly by grabbing the kit and beginning their work. The following graphic illustrates some of the materials that should be included in an employer's investigation kit.



### Accident Investigator Toolkit

"Accident Investigator Toolkit" by Alyssa Giles, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

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<b>Flashlight</b>	<b>Pens</b>	<b>Paper</b>
<b>Clipboard</b>	<b>Measuring Tape</b>	<b>Calculator</b>
<b>Camera</b>	<b>Laptop (if resources allow)</b>	<b>Caution tape</b>
<b>Blank incident investigation forms</b>	<b>Blank witness statement forms</b>	<b>Emergency contact list</b>
<b>Hazardous Materials disposal bag</b>	<b>Gloves</b>	<b>Masks</b>

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### Don't forget to:

- (1) Train everyone so they know where to find the incident investigation kit.
- (2) Add the investigation kit to the safety checklist so the employer knows the kit is in the designated location and to do a visual check to see if it has been opened.
- (3) Replace any necessary items once the incident investigation kit has been opened.

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## 5.5 ESSENTIAL INCIDENT INVESTIGATION STEPS

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A successful incident investigation begins with a consistent process designed to uncover what happened so future incidents can be avoided. Investigations need to be performed as soon after the incident as possible and be completed as quickly as possible. Witnesses' recall may deteriorate over time and important evidence may disappear if there is a delay. The sooner an investigation is completed, the sooner changes can be made to make the worksite safer. Employers may also be required to report incidents and investigation results within a specified time period.

### Step 1. Scene Security

Securing the scene entails two actions. First, any uncontrolled hazard (e.g., leaking gas) needs to be eliminated to ensure the safety of the investigators and others. Second, the scene needs to be protected so that no evidence can be destroyed or altered (intentionally or unintentionally) until the completion of the investigation. Protection normally includes restricting access to the scene. In some circumstances, it may also require protecting the scene from inclement weather.

## Step 2. Identify and Interview Witnesses

Investigators normally prioritize interviewing witnesses, including the injured worker(s). Witnesses should be interviewed as soon as possible after the incident while their memories are fresh and uncontaminated by discussing the event with others. A few principles should be followed in interviewing to ensure accurate information and the well-being of the witness:

- Ensure the witness is physically and emotionally well. Witnessing an incident can traumatize people and assistance, such as counselling, may be necessary before an interview takes place.
- Be clear about the purpose of the interview and the investigation, highlighting that it is not about laying blame.
- Interview witnesses separately and in a neutral location. A worker representative should be provided if the witness requests it or if the union agreement requires it.
- Allow witnesses to describe what happened in their own words. Do not lead or put words in their mouths.
- Ask only questions that elicit more information or clarify answers. Do not ask the witness “why” they think something happened.
- Be an active listener. Ensure the investigator has correctly heard them by repeating or summarizing what they said.
- Record the interview in some fashion—either with detailed notes or (if appropriate) audio recording.
- Be aware of power relations. Interviews can be distorted by unrecognized power imbalances, such as the interviewer being the supervisor of the worker, or the worker who was injured being under the witness’s supervision. These dynamics can be a barrier to accurate reporting of the incident.

## Step 3. Complete the Investigation

The next step in an investigation is to gather evidence. There are a number of techniques for collecting the relevant information. They will be used in various combinations depending on the nature of the incident and the workplace. Gathering might begin with a **walk-through**, which is an inspection of the incident scene to get an overall picture of the environment. A walk-through may also clarify which additional evidence-gathering techniques are appropriate. These further techniques should include recording the scene through photos or video or drawings (if photos or video are not practical) to create a visual record of the scene.

Another investigative technique is a **re-enactment** of the incident, which is a simulation designed to recreate the circumstances that led to the incident. A re-enactment might entail asking witnesses to act out the events that took place before the incident, or re-establishing a set of conditions relevant to what occurred. The value of the re-enactment is that it can identify how circumstances, events, or behaviours interacted to cause the incident. These interactions can be difficult to identify solely through witness testimony because of

the limited perspective any one witness will have on an incident. Other investigative techniques might include inspecting machinery and tools, checking logs and records, collecting debris, materials and other relevant items, or conducting air sampling or noise testing. Investigators should also gather any relevant company policies, government regulations, or operator's manuals and guides.

## Step 4. Root Cause Analysis

Once all the information has been gathered, the next step is to analyze the data to determine the causes. This is a crucial step, and is often where investigations go wrong. The immediate reasons for the incident will be the first to appear. These causes will usually be worker error or some factor that may appear to be uncontrollable. Stopping the investigation at this point will lead to an incomplete analysis and the investigation will likely fail at one of its key goals—preventing future incidents. Additional analysis of the data will reveal underlying reasons for (the “root cause” of) the incident. A simple way to think about probing data for root causes is to keep asking “why?” Asking why something happened allows the investigators to get past their initial understanding of the incident.

In an attempt to help investigators get to root cause, a variety of analysis models have been developed. The **domino theory** dates back to 1936 and remains popular due to its ease of illustration. It envisions cause as a series of five dominos lined up together.<sup>1</sup> Each domino represents factors reaching back from an incident. The first (closest) domino is labelled Injury, followed by Incident, Unsafe Acts and Conditions, Personal Defects (e.g., equipment failure, personal factors), and finally Background (e.g., lack of management control). The theory contends that injury results from failure at all five levels. If any of the failures does not happen (i.e., one of the dominoes is removed from the chain), an injury will not occur. For example, if a worker is taught to work safely, an injury might be prevented even though failures in background decisions still occurred.

A more recent revision to domino theory is the **Swiss cheese model**.<sup>2</sup> This model retains the five factors giving rise to injuries that are outlined in domino theory. Each of these dominoes is then given “holes” that represent various subfactors that influence whether an incident occurs or not, such as organizational influences, local working conditions, unsafe acts, and defences, barriers, and safeguards. In the Swiss cheese model, an incident requires that the holes in the dominoes line up—in other words, a failure must occur in each domino. This model emphasizes that injuries are the result of multiple failures. If one of the subfactors is functioning properly, then weakness in the other four may still not lead to an incident. For example, bad organizational culture (an organizational influence) around safety may not lead to injury if there are appropriate guards (a defence, barrier, or safeguard) to prevent injury. The domino theory and Swiss cheese

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1. Heinrich, H. (1936). *Industrial accident prevention*. McGraw-Hill.

2. Reason, J. (1990). *Human error*. Cambridge University Press.

models are popular because of their simplicity in articulating a core principle that an investigator must look beyond immediate actions and explore underlying factors that contributed to the incident.

## Step 5. Reporting and Recommendations

The next step in the investigation process is to write a formal report outlining the findings and making recommendations. In some respects this can be considered the most crucial phase, as a careful investigation is without value if the recommendations fail to improve the situation. The **incident report** will be the permanent record of the incident and its causes and thus should clearly outline what happened and why it happened. It may even have future legal ramifications, as its recommendations may be used by government inspectors to determine if an employer met the standard of due diligence in controlling hazards after the incident.

Incident reports can take different forms depending on context, organization, and situation. All incident reports should include the following elements:

- Who performed the investigation
- Details of the incident, including date, time, persons involved, outcomes
- Details of the investigation and how it was conducted, timelines, etc.
- An outline of the factors that led up to the incident
- Clear identification of the root causes of the incident
- Specific recommendations designed to prevent future incidents

In designing a report template, a report that requires investigators to answer open-ended questions is preferable to a report that provides a checklist of options. To elicit action, recommendations need to be specific and directed to the identified causes. Nevertheless, if they are too specific, they risk not addressing systemic issues adequately. The recommended action also needs to be within the control of the employer. This can be difficult when environmental conditions played an important role in the incident. For example, bad weather may have been a factor in an incident. While the employer cannot control weather, the employer can implement controls that neutralize the effect of weather on workers. There is also the issue of how to report on the role of human error in the incident. Should human error be identified during the incident investigation, it should be identified without assigning blame.

The investigator(s) should ensure all affected parties receive a copy of the investigation report, including involved workers, the joint committee (if applicable), and responsible managers. It is the responsibility of the employer to implement recommendations. Often employers will delay implementation, seek out other solutions, or respond that the recommendation is too expensive or not practicable. Lack of follow-through on recommendations is a reality of in practice and it can undermine both workplace safety and how carefully

investigators examine future incidents. An action plan should accompany the report in order to assign timelines and resources to implement the recommendations.

## Step 6. Follow up

The final step in the incident investigation process is follow up. During the reporting stage, specific recommendations were put forward which most often include corrective and preventative measures. The goal is to eliminate or minimize the risk of a similar incident happening in the future. One question to ask is “have the recommendations been implemented?” If the employer discovers the recommendations have not been fully implemented as yet, review the action plan to determine if the appropriate timelines and resources have been assigned to this phase, and revise if necessary.

Finally, the employer needs to determine if the recommendations are effective? As everyone in the workplace is part of the IRS (Internal Responsibility System), it is important to include stakeholders such as the health and safety representative or committee, the area supervisor and union representation (if applicable) to determine the effectiveness of the corrective and preventative measures.

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## 5.6 SUMMARY

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### Summary

All investigations have the task of preventing injury and ill health, meaning they should be conducted with care and precision. This chapter examined the key steps involved in an incident investigation. Every employer must ensure they have trained incident investigators and an incident investigation toolkit on site. There are action items that need to take place following a workplace incident, some to meet internal expectations and some to meet external expectations, such as government and legal requirements. An employer needs to know who to contact under which circumstances, when to contact them and which forms to complete. Every employer needs to be prepared to conduct a thorough and timely incident investigation in order to meet expectations and protect its people.



## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=176#h5p-3>*

*Image Credit: Photo by Skitterphoto is licensed under Pixabay License*

## Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to collect all the information before beginning the analysis step?
2. Why should investigations focus on root cause and what are some of the ways that investigators can lose sight of it?
3. How might accurately reporting the cause of an incident result in blaming workers for their own injury?

## Exercises

Read the following scenario describing a workplace incident:

Amy worked for Chris's Catering, a small catering company that specializes in special events.<sup>1</sup> On June 12, Amy was dispatched to work a small outdoor wedding taking place in a park overlooking the river. The size of the job called for two chefs in the kitchen (the husband and wife co-owners), one wait staff responsible for clearing plates after guests were finished, and two porters who would set up the serving tables and carry chafing dishes (hot metal pans for buffet-style serving) and other serving trays from the kitchen to the serving tables. Amy was assigned as a porter and was required to wear a short-sleeved black uniform with the company's logo.

The wedding was located outside a community hall. The kitchen was inside the hall. The buffet table was at the opposite end of the small park, about 100 metres away. It was a hot and sunny afternoon. The other designated porter, Andy, called in sick at the last minute, leaving Amy to do the job alone with occasional help from the wait staff. As the time of the reception neared, the chefs were running behind schedule. Amy began shuttling chafing dishes to the buffet table. The dishes weighed approximately 12 kg each when filled with food. Amy used dishcloths to protect her hands from the heat of the dishes. She delivered eight dishes to the table.

As Amy was about to place the ninth and final tray containing a hot minestrone soup, she took a sudden step backward, bumping into a guest behind her. The collision caused Amy to lose control of the dish, which spilled over her and the guest. It also caused Amy to fall into the buffet table. Amy suffered a severely sprained ankle, burns on her arms, and some bruising to her face and arms. The guest also experienced some minor burns.

Write 200-word answers to each of the following questions:

1. How would you conduct the investigation? What tools and techniques would you use and who would you interview?

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1. This story is fictionalized. Any resemblance to actual people or companies is purely coincidental.



2. How would you analyze and report the information you gathered?
3. Identify the potential causes of the incident, distinguishing between proximate and root causes.



# CHAPTER 6: DISABILITY MANAGEMENT AND RETURN TO WORK

## Chapter Outline

- 6.0 Learning Objectives
- 6.1 Disability Management
- 6.2 The Business Case for Disability Management
- 6.3 Disability Prevention
- 6.4 Accommodation
- 6.5 Return to Work
- 6.6 Summary



## 6.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

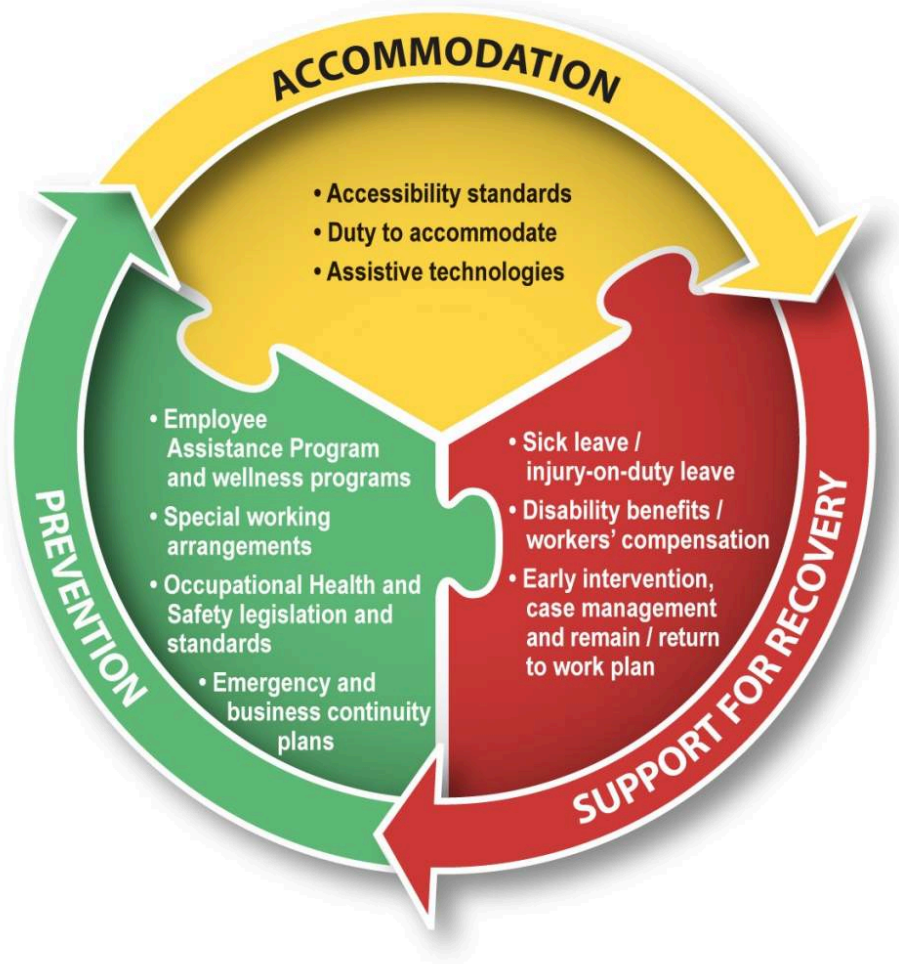
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### Learning Objectives

1. Explain the business case for disability management.
2. List disability prevention strategies.
3. Identify the key components of a disability management program.
4. Explain various return to work strategies.

## 6.1 DISABILITY MANAGEMENT

**Disability management** is a set of employer practices designed to prevent or reduce workplace disability and assist workers in recovering normal functioning as quickly as and to the maximum degree possible. In sections that follow, we'll examine each of the three interrelated aspects of disability management:



“Disability Management: Accommodation, Prevention and Support for Recovery”  
from the Government of Canada, reproduced for non-commercial purposes

<b>Prevention</b>	Employers may seek to prevent injuries and illnesses that give rise to disabilities through injury prevention efforts as well as employee assistance and wellness programs.
<b>Accommodation</b>	Workers who have disabilities may require accommodation. This may include assistive technologies and modifications to work, work processes, and the workplace.
<b>Recovery</b>	Some disabilities are temporary in nature. Sick leave, modified work, disability benefits (including workers' compensation), and return to work programs can assist workers during the period of time required for them to recover. <sup>1</sup>

Before discussing disability management, it is useful to consider what the term disability means. Disability is often discussed as a characteristic of a worker (i.e., the worker is disabled). While a worker may indeed have an impairment, it is important to remember that it is the workplace context that turns the impairment into a disability. See more information in the box below.

## Conflating impairment and disability

It is useful to be mindful of how we use the term disability. At a very basic level, **disability** means the condition of being unable to perform a function or task as a consequence of a physical or mental impairment. That definition seems pretty straightforward. In this case, being unable to perform a function is only meaningful if performing the function is an expectation of a situation. What this means is that the existence of **impairment** (i.e., a cognitive or physical difference) does not cause a disability. Rather, it is the nature of the tasks in the workplace that turn impairment into a disability.

For example, pretend that your sense of smell is very limited. Is that olfactory impairment a disability? If you were a gas fitter, it might well be considered a disability because being able to smell a gas leak is an expectation of the job (even though there are other ways to detect natural gas). In most other circumstances, few people would consider an impaired sense of smell a disability. Thus the work context turns the impairment into a disability. Impairments are, on their own, not necessarily troublesome, tragic, or disabling. Further, altering the context (e.g., modifying work) can eliminate the disability even though the impairment remains.

One of the ways disability and impairment are socially constructed is that we often associate

1. Government of Canada. (2011). Fundamentals of disability management. Ottawa: Author. <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/health-wellness-public-servants/disability-management/fundamentals.html>

them with traits that have some form of observable manifestation. It is important to remember that impairment and disability are not always visible or obvious. Much impairment is difficult to casually observe (e.g., diabetes or epilepsy). Cognitive and mental conditions can be particularly difficult to identify. Others can be cloaked through treatment (e.g., prostheses, medication). Society may overlook impairments that are less observable, and thus may be less likely to implement appropriate accommodations to address them.

It is also important to be mindful of the tendency to conflate illness and disability. Illness often entails discomfort, and we seek medical intervention to either resolve the underlying cause or treat the symptoms. Sometimes, illness can cause an impairment that, in specific workplace circumstances, creates a disability. Yet, in most cases, disability and impairment require neither medical supervision nor intervention. In this way, impairment and disability are not questions of health or ill health.<sup>2</sup>

Disability management is often said to minimize the cost of disability to employers.<sup>3</sup> These practices also ensure that employers meet their duty to accommodate. Human rights legislation requires employers to avoid discriminatory workplace practices. This chapter focuses specifically on employers' obligation to accommodate workers with temporary or permanent physical or mental injuries, regardless of whether the impairment was caused by a workplace injury.

Employers' **duty to accommodate** requires employers to alter work, work practices, or the workplace in order to allow workers with disabilities to perform meaningful work. The duty to accommodate requires employers to make any necessary efforts to accommodate the worker's disability-related needs up to the point of **undue hardship**. The threshold of undue hardship varies from workplace to workplace. To claim undue hardship, typically, an employer is required to demonstrate that an accommodation is economically unsustainable, interferes with a legitimate operational requirement, or poses a health-and-safety threat.<sup>4</sup> In these circumstances, an employer is still required to provide whatever accommodation is possible short of undue hardship.

2. Stone, S. (2008). Resisting an illness label: Disability, impairment and illness. In P. Moss & K. Teghtsoonian (Eds.), *Contesting illness: Processes and practice* (pp. 201–217). University of Toronto Press.

3. Tompa, E., de Oliveira, C., Dolinschi, R., & Irvin, E. (2008). A systematic review of disability management interventions with economic evaluations. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 18(1), 16–26.

4. Manitoba Human Rights Commission. (2010). Reasonable accommodation. <http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/v1/education-resources/resources/policies-pages/policies-g-2.html>



## **Additional Resources**

Why Have an Approach to Job Accommodation by Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

Undue Hardship – The Ontario Human Rights Commission

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## 6.2 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DISABILITY MANAGEMENT

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### Types of Risk



Financial



Legal



Corporate

“Risk associated with disability management” by Alyssa Giles, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Risk assessment is an important part of operations management. One risk to an organization includes the failure to develop and implement a disability management program. Three areas of risk associated with disability management include legal, corporate image and financial.

### Legal Compliance

It is important that an employer recognize and follow legislation surrounding disability management. For example, in Ontario, an employer is expected to comply with AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) legislation and the Ontario Human Rights Commission legislation. Both pieces of legislation provide helpful definitions of disability, clearly outline the ways in which individuals with disabilities are to be accommodated in the workplace and provide the employer with useful resources to assist with implementation.

## Organizational Reputation

Every organization wants to be known as a responsible corporate citizen. Should an employer develop a reputation for failing to support individuals that have suffered a workplace injury, illness or disability, the impact on the organization may be costly. With the ease of use and popularity of social media, it is easy for employees and former employees to share information about their employer, including disability management and return to work practices. From a morale standpoint, most would agree that a good employer takes care of their employees by introducing disability prevention strategies and return to work programs. Job candidates research potential employers online prior to applying for a job or attending a job interview. What will this potential employee find out about the employer's safety record and culture? Lastly, every organization needs to be concerned about their reputation within their industry as the competition for sales is fierce in a global economy.

## Financial Consideration

What is the cost to an organization if they fail to follow good disability management practices? There are direct costs such as the premium costs associated with Workers Compensation. In Ontario, an organization's WSIB (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) premiums are partially based on the number of lost time accident days an employer incurs. If an injury is deemed to be a lost time accident it typically means the employee is absent from work on the day(s) following their injury. Employers need to use their implement their disability management program to minimize their lost time incident rating. When an injured employee is off work, there are also indirect costs associated with these absences such as productivity issues and the cost of hiring and/or training an employee to cover for an injured employee. Other indirect costs to an employer may include the negative impact on morale and engagement when an employee is off work due to a workplace injury, illness or disease.

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## 6.3 DISABILITY PREVENTION

### Disability Prevention Strategies



Job Sharing



Job Design



Job Rotation



EAP  
(Employee  
Assistance Program)



Flexible  
Work Arrangements

“Disability Prevention Strategies” by Alyssa Giles CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

While all employers have legislative obligations to prevent injury (as outlined in Chapter 2), some employees also provide an **employee assistance program (EAP)** as part of their disability management program. These programs normally provide access to short-term psychological counselling to help employees to cope with personal problems. The underlying logic of EAPs is that personal issues can affect work performance and, if untreated, can sometimes become more profound.

EAPs are often one aspect of **workplace wellness programs**. Such programs are health promotion activities designed to help workers to improve their health and well-being. These programs often focus on specific issues (e.g., smoking cessation, weight loss, stress management). Again, the underlying logic of these programs is that healthier workers will be more productive workers. It is worth noting that many of these programs help workers to adapt to workplace hazards rather than seeking to remove the hazard by modifying the work. Stress management, for example, rarely seeks to eliminate the workplace causes of stress. Instead, it seeks to help the worker cope with that stress to maintain the worker’s productivity.

Some wellness initiatives that do actually modify the workplace are things like **flexible work arrangements**, such as **compressed workweeks**. In a compressed workweek, a worker puts in slightly longer

hours but fewer days per week. Some workplaces will also allow **job sharing**, wherein two workers share a single position with each worker working some portion of the full-time job. Another option is telecommuting, wherein workers perform work away from the office (e.g., at home). This option can allow workers to better balance otherwise conflicting work and home responsibilities.

Other wellness initiatives include job design and job rotation. In job design, department leaders work with the Human Resources department to review the makeup and expectations of a job to ensure the workload and physical requirements of the role are realistic and support good overall health. In job rotation, employers cross-train employees to rotate job coverage so no one person experiences an entire shift of heavy lifting, awkward positioning, or risk of repetitive strain injury. A different strategy for reducing the possibility of injury through interventions in workers' personal lives is the use of alcohol and drug testing in the workplace. Some employers feel this private behaviour outside of work can affect safety at work, and therefore take steps to identify workers whose alcohol or drug use may affect their work.

A **bona fide occupational requirement (BFOR)** is a rule necessary for the proper performance of a job, and such a rule can prevail even if it causes otherwise prohibited discrimination. For example, it is unlawful for an employer to refuse to hire a worker because the worker is blind. Yet, if an employer were hiring a delivery driver, requiring the worker to hold a valid driver's licence (which a blind worker cannot acquire) would be a bona fide occupational requirement. This requirement is permissible because holding a driver's licence is rationally connected to the job and reasonably necessary for the accomplishment of a legitimate work-related purpose.

Ontario suggests a three-part test to determine if drug and alcohol testing is a BFOR:

- The standard or test has been adopted for a purpose that is rationally connected to the performance of the job.
- The particular standard or test has been adopted in an honest and good faith belief that it was necessary to the fulfillment of that legitimate work-related purpose.
- The standard or test is reasonably necessary to accomplish that legitimate work-related purpose (i.e., it is impossible to accommodate individual employees sharing the characteristics of the claimant without imposing undue hardship upon the employer).<sup>1</sup>

This approach places significant restrictions on employer drug testing. For example, drug testing typically shows the presence of drug-related residue in a worker's system, rather than measuring the actual degree of worker impairment. Since a test that does not measure impairment cannot be rationally connected to job performance, such testing is not a BFOR. Alcohol testing after an incident, when an employer has cause to suspect impairment, or at random for workers in safety-sensitive positions, may be permissible because alcohol

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1. Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2016). *Policy on drug and alcohol testing 2016*, Open Government Licence - Ontario.  
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-drug-and-alcohol-testing/drug-and-alcohol-testing-basic-principles>

testing does measure impairment. It is important to be mindful that different rules may apply in different circumstances and jurisdictions.

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## 6.4 ACCOMMODATION

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There are many causes of disabilities, including workplace injuries. As noted above, all Canadian jurisdictions require employers to accommodate workers with disabilities to the point of undue hardship. Both workers and employers have roles to play in ensuring that a disability is accommodated. Employers do not have to implement the accommodation suggested by a worker. Rather, they are obligated to reasonably accommodate the worker. Once an accommodation is established, the worker is obligated to inform the employer if the need for or nature of the required accommodation changes and provide documentation to support such accommodation.

There are a number of ways that employers commonly accommodate disabilities. The duties of worker may be modified so that the worker is able to perform them despite the disability. For example, a warehouse worker with a torn rotator cuff in her shoulder may still perform those parts of their normal duties that do not require lifting, pushing, pulling, or overhead work. A machine operator who develops contact dermatitis on their hands from exposure to chemicals may be assigned to an entirely different job, such as quality checks. Such **modified work** may be permanent or temporary, depending upon changes in the worker's abilities. Accommodating permanent disabilities may also entail retraining workers to perform jobs they are presently unqualified to perform.

Employers may also make **workplace modifications** in order to accommodate disabilities. A common and obvious change is adjusting buildings, equipment (e.g., work stations), and tools to accommodate workers with mobility impairments. Less obvious changes to the workplace including providing nitrile gloves to staff members who are allergic to latex products or adopting scent-free workplace policies to accommodate workers with chemical sensitivities.

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## 6.5 RETURN TO WORK

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“Our research shows that if you don’t get a worker back within 90 days of their injury, the chances that they ever go back to work drop by 50 per cent,” said David Marshall, president and CEO of Ontario’s Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, in 2015.<sup>1</sup> Marshall’s views are shared by many employers and OHS practitioners who see a **return-to-work(RTW)** program as a way to reintegrate injured workers into the workplace via practices such as modified work. As an added bonus, RTW programs save employers money on their workers’ compensation premiums.

Organized labour and injured worker advocates have a different view of RTW, with Ontario Federation of Labour president Sid Ryan calling Marshall “the equivalent of the modern day bounty hunter. His job is to disqualify injured workers from receiving their rightful benefits . . . [His] \$400,000 [salary] is his bounty for his work over the last year.” Catherine Fenech, of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, notes “an increase in workers being told the board thinks they can go back to work no matter how badly injured they are.”<sup>2</sup>

The final component of disability management consists of programs designed to assist workers in recovering from temporary impairment (such as injuries and illnesses) that cause disabilities. The most common disability recovery program is **sick leave**, which is paid leave designed to help workers recover from short-term illness or injury. Sick leave is so widely available because it is sometimes specifically required by employment standards legislation and generally seen as a reasonable accommodation required by human rights legislation.

Most employers are required to enroll their workers in their provincial or territorial workers’ compensation system, which provides wage-loss and other benefits in the event of a work-related injury or illness. Some employers also provide workers with **disability insurance** purchased from a private insurer. Disability insurance benefits provide wage-loss replacement for workers who require a longer period of time away from work for reasons other than a work-related injury. The specifics of disability insurance vary among workplaces and frequently reimburse only a portion of the wages lost.

Modified work may also be used to help workers to recover from a temporary impairment that causes disability. **Work hardening** entails providing a worker with the opportunity to gradually return to work (via increasing hours and work demands) in order to build stamina. Employers may also provide coaching or other forms of support to workers who are returning to work. As noted below, the beliefs underlying these return-

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1. Brennan, R. (2015, January 31). Meet the man injured Ontario workers ‘love to hate.’ *Toronto Star*. <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/01/31/meet-the-man-injured-ontario-workers-love-to-hate.html>

2. MacEachen, E., Ferrier, S., Kosny, A., & Chambers, L. (2007). A deliberation on ‘hurt versus harm’ in early-return-to-work policy. *Policy and Practice in Health and Safety*, 5(2), 41–62.



to-work strategies and their manner of implementation are the subject of some controversy. Box 10.4 discusses the National Institute of Disability Management and Research, which provides research-based evidence for practitioners.

## Credentials in disability management and OHS

The National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) provides education, training, and research focused on the implementation of workplace-based reintegration programs based on research evidence.<sup>3</sup> Recently, NIDMAR has partnered with British Columbia's Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences to offer programs focusing on disability management and return to work.<sup>4</sup> This partnership builds upon NIDMAR's existing (and very good) professional certifications in disability management and return to work.

Many professions—including doctors, lawyers and architects—are subject to regulation by their respective provincial and territorial governments. Such regulations are generally managed through government-appointed professional regulatory organizations (PROs), such as a provincial law society or college of physicians and surgeons. PROs generally determine the qualifications required for practice, certify practitioners, and investigate misconduct. While performing a valuable regulatory function, PROs can also limit access to a profession. For example, foreign-trained doctors often complain that accreditation requirements prevent them from practising.

Over time, many otherwise unregulated occupations have developed voluntary associations that often provide professional development opportunities for their members. Some associations have also developed voluntary credentials and certifications. The Certified Human Resource Professional (CHRP) and the Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) accreditations are two examples. Accreditation is typically awarded based upon a combination of work experience, formal education, completing a certification exam, and paying an annual membership fee. Accreditation may also require ongoing professional development. While these accreditations are not required to gain employment, many employers use these credentials as a screening tool.

Accreditation in unregulated professions likely enhances the knowledge of practitioners. Yet it is

3. For more information about NIDMAR, see: <https://www.nidmar.ca>

4. For more information about Pacific Coast University, see: <http://www.pcu-whs.ca>

useful to consider what other functions accreditation serves. Accreditation gives a small group of actors the power to determine what knowledge, skills, and behaviour are considered necessary and appropriate. Those workers who possess accreditation often have increased legitimacy and standing, even if the knowledge they have been accredited as possessing is contested terrain. The professionalization of safety also has subtle and sometimes negative implications for the effectiveness of the IRS. Finally, meeting the requirements of accreditation can pose an occupational barrier to traditionally disadvantaged workers.

As noted above, return-to-work (RTW) programs are designed to reintegrate injured workers into the workplace via practices such as modified work. This approach stands in contrast to the historical practice of having workers stay off work (most often collecting workers' compensation wage-loss benefits) until they are fully recovered. By providing injured workers with modified work, employers are able to reduce the cost of injury borne by workers' compensation claims. In jurisdictions that operate experience-rating programs, reducing workers' compensation claim costs can result in a reduction in an employer's workers compensation premiums. In short, RTW programs can save employers money.

When considering the relationship between injury duration and the likelihood of workers returning to work, it is important to be mindful that more seriously injured workers are likely to both require a longer period of recovery and have a lower chance of ever returning to work.<sup>5</sup> This is a very plausible explanation for why workers who are off work longer may also be less likely to return to work.

There is some evidence that workers with back pain recover more quickly when they remain active. On the surface, this correlation might seem to suggest that RTW can, in fact, be rehabilitative. It is not clear, however, to what degree work is analogous to the more generalized term *activity*. Work differs from other activities (e.g., going for a walk) because it occurs in the context of a power relationship designed to maximize productivity. Consequently, some employers will promise, but not truly provide, suitable modified work. When this occurs, workers face pressure to work in a manner that can be contrary to their medical restrictions, thereby creating the risk of re-injury.<sup>6</sup> More troubling is that there is no evidence to support the notion that activity aids recovery from injuries other than lower back injuries. That is to say, proponents of RTW are not only misstating the benefits of RTW but are also overstating the medical benefits of activity in general.

5. MacEachen, E., Ferrier, S., Kosny, A., & Chambers, L. (2007). A deliberation on 'hurt versus harm' in early-return-to-work policy. *Policy and Practice in Health and Safety*, 5(2), 41–62.

6. MacEachen, E., Ferrier, S., Kosny, A., & Chambers, L. (2007). A deliberation on 'hurt versus harm' in early-return-to-work policy. *Policy and Practice in Health and Safety*, 5(2), 41–62.

## The “Stakeholders” of Disability Management



“The Stakeholders of Disability Management” by Alyssa Giles CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Numerous Stakeholders—primarily employers and workers, governments, unions, and medical practitioners—are involved in disability management and return-to-work strategies. Each stakeholder brings a unique perspective to the table. It is the employer’s job to ensure each stakeholder’s concerns are considered as they seek to manage workplace disabilities and return-to-work programs, and stakeholders are included in the process.

### Additional Resources

Return to Work Flowchart from Workplace Safety and Prevention Services

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## 6.6 SUMMARY

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### Summary

The field of disability management encompasses disability prevention, accommodation, and recovery. A complete disability management program serves to meet employers' statutory obligations to prevent and accommodate disabilities created by occupational health and safety, human rights, and workers' compensation legislation. Such programs can also minimize the cost of injuries and disabilities borne by employers, primarily by returning workers to productive work as quickly as possible.



### Check Your Knowledge





An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=195#h5p-4>

*Image Credit: Photo by Skitterphoto is licensed under Pixabay License*

## Discussion Questions

1. What causes an impairment to become a disability? What does this tell us about the role of the workplace in disability management?
2. How can employers meet their duty to accommodate?
3. How can employers work to prevent disabilities in the workplace?
4. What is the part of the employer in a return to work program?
5. Explain undue hardship as it pertains to the duty to accommodate.

## Exercise

1. Go online and identify the legislative requirements in your jurisdiction that require employers to accommodate disabled workers. In a short essay of 200 words, explain how a worker would go about enforcing those rights in your jurisdiction.

2. Pretend that you are an HR practitioner tasked with developing an accommodation for a warehouse worker based on the following scenario:
  - The worker's job has three components: (1) lifting materials on and off a skid, (2) moving materials around the warehouse using the skid, and (3) recording such movements and performing periodic inventory.
  - The worker is unable to lift materials because of a disability but can perform the other tasks. It is unknown how long the worker cannot perform the lifting component.
  - There are five other workers in the warehouse performing the same job. Each warehouse worker performs all three tasks and is busy all the time. There is also a supervisor who monitors performance and resolves problems.
  - The injured worker is personally unpopular and there is skepticism among the other workers about whether his disability is real.

# CHAPTER 7: OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT - CAREER READINESS

## Chapter Outline

- 7.0 Learning Objectives
- 7.1 The Job Search
- 7.2 What Sets You Apart?
- 7.3 Networking
- 7.4 Social Media
- 7.5 Interviews
- 7.6 Interview Questions
- 7.7 Summary





## 7.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

- Identify ways of gaining practical experience.
- Create and utilize an effective networking strategy.
- Identify the various types of interviews and interview questions.

## 7.1 THE JOB SEARCH

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It is an exciting time as you prepare for your career in Operations Management. Let's look at what it takes to complete a thorough job search, what sets you apart from your competition, how to tap into your networks, how to utilize social media, and the interview techniques that will help you attain the career you have been working towards.

### The Hidden Job Market

Chances are, you've tried your hand at job searching at one time or another and (to your dismay) you've come to the conclusion that finding a job isn't an easy task! People want to hire you, but you need an organized and targeted approach. Instead of focusing on the quantity of applications, start focusing on the quality of applications you're sending out. Without a clear understanding of the hidden job market, the importance of using a variety of job search methods, and a tailored approach, you are at risk for increasing your frustrations and decreasing your motivation to find work.

The hidden job market accounts for 65-80% of available jobs, suggesting that an unprecedented number of jobs are no longer being publicly posted. More often than not, positions are being filled internally, by referral or through direct contacts. This is because some employers prefer to fill vacancies by word of mouth, referral programs, and internal job postings.

You need to tap into the hidden job market by diversifying your job search. This means opening the door to a more responsive market and expanding additional opportunities, resulting in a shorter, more successful search. In the following sections, job searching has been divided into two major approaches – your online job search strategy and your networking strategy.



Photo by Sam, Unsplash License

## Online Job Search Strategy

### Fanshawe Career Centre Job Board

Fanshawe Career Centre offers an online job board exclusive to Fanshawe students and graduates. You can visit this website through FOL – Resources – Career/Co-op/CCR to view a variety of current full-time, part-time, and summer employment opportunities. You can set up alerts to be notified when opportunities in your field are posted. Furthermore, you can also find out about job fairs, networking events, and employer information sessions on your Dashboard.

### Employer Websites

Make a list of target employers and visit their websites often. Employers often receive so many resumés that they don't always need to post their positions to a job board to attract interest. Therefore, by creating a list of employers that you may be interested in working for and frequently visiting their "Careers" section, you will ensure that you are seeing any available positions. If their websites have a resumé bank, be sure to upload your resumé. There are several different resources to help you develop a list:

- Business directories, such as the Yellow Pages
- LinkedIn company directory
- Professional associations

### Online Job Boards and Search Engines

Although online postings are among the most highly populated job search methods used by job seekers, they only account for a small percentage of available jobs. Nonetheless, they are still a convenient way to look for employment and for certain companies this may be the only option. Once you have entered a site, you would typically use a search engine to find advertised jobs by inputting a keyword and location. Most of these online sites allow you to post your resumé directly with the idea that an employer or recruiter may match you to a position and contact you directly. Review the following recommendations to improve your response rate:

- While setting up and receiving targeted e-mail alerts may be helpful, ensure that if you've posted your resumé, you are updating your information regularly, as many recruiters are looking at resumés according to how recently they were posted.
- Jobs are often listed by a range of different titles; remember to change your search criteria frequently to maximize your search results.
- Lastly, don't wait until the closing date to apply; the early bird catches the worm. If looking to fill an

opening immediately, employers may start reviewing applications before the position closes.

- For an up-to-date list of common websites visit Job Search found on FOL – Career/Co-op/CCR site.

## Professional Association Websites

Many industries and occupations have professional associations, and these can be a valuable resource in your job search. Becoming a member of a professional association links you to members who have similar interests and qualifications. Typically, on a professional association website, you will find information about relevant job listings, upcoming conferences and events, career development opportunities, industry trends, publications, and newsletters. Attending conferences and events may lend favour to potential networking opportunities. Learning industry trends could prove useful in your next job interview and accessing member directories may assist you in setting up an informational interview to gain valuable industry-specific career advice.

## Managing Your Job Search

The job search process can certainly feel like you are riding an emotional rollercoaster. While there may be times when you receive a positive response and feel excited, it is more common and normal that you will experience frustration, anxiety, or general disappointment. These feelings can result from a lack of responses, failing to meet the expectations you had for yourself or the expectations that you feel others had for you, or the weight of being continually rejected. When you experience negative feelings associated with your job search, not only do you tend to become less productive, but your negativity can seep into your interactions with employers. Fortunately, there are some useful strategies you can employ to maintain your motivation and better manage your stress throughout your search.

## Job Search Tips

- **Set goals.** It can be difficult to maintain momentum in your job search. To ensure that you stay motivated, consider setting daily and weekly goals. Set goals for different job searching efforts, for example, “I will aim to submit two online job applications per day” or “I will make two to four new connections on LinkedIn each week.” Setting and meeting daily goals will help you to believe that you are capable of finding a job and breaking down tasks will help you feel less overwhelmed.
- **Create structure.** Additionally, it can also be helpful to create a job search routine by scheduling specific times during your day or week that are dedicated specifically to searching for work. You should focus on hours of the day that you have the most energy and the least distractions. While you do want to commit yourself to a reasonable block of time, avoid staring at the computer for too long or you may notice your productivity declining.

- **Stay organized.** Document your job search efforts as you go. Write down the jobs you've applied to, the dates in which you applied, and save a print or electronic copy of the job postings in case you need to refer to them in the future. Similarly, when attending job fairs or networking events, gather the names and contact information of those you spoke with. It is often helpful to use a spreadsheet to track the details of all of the information so that you can follow up. Not only is it good for a point of reference, but it creates a level of accountability. By tracking your efforts, you will notice that you've done a lot of work and this will make you feel proud and fuel your motivation. On the other hand, it might also give you an indication that you haven't been doing as much as you should and make you more responsible in getting back on track.
- **Figure out what's not working and seek help.** People often spend months job searching and wonder why they aren't receiving a response. If you're not generating responses, there is probably something about your current strategy that isn't working. Evaluating your strategy and trying something different might be the answer you are looking for. Ask those around you for constructive criticism, identify where you are struggling, and improve it. Take advantage of your resources; book an appointment with the Employment Support Centre to discuss and evaluate your current approach.
- **Take care of yourself.** Looking for a job can be draining. Make sure you maintain a healthy diet and get enough rest to maintain your drive. You will reduce your stress and increase your positivity by making time for things you like to do, whether this is playing sports, reading a book, watching a movie, or anything else that keeps you motivated.
- **Reach out to your support network.** When you're feeling really defeated, don't bottle up your job search stress. Instead, share your experiences with a close friend or family member. Chances are they have been in a position where they can relate to your experience. Sometimes a trusted friend can help you challenge your negative beliefs by offering encouragement and support, which can boost your confidence in yourself and the job search process.

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Fanshawe Career Services Job Search Workbook
- Fanshawe College Interview Handbook (OER)
- **You Got This! The Real Skills You Need For Career Success, 1st Edition** *By Andrew Loos, Shelley Burns, Shari Carpenter, Lisa Shumate, Bill Imada*



## Online Job Search Safety

The Canadian Competition Bureau reports that “thousands of Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life are defrauded each year.”<sup>1</sup> Learn to recognize employment scams to protect yourself from financial loss, wasted time, and energy.

### How to Protect Yourself

Be an informed and proactive job seeker. Research and assess every job posting, company, and employment agency to which you apply. Contact them yourself directly if necessary. When in doubt about the job posting, company, or any interactions with an employer proceed with caution!

- Do not accept a job offer without being interviewed in person, over the phone, or via video conferencing (Zoom/Teams).

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1. Medicine Hat Police Service. (2022, January 3). Fraud Prevention Month. <https://www.mhps.ca/posts/post/2920>

- A legitimate employer typically requests personal information only after an interview has been completed, references have been verified, and an offer of employment has been made and signed. Personal information includes:
  - SIN
  - date of birth
  - driver's license
  - banking information
- Do not use your own money to pay suppliers or transfer funds.
- Never accept payment in advance of starting a job or for services that have not been completed.
- Sounds too good to be true? Seek advice from a trusted source, such as a parent, a professor, or the Fanshawe Career Centre.

## **What To Do If You Suspect an Employment Scam?**

- End all communication with the employer and if personal information was disclosed, change all of your passwords and monitor your accounts to be on the safe side.
- If you have sent money to a fraudulent employer, contact your bank or credit card company immediately for further instructions.
- Gather all records of the fraud and contact the police to report it to your local authorities.

## **Additional Resources**

To learn more take a look at:

- Consumer Protection Ontario

- The Little Black Book of Scams

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Working in Play: Planning for a Career in the Recreation and Leisure Industry in Canada (sections 6.1-6.5) by Linda Whitehead, BA, M Ed, MBA is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.



## 7.2 WHAT SETS YOU APART?

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Fanshawe College has identified Job Skills for the Future that all programs in the college embed into their curriculum. These Job Skills are generic to all industries. Competence in these job skills is regarded as required for those seeking to build successful careers. It is important that soon-to-be-graduated students can identify these skills in themselves and understand how they can exhibit competence in these skills when meeting with potential employers. Of the Job Skills for the Future, Social Intelligence is highlighted in this OER.

## Social Intelligence



Job skills for the future by Linda Whitehead, BA, M Ed,  
MBA CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Build and nurture mutually beneficial relationships.

Social Intelligence is being able to interact positively with others, building strong healthy relationships and thriving in social environments. It is having the self-awareness to effectively apply the knowledge of social dynamics and team building to create positive outcomes for everyone involved. Individuals who demonstrate the skill of Social Intelligence have excellent communication skills and are empathic. We often refer to Social Intelligence as ‘people skills’ or ‘interpersonal skills’.

### Excelling in Social Intelligence as a Job Skill means:

*You:*

- Have a passion for working with others towards positive outcomes
- Are curious about the world and the people in it

- Care about others
- Have good emotional control (Emotional Intelligence)
- Listen with intent and exhibit strong conversational skills

*Others see you as:*

- Having respect for diverse opinions, values, belief systems and the contributions of others
- Having a constantly renewed sense of curiosity and wonder
- Having a willingness towards helping others
- A good listener and communicator

Have you heard the phrase “job competition”? The word “competition” isn’t used by accident. Almost every job is filled following a competition between job candidates. Have you reflected on what sets you apart from the other candidates in this competition? An excellent way to build your professional reputation, obtain references, set yourself apart from the competition, refine your career goals, and build long-term networks is by gaining practical experience, especially if you have limited networks to begin with. Each of these opportunities will provide you with a solid network of contacts and valuable industry advice even before you start searching for your career.

**Upskilling with micro-credentials:** Have you heard of the term micro-credential? According to eCampus Ontario, “A micro-credential is a certification of assessed learning associated with a specific and relevant skill or competency. Micro-credentials enable rapid retraining and augment traditional education through pathways into regular postsecondary programming.”<sup>1</sup> You will find that micro-credentials are laser focused, shorter in duration than traditional courses, often available online and some offer badges of completion which may be stackable to attain a further level of achievement.

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1. eCampusOntario. (n.d.). *Why Micro-credentials Matter*. <https://micro.ecampusontario.ca/>

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Fanshawe College Microcredentials



**Part-time and summer employment:** Employers are looking past the knowledge and skills you've gained in school, they are interested in seeing that you have obtained real-world experience. Securing a summer or part-time job while completing your studies will demonstrate to the employer that you have developed the employment readiness skills they are looking for. Gaining experience in different interest areas will also help to solidify your career goals and expand your connections.

**Job shadowing:** Job shadowing is an opportunity for you to observe working professionals in their environment throughout their typical workday or week. This allows you to process information about an occupation and clarify your job goal. You are able to see hands-on how your learned skills translate into a particular work environment and job. To inquire about job shadowing opportunities, reach out to people in your network or contact companies of interest.

**Volunteer opportunities:** Volunteering your time allows you to directly impact your community, meet new people, learn new valuable skills, advance your career, and increase your confidence. Additionally, volunteering introduces you to different environments and roles within an organization that will help you identify your interests within the field. You have the chance to cultivate valuable leadership opportunities through rewarding experiences. If you are interested in volunteering, visit the Volunteer Centre, contact specific companies of interest, search their websites, or connect with community volunteer organizations like Volunteer London.

**Mentorship:** Lastly, a good way to gain quality advice and industry know-how is by finding yourself a mentor. A mentor is someone who willingly shares their skills, knowledge, expertise, advice, and professional contacts with you throughout your career journey. A mentor can assist you in setting realistic career goals and making smart career decisions. Their wisdom can be beneficial, from finding a job after you graduate to moving up the company ladder. You can look within your current network for a mentor; this could be a professor, work or volunteer supervisor, or a family friend. If no one in your immediate network is in a position or industry that might interest you, research professionals on LinkedIn, reach out to your Alumni and Friends Network, or ask for referrals and contact them directly.

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## 7.3 NETWORKING

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For many of us, just thinking about networking can make us break out into a cold sweat. However, networking is the simple act of exchanging information, specifically for the purpose of cultivating productive, organic, and lasting relationships. When you develop and maintain strong and productive relationships across many different facets of your life, you increase your chances of those relationships positively impacting your career goals. It is important to recognize that engaging in networking opportunities will not lead to results overnight; it is a long-term strategy that will allow you to build a strong community of individuals and professionals that, when accessed properly, can support you in your career development journey.

When you learn how to network effectively, you bypass the internet job application gatekeepers and increase your chances of getting interviewed. It's about leveraging the connections you already have, who can confidently attest to your past performance and future potential. Furthermore, it's also about putting yourself out there and using your connections to expand your networks. Even though we know that networking is a necessary component of uncovering the hidden job market, many of us still find it uncomfortable and question whether what we are doing is right. Next, you will learn how to prepare yourself for both planned and unplanned networking interactions, as well as identify many different networking activities that you can incorporate into your overall job search strategy.



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## Tap Into Your Personal Networks

There is no better place to start than with the people in your life that already know you. Develop a broad list of contacts, including family, friends, neighbours, classmates, professors, current and previous coworkers and managers, and people you have met through various extracurricular, social, religious, and business activities. After you've developed your list, spend time talking to the people in your network and inform them that you are looking for work and let them know what kind of work you are looking for. Organize your network contacts and communicate regularly about your current needs, so that they can assist you better.

### Here are some ways that you can utilize your existing networks:

1. Ask your network contacts for information or referrals to companies or industries and job leads.
2. Research your network contacts' connections and inquire about people who are of interest to you.
3. Ask if you can use their name when contacting the referrals.
4. Always keep your networks informed of how they have helped you and thank them often for their efforts.
5. Help your network too. Share any contacts, advice, or job leads that would be of interest to them.

## Networking Tips

1. **Do your homework.** Before attending networking events and job fairs, think about what you would like to achieve out of them. Research organizations or professionals attending and decide which are most appealing to you.
2. **Wear interview attire.** Remember you are trying to leave a lasting and positive impression on your professional contacts. Help them to visualize the professional that you are, by wearing business or business casual attire. Jeans or athletic wear is not appropriate for this type of setting.
3. **Turn your cell phone ringer off.** When you're in the middle of speaking with an employer or industry contact, any interruption can leave a negative impression. Put your device on vibrate and don't take it out of your pocket until you have left the event.
4. **Have a strong introduction.** A smile and firm handshake can be effective; however, take your cue on

handshaking from the employer. Some people do not shake hands due to cultural norms or illness/flu season. Introduce yourself and be ready with your 30-second elevator pitch. Be specific; outline your education, skills, experience, and the type of job that interests you. Be prepared to let the employer or industry contact know what value you will bring to their organization.

5. **Prioritize your interests and take your time.** Map out a strategy to visit the industry contacts and employers you are most interested in. Allow yourself enough time to visit with employers at a comfortable pace. Running in and out quickly may not produce the job search results you are looking for.
6. **Ask open-ended questions.** Ask questions that can be answered with more than just a “yes” or “no”. You are trying to gain as much information as possible, while maintaining a meaningful conversation with the individual. Don’t be afraid to ask questions about their organization and about their industry in general. Ask questions such as: “What is it like to work for your organization?” “What skills do you look for in a potential candidate?” “What is the hiring procedure for your organization?”
7. **Bring your resumé.** Bring several copies of your most up-to-date resumé with you to a networking event. If you are targeting certain employers or you are aware of a position that is available, tailor your documents accordingly.
8. **Always follow up.** Ask for business cards and convey that you enjoyed meeting the individual and that you look forward to seeing them again soon. Encourage a future meeting or discussion to further communicate and share ideas or send a customized request on LinkedIn. At this time, you can also provide the individual with your personalized business card as well.
9. **Keep an open mind.** Think outside the box! Consider all employers as a potential contact, no matter what the industry. You never know where a potential opportunity may come up and who the people that you are talking to might be able to connect you with in the future.
10. **Build and maintain relationships.** The goal is to meet people and create connections. Meet fewer people but invest more energy in each connection. You cannot expect to gain something from someone you just met. Develop a relationship before you start asking about opportunities and ask how you can help them.

## Conduct Informational Interviews

Informational interviewing involves speaking to people who work in the field that you want to learn more about. To be clear, you are not interviewing for a job, you are interviewing to gather more insight about the field you are interested in. This will allow you to make more informed career choices, gather the information necessary to write more effective cover letters and resumé, and be better prepared for future job interviews. Informational interviews can also be a great way to make valuable industry contacts and many people in the workforce are open to sharing information about their careers – especially if it can help someone else map out their own career path. If you leave a good impression, your name may later be passed along to someone else who



is in a position to interview you, however, don't go in expecting this to happen. To leave the best impression possible, you must be prepared and act professionally. Here are some steps to consider before, during, and after your informational interview:

## Before the Information Interview

- Conduct research on different companies or individuals and identify who you would like to interview.
- Request an informational interview and explain how you obtained their information.
- Call or send them an e-mail, explaining why you are interested in setting up the interview and what you hope to gain from it, be clear about what you're requesting, such as more information about a job or profession.
- Begin with a professional salutation, "Dear Ms. Grayson."
- Briefly introduce yourself, your program or credentials, career interests, and goals.
- If you want to meet them in person or speak by phone, tell them how much time you'll need, for example, 15 to 20 minutes.
- Confirm the time and location.
- Ask them to recommend other people or sources of information if they can't speak with you directly.

## During the Information Interview

- Similar to an actual interview, arrive early and dress in professional attire.
- Be clear that you only want information; you can discuss your skills and experience, but do not fish for opportunities, let the employer initiate any conversations regarding available opportunities.
- Come prepared by doing some background research on the person you're interviewing, the organization they work for, and the work they do. Use your list of questions to guide your conversation.
- Have your resumé on hand in case your contact wants to see it.
- Manage your time and respect their time; only take as much time as you've scheduled.

## Questions you might ask in an Information Interview

Here is a list of potential questions that you can ask the person that you will be meeting with. Questions can vary in topic from advice to information on qualifications, job duties, organizational structure, industry trends, and work culture. Since your meeting is intended to be brief, select around five questions in advance that reflect the information you are most interested in gaining. Keep track of the time in your meeting and use your discretion on how many questions you ask.

- What are your suggestions for someone trying to get a job in this field?

- What are the personal qualities of people who are successful in this field?
- What are the core skills you look for on a resumé?
- What education and training is needed? What kinds of backgrounds do people in this organization have?
- How would you describe a typical week in terms of percentages spent on different duties?
- What do you enjoy most about this position or organization?
- What are some tasks or projects that you are currently working on?
- What skills can I focus on to help me prepare or excel for work in this field/industry/job?
- What would entry-level work involve in this field?
- How does one advance in this field? What does the typical career path look like?
- What advice would you give to someone with my educational/professional background?
- What is the work culture like in your organization/industry?
- Are there any resources, such as websites, industry associations, or organizations that I should use?
- What is the most effective way to stay connected to current events and industry news?
- What kinds of experience, paid or volunteer, would you recommend for someone pursuing a career in this field?
- Can you suggest any other ways to obtain relevant experience?
- Given my background, is there anyone else or any other organizations that you would recommend that I talk to?

## After the Information Interview

- Send a thank you letter right away.
- Identify what worked well and what you will change for next time.
- Connect on LinkedIn and reach out to your contact and let them know how they assisted you.

### Examples:

#### Informational interview example:

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I understand that you work as \_\_\_\_\_ I'm

currently exploring this line of work as a possible career in the future. I wonder if I could take about 10 minutes of your time to find out more about what you do?

### **Example – Formal request**

Dear

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, a mutual acquaintance of ours, \_\_\_\_\_, has recommended that I call you to speak with you about your position as a Supervisor with your organization. I am currently studying Operations Management at Fanshawe College. Recently, I have been researching your organization, as I am very interested in working with your Operations team, but there is only so much you can learn without talking to someone who is actually doing the job. I'd really appreciate it if you could answer some questions, I have about what it is like to do this job on a day-to-day basis. Would you have 15-20 minutes to speak over the phone or meet in person?

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely, Your Name Here

### **What to say when an information interview is declined:**

“Thank you for taking my call. I realize I’ve caught you at a bad time. Would there be a more convenient time when I could call back?” or “Would there be anyone else I could speak with?” If they give you the name of someone else, you can ask “Would you mind if I tell them that you suggested I call?” If there are no other leads, reiterate your thanks again.

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## 7.4 SOCIAL MEDIA

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### Use Social Networking Websites

Social media and the ability to network through various online platforms have opened a whole new world of opportunities that you didn't have access to through traditional networking methods. Social networking websites allow you to easily connect with people you may not have otherwise known. It allows you to update your contacts more efficiently on your current employment status and it is seen as a more convenient and acceptable way to exchange information on a regular basis. More employers are using LinkedIn to search for, pre-screen, and evaluate candidates. Among the most common social media sites are LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

## Use these platforms to:

- Research companies and people of interest.
- Reach out to your networks, exchange information, and maintain regular contact.
- Post status updates or send messages that indicate you are looking for work or information.
- Search for jobs that are being advertised and apply directly through the platforms.
- Connect with people you don't already know.
- Participate in discussions or follow companies and groups.
- Create and post content.

## LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking website with the largest online professional network in the world, the fastest-growing demographic being students and recent graduates. LinkedIn provides you with the resources to access various professional networks, key decision-makers, recruiters, and learning opportunities that will help you in your search for meaningful work. Just having a LinkedIn account will not guarantee you a job, however, many recruiters have successfully hired using a social network and, the largest percentage hired using LinkedIn. As this tool continues to evolve, creating a captivating profile is essential to effectively self-market, generate connections, identify leads, grow your professional brand, and make a professional online impression.

### LinkedIn Profile Essentials

Aim for an All-Star rating. There is nothing more disappointing to your audience than an incomplete or poorly maintained profile. Make sure you have completed all the suggested sections to generate an All-Star rating; this will increase your visibility and encourage other professionals to connect with you. If you want to be 40x more likely to be viewed, pay attention to your Profile Completion Meter and ensure the following sections are complete:

- Skills (+5), current position, two past positions, photo, location, summary, education, industry, and location
- At least 50 connections

## Tips to Stand Out

Use the following tips to create an effective profile that will help you stand out:

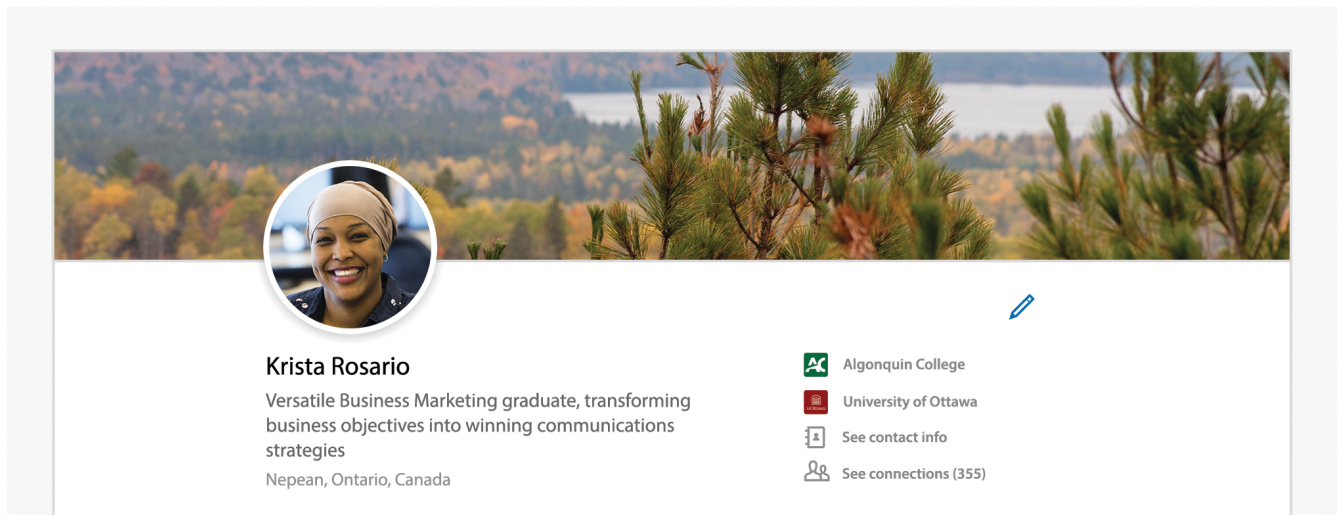
**Come up with a targeted and attractive headline.** Don't fall into the mistake of using your automatically generated job title and company name as your headline. You must stand out and grab the attention of the reader by describing what you do, and what added benefits you can offer the reader. Try to be rich with key words when possible, as well as clear, intentional, and succinct in order to fit within the 120-character limit.

**Increase your views with a good photo.** This is often a person's first glimpse of your profile; if you don't have a photo that represents your personal brand, you may be leaving the wrong first impression. With access to high-resolution phone cameras these days, you don't necessarily have to get a professional photo taken. When taking your own headshot: Ensure that the quality of the image is clear, you are in a well-lit space, and that the background is not distracting.

- Look directly at the camera and smile.
- Avoid wearing accessories like hats or sunglasses that may hide your face.
- Avoid using a cropped photo from a group picture.
- Dress appropriately for your career goal.

**Build a conversational and informative summary.** Ask yourself what you want your target audience to know about you. A well-crafted summary is an opportunity for you to highlight your skills, experience, and your future career aspirations while characterizing elements of your personality in the tone you are writing in. When writing your summary consider:

- Making your first two lines captivating as this is all that is displayed at first glance.
- Writing in first or third person, keeping in mind first person is seen as more direct and intimate.
- Incorporating industry keywords in order to be more visible in recruiter searches.
- Including information on your background, what you can offer, your professional goals and a call to action.



“LinkedIn Profile” by Lindsay Bortot and Employment Support Centre, Algonquin College, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

**Show your experience.** Always add rich descriptions to your experience sections. These can reflect the STAR technique you used to develop your resumé descriptions. In addition, emphasize the skills you gained in your day-to-day tasks and include details of your various accomplishments from your paid or unpaid part-time, full-time, or summer work experience. Listing in bullet points is often the preferred format.

**Share your accomplishments.** Add in additional sections to showcase some of your other accomplishments that might set you apart from your competition. Including information on additional certifications or awards received can be impressive. Highlight your project work. Don’t minimize your project experience; describe the practical experience you gained so that readers can see how this translates into on-the-job skills. You can provide a relevant URL to the project and connect your team members who are also LinkedIn members.

**Showcase your education.** List all of your post-secondary education. Typically after you have completed post-secondary you would not need to list your high school education here. Some employers and recruiters may have a preference for seeking out candidates that graduated from a specific school or program. Notable accomplishments such as achieving a high GPA, or relevant courses can be included in the description to show that you are a high-performing candidate.

**Promote your skills.** Paint a picture of what you can offer a recruiter or an employer. Start by listing at least five skills you have learned throughout your academic, volunteer, and work experiences. As you develop more skills, update your profile to reflect this. Identify both soft skills that are transferable from one field to another and hard skills that you learned during formal training or on the job and ensure that they relate to your job goal. When your connections endorse you for your skills, you increase your credibility and improve your search ranking.

**Personalize your URL.** By default, when you start your LinkedIn account you are given a public URL. With the increase in LinkedIn’s popularity, you may want to use your URL to promote yourself in the



signature of your e-mail address, on your resumé, and on your business networking cards. Personalizing your URL allows you to make it shorter and more memorable and ultimately enhances your personal brand.

**Include Multimedia.** Make your profile more visually appealing by adding photos, videos, or slideshow presentations. This gives a reader an opportunity to see examples of your work, similar to an online portfolio.

**Build your connections by common interests and community.** Don't wait until you graduate to build up your connections, spend time increasing your contacts now. Aim for 50 as you're starting out, but the more connections the better! You can connect with friends, classmates, professors, or people that you've volunteered and worked with. Be proactive in your approach, you can start by syncing your e-mail contacts to create a list of suggested connections. Only send invitations to those you are comfortable connecting with; avoid randomly adding people that you don't know so that you can keep up-to-date and help each other through recommendations and information about opportunities that are relevant to you.

## Using LinkedIn For Your Job Search

### Tips for your job search:

**Customize your LinkedIn invitations and connect in a timely manner.** Always send a personalized message when you're interested in connecting with someone. If you've met them before, make sure to place yourself by reminding them of when and where you've met. If you haven't met before, let them know why you would like to connect (i.e., I see that you are a graduate from the same program, I was wondering what advice you might have for a new graduate looking for work in the field?). After you've met someone, don't wait too long before sending an invitation, your timeliness will ensure that they remember who you are and show your interest.

**Ask people for endorsements and recommendations and endorse and recommend others.** There is no better way to build your credibility than to have your connections attest to what you can do. Don't be afraid to ask your connections for endorsements and recommendations, and always offer to reciprocate your request for them. People will be more likely to follow through with your request when they are gaining something out of it too. By having others authenticate your skills and qualifications, you are seen as a more credible professional to your network. When making a request you should be polite, personalize your invitation, and provide ideas of what you would like them to write about. Always send a thank you note afterwards to show your appreciation.



## Skills & Endorsements

### Blogging • 82



Endorsed by Simon G., who is highly skilled at this



Endorsed by Paulo Mughabi (mutual connections)

### Social Media • 62



Endorsed by Sam Peters and 1 other who is highly skilled at this



Endorsed by Paulo Mughabi (mutual connections)

### Editing • 49



Endorsed by Paulo Mughabi (mutual connections)



Endorsed by 4 of Catherine's colleagues at the University of Ottawa

[Show more](#) ▼

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**Search for jobs.** Look through LinkedIn’s job bank and search for jobs of interest; some employers post exclusively on LinkedIn. Make a note of any existing connections that you have that work at the company you are applying to. Pay particular attention if you are connected to a hiring manager. For instance, are they a 1st or 2nd-degree connection? If so, get in touch with them to show your interest in the role, and find out more about the job and company. Use the knowledge gained from your connections to tailor your job application and make yourself stand out. Under the Jobs tab, don’t forget to set your career interests and let recruiters know you’re open so recommendations will be more tailored to your goal.

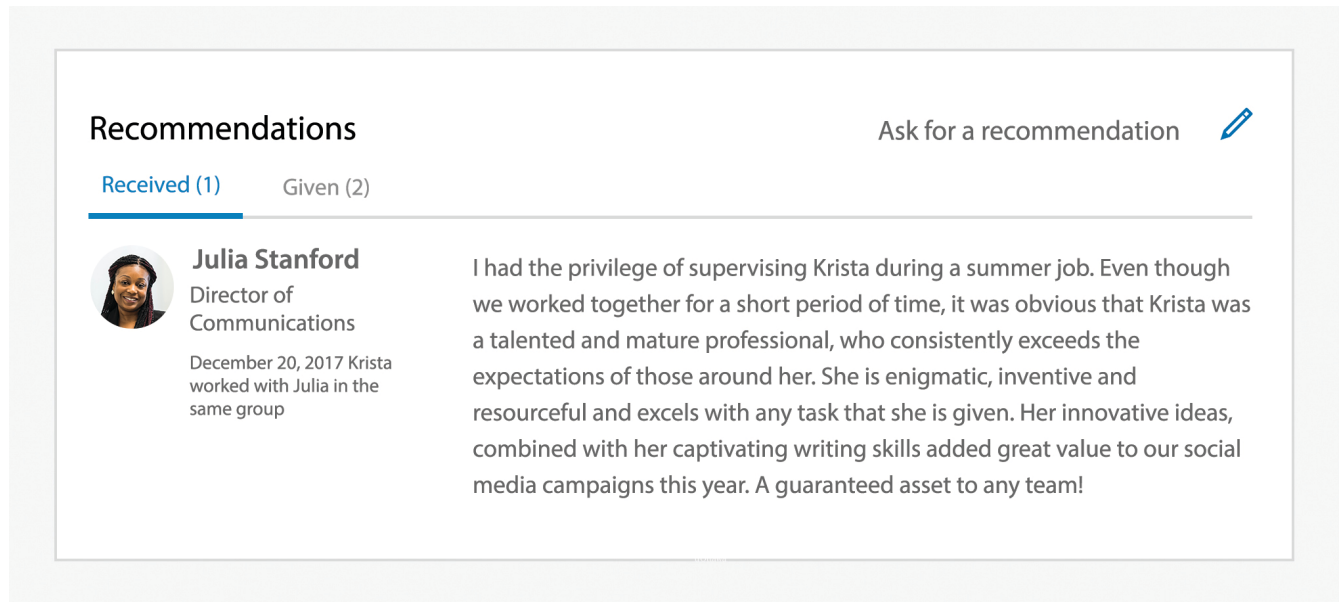
**Find alumni.** Narrow your search by date and program and explore where other graduates are working and what types of jobs they are in. This can be a good way to identify companies that have hired previous graduates from your program. Reach out to alumni to connect and ask them to provide you with advice on how they were successful in finding work in their field.

**Conduct a people search.** Use LinkedIn to find professionals, and track the career paths of employees before they started working at the company that you’re interested in. This information might give you a better idea of what kind of experience or skills the company wants in a new hire.

**Follow companies.** Search for and follow companies of interest to learn more about a company and the people that they employ. Company Pages give you an excellent overview of an organization, list job openings, and indicate products and services. For instance, the “Careers” tab allows you to see job postings and testimonials from current employees. This is a great way to get an “insider’s perspective” on a particular

company. By following a company, updates about new jobs, products, or events will appear in your news feed on your LinkedIn home page. Use the company pages to help prepare you for your next interview.

**Stay active.** It's not just about who you know; it's about who knows you. Stay on your network's radar by updating your LinkedIn status often; you can talk about what you're reading, working on, and more. Additionally, you can create original content and publish articles on LinkedIn Publisher, you can actively post status updates that are relevant to your target market and engage in conversations with your network about all kinds of different topics. React to other people's posts, share, and like regularly.



“LinkedIn Recommendations” by Lindsay Bortot and Employment Support Centre, Algonquin College, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

**Don't be a passive participant.** LinkedIn is meant to be a conversational platform where information and advice can be shared freely. When you create a post or share an article, engage with your network by posing open-ended questions that they can respond to in the comments section. Continue the conversation by replying to as many messages as possible. People want to get to know you, when you engage with them this will increase your visibility and result in more followers. Similarly, spend time reacting and responding to other people's content as well, and thank them for sharing.

**Join Groups.** The obvious benefits of joining groups include sharing knowledge and learning from other professionals with similar interest areas or expertise. A useful “Groups” feature is that group members can message each other for free, without being connected (with the exception of certain privacy settings). In building rapport with group members by participating in collaborative discussions, you can invite them to connect on LinkedIn and continually grow your network.

**Be reachable.** Include other ways you'd like to be contacted, such as an e-mail address or phone number. If you are active on other social media platforms, such as Twitter, you can sync your account. If you have your own website, indicate this in the Contact and Personal Info section as well.

**Know when to go public.** You want to show your readers as much as possible to entice them to view your profile and make a connection. Make sure that you have adjusted your settings to show your readers the most important information. That being said, if you're revamping your profile and you want to launch when it's fully complete, think about going into private mode until you've made the changes.

**Stay connected with the apps.** Most of LinkedIn's website traffic comes from their mobile apps. In addition to the LinkedIn Mobile app, they include a suite of other apps that help you target your approach. Here are some that may be helpful:

- Job Search – Search and apply for jobs
- Lookup – Find, learn about and contact coworkers
- Learning – Personalized recommendations and courses taught by industry experts
- SlideShare – A selection of presentations, infographics, and videos about any topic
- Groups – Access to groups of likeminded individuals
- Pulse – Top industry news

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- LinkedIn Help Centre
- LinkedIn Student Blog



## Professional Digital Footprint

With all the different social media options out there, managing your web presence and maintaining a professional digital footprint becomes essential in ensuring your job search success. More and more often, employers are googling potential candidates as an informal way of pre-screening them. This can be a very quick and easy alternative to find out about a person's professionalism or lack thereof. It can directly impact your chances of finding employment. Ensure that your information is up-to-date and that the images and content you are publicizing across your social media platforms reflects you in a positive and professional light. Spend time virtually cleaning up your accounts before you start your job search!

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## 7.5 INTERVIEWS

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Congratulations, your resumé, cover letter, and job search strategy worked! You've landed a job interview. You're excited, and maybe even a little nervous, as you ask yourself, now what? How do I ensure I have the best possible chance of coming out ahead of my competitors?

This section will provide you with a thorough understanding of what you need to know at every stage of the interview process. We will explain the different types of interview formats and provide you with sample questions and answers that will be crucial in increasing your chances of securing your next job. Remember that the interview is a chance for the employer to learn more about you, your skills and experiences, but it is also an opportunity for you to learn more about the company and whether or not this opportunity will be a good match to your current goals and future career aspirations.

There are two major categories that employers are looking to evaluate in a candidate during an interview.

- **Qualifications:** Do you have the required credentials, skills, and abilities to perform the job?
- **Personal and career fit:** Do your personal qualities, attributes, and career goals match with what the company is seeking?

## Common Interview Types

There are many different types of interviews being used in today's job market. Understanding the most common interview formats will help you manage your expectations and prepare better.

**Structured or formal:** This type of interview is very common and is used as a standardized method of comparing multiple candidates. The candidate is invited to attend a face-to-face meeting with the hiring personnel. In this format, an employer develops questions that will help assess the skills and experiences they are seeking to fulfill the requirements of the position. Many employers will have a rubric or scoring system for each question. A score is given based on the appropriateness of the candidates' answers and then these scores are compared as a method of determining the most suitable candidate.

**Unstructured or informal:** This type of interview is more casual, and may have some prepared questions, but is typically less structured. The questions may be determined or changed depending on the candidate's responses or the direction of the conversation. In this method, the candidate can discuss their skills and qualifications more openly, emphasizing more of what they feel is important.

**Pre-screening, video, or telephone:** To narrow the candidate pool, a telephone or video interview may be used for initial screening purposes. This interview format may also be used to interview candidates who don't reside in the same area. When taking part in a video or telephone interview, always remember to ensure your technologies are working and are charged in advance. Remove any distractions from the background. Dress and prepare as you would for an in-person interview. Preparation is essential in being successful in the interview process. Your research will show the interview committee your initiative, interest, motivation, and resourcefulness.

**Panel:** In a panel interview, a group of interviewers, typically two to five people from various positions and roles in the company, will take turns asking questions to one candidate. By having multiple opinions involved in the hiring decision, the employer will have a broader, more objective viewpoint when making a decision on which candidate will be most suitable. During your interview, it is important to engage all the panelists,

therefore, as you answer each question, ensure that you are shifting your eye contact to address each one of them.

**Group:** Often the group interview is used in order for an organization to save on time and resources by screening a larger number of candidates at the same time. The structure of a group interview may look different from employer to employer, but typically includes a series of questions to observe how candidates communicate, interact with people, and react under pressure.

**Performance, testing, or presentation:** This type of interview can be arranged during a separate time or as part of a face-to-face interview. During this time, an interviewer asks the candidate to perform specified tasks related to the job within a limited timeframe. Employers cannot always make a hiring decision solely based on interview performance, therefore, depending on the job requirements, they may decide to test an individual's ability as part of the hiring process. For example, for an administrative assistant position, you may be tested on your ability to use Microsoft Excel, for a hairdressing position you may be asked to perform a haircut, or for a teacher you may be asked to give a presentation.

## Before the Job Interview

For those of you who are bravely saying to yourself, “I’m just going to wing it!” our advice to you would be to do the opposite. Though it may be exhilarating to take this approach, it will not be the approach that gives you the upper hand in getting the job. Preparation is essential in being successful in the interview process. Your research will show the interview committee your initiative, interest, motivation, and resourcefulness. Before your interview, take a look at the following five suggestions to properly prepare.

### Confirm all the details:

- Verify the details of your interview, ensuring that you have recorded the correct date and time.
- Map out the location and address of the interview in advance to ensure that you will arrive on time.
- Record the names (with correct punctuation) and the titles of the people you will be meeting with and research them beforehand, when possible.
- Ask about the amount of time being allocated for the interview.
- Inquire about whether there will be employment tests and the duration of these tests.

### Review the job description and understand the job requirements:

- Understand the job requirements and be able to demonstrate how your skills and experiences match these requirements.
- Review the Accomplishment Statements on your resumé and prepare additional examples of your

achievements from previous work, volunteer, or academic studies that relate to the job requirements.

## **Research the position and the company:**

- Use the company's website to learn about and understand their mandate, mission, vision, values, products, services, and market and be able to relate this to why you want to work with them.
- Use news sources and social media (Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn) to research the recent organizational activity, view discussions, and updates from the company.
- Familiarize yourself with the facts: How long have they been in operation? Who are their clientele? What are their products? Are they a local or international organization?
- See if you know anyone who works at the company, or ask people in your network if they know about the organization.

## **Review sample questions, prepare answers, and rehearse:**

- Plan and practice your answers as well as your delivery in advance and it will increase your confidence, allow you to articulate more clearly, and will make you overall more comfortable during the interview process.

## **Build your confidence and reduce your anxiety:**

- Before your interview, practise visualizing yourself performing well, imagine that the interviewers are impressed by your professionalism and your ability to answer the questions with a sense of ease and competency.
- Sit up straight, put your feet flat on the floor, breathe deeply, and exhale through your mouth to slow your heart rate down, this will allow you to focus more clearly on your answers while reducing your nervousness.
- Use positive self-talk, believe in your own awesomeness by repeating to yourself things like, "I'm prepared," "I'm the best candidate for this job," and "I can do this."

### **Don't Forget to Bring!**

- Interview details including the address, phone number, and interviewer names.



- The original job posting to review while you're waiting.
- Additional copies of your resumé and cover letter.
- A pen and paper for taking notes.
- Your portfolio and samples of your work, when applicable.
- A list of prepared questions to ask at the end of your interview.
- Your references, neatly typed on a single sheet of paper.

## Practice Your Interview Skills

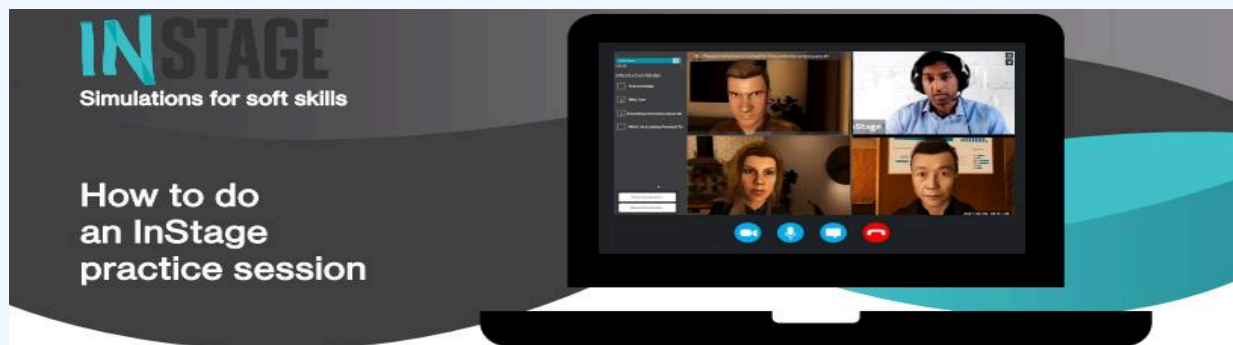
### **PRACTICE + PRACTICE + PRACTICE = SUCCESS**

Build confidence and reduce stress! Rehearsing for an interview allows you to respond to questions with ease and communicate effectively. Why not practice your answers to typical interview questions in video format? If you have access to a webcam you can practice your interview skills using Interview Stream.

Start by watching the tutorial, select questions and conduct a video interview. See and hear what you look and sound like in an interview setting. You can even customize your own video.

### **InStage Resource**

Click the image to go to the InStage website where you can practice for interviews through a simulation.



## During the Job Interview

Just like a good story, you want to have a “hook,” a memorable and compelling piece that will capture the interviewer’s attention and keep them engaged. Your “hook” or in this case, your first impression, should spark the interviewer’s interest within minutes of your initial meeting. Comparatively speaking, if the interviewer(s) are interested in the first couple of paragraphs, they’re going to continue reading. Therefore, in the first couple of minutes, there are many different things you can do to make a confident first impression. Consider these valuable suggestions on body language, verbal communication skills, and interview etiquette:

**Be punctual** – Arrive for your interview 10-15 mins before your scheduled interview time. It’s important to show that you’re prepared. If you feel that you might be running late, be courteous and contact the interviewer to let them know; this will give them the opportunity to reschedule if it is more convenient.

**Give a firm handshake** – Introduce yourself with a solid handshake. Remember not to grip too hard or too soft. If your hands perspire when you’re nervous, be sure to keep a tissue on hand to absorb the moisture while you’re waiting to be introduced.

**Be friendly, smile, and maintain eye contact** – You’re not just concerned about making an impression on your interviewers; ensure that you are friendly to any individual you are in contact with from the moment you walk in the door to the moment you leave. Smiling will create a warm and positive impression, and maintaining eye contact will demonstrate your self-confidence, focus, and respect.

**Be aware of your posture** – Sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor, hands on your lap, and your back against the chair. This open position will convey interest and engagement. Poor posture, such as slouching may come across as too casual, and may imply disinterest or even defensiveness. Avoid closed body language, such as crossing your arms or sitting angled away from your interviewer(s).

**Just like a good story, you want to have a “hook”** – A memorable and compelling piece that will capture the interviewer’s attention and keep them engaged. Your “hook” or in this case, your first impression, should spark the interviewer’s interest within minutes of your initial meeting. Comparatively speaking, if the interviewer(s) are interested in the first couple of paragraphs, they’re going to continue reading. Therefore, in the first couple of minutes, there are many different things you can do to make a confident first impression.

## Professional Image and Attire

Your professional image and visual presentation weigh heavily on an employer’s impression of you. It is important to note that different employers and environments will have differing expectations of formality when it comes to dress codes, for example, a construction company may be much more casual than a law office. As a general rule, focus on dressing one step above what they would wear to work. This may involve researching

the company beforehand or asking the person who has called to schedule the interview what the dress code is. Use the tips below to help you to prepare.

- Avoid any clothing that is too tight, revealing, or uncomfortable.
- Have polished, clean shoes and avoid shoes that may be difficult to walk in.
- Choose solid colours and subtle patterns, avoid distracting patterns or bright colours.
- Avoid noisy or distracting jewellery, watches, and heavy makeup.
- Make sure your clothes are clean, ironed, and not wrinkly.
- Ensure you are well-groomed by having clean and neat hair.
- Be aware of scent-free policies.

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## 7.6 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Photo by geralt, Pixabay License

### Types of Questions

Preparation is essential for a successful interview! You want to ensure that you are able to convey to the employer that you are the most suitable candidate for the position. You are the interviewer's main source of information concerning your qualifications. Do not assume that the interviewer knows all of your qualifications and accomplishments; you must clearly spell them out as you answer the questions during an interview.

### Introductory Questions

Introductory questions give you an opportunity to describe yourself and your accomplishments as they pertain

to the job you are applying for. These questions are used to assess your background, your experience, and your organizational fit. Being that they are open-ended questions, they give you an opportunity to sell yourself.

### **Examples of common introductory questions include:**

- Tell me about yourself.
- How has your education prepared you for this role?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why are you interested in working for our company?
- What experience do you have that relates to this position?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?

## **Behavioural questions**

Behavioural questions will ask you to describe a specific situation or experience and require you to provide an example of how you handled it in the past. Behavioural interviews are founded on the idea that the best predictor of future behaviour is based on evaluating past behaviour. The key is not to get the “right” answer but to demonstrate how you came to an appropriate result. To answer these questions well and completely, you need to be prepared with specific examples or experiences.

### **Examples of common behavioural questions include:**

- Give an example of a situation where you had to deal with conflict, either with a customer or coworker. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation where a coworker or supervisor had expectations that you felt were

unrealistic. How did you deal with that?

- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
- Describe a stressful situation at work and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when you made a mistake? What did you learn from it?
- Describe a situation in which you had to balance multiple priorities.
- Provide a situation in which you managed a tight deadline?
- Give an example of a time when you collaborated as part of a team.
- Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
- Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or coworkers.
- Tell me about a time you have gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?

### The Key to Answering Behavioural Questions, S.T.A.R. Technique

When answering behavioural questions, you should use the STAR technique to ensure you've included the appropriate amount of information and detail.

- **Situation** – Briefly describe the event or situation and include information on the who, what, where, and when.
- **Task** – Give a clear explanation of the task you had to complete and any challenges that accompanied it.
- **Action** – Speak about the actions you took to complete the task, purposefully mentioning qualities or traits that the interviewer is looking for.
- **Result** – In summary, emphasize what the result of your efforts was and quantify it when appropriate.

## Situational questions

Situational questions are focused on hypothetical scenarios, and they require you to demonstrate sound judgment with a response or solution to a problem that you may not have experienced before. Sometimes these questions require you to think outside the box, and carefully consider what is really being asked.

### Examples of situational questions include:

- If you discovered your supervisor was breaking the company's code of conduct, what would you do?
- As the team leader, you are faced with a situation where two team members are arguing, how would you deal with the situation?
- If you had two important deadlines coming up, how would you prioritize your tasks?

More unconventional questions an employer may ask:

- If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?
- If you had to sell this pen, what would you say?

## Job knowledge or technical questions

These questions typically assess the technical or professional skills and knowledge you will need to perform a job. Hands-on tests, simulations, and questions are phrased to find your level of experience with specific equipment, software, processes, procedures, etc.

## Your turn! Questions to ask the employer

When an employer asks you at the end of the interview, “Do you have any questions for us?” you want to avoid saying, “no.” Having a lack of questions prepared may suggest to an employer that you’re uninterested in the opportunity. It is your responsibility to come up with some well thought out and engaging questions. The questions that you ask can be about the roles and responsibilities of the job, the organizational structure of the company, general interest, or the next steps in the hiring process. Be conscientious of the interviewer’s time, choose no more than three questions to ask.

### Examples of questions you **SHOULD** ask include:

- What skills make the most successful employees here?
- What is the top priority of someone who accepts this job?
- Can you describe recent projects of someone in this position?
- What does a typical day/week look like in this role?
- How large is the team I would be working with?
- Is there any advice you can provide that would help me prepare for my first three months in this role?
- What is your favourite part about working for this organization?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?
- When should I expect to hear back?

### Examples of questions you **SHOULD NOT** ask include:

- How much will I get paid? What is the salary? Is this negotiable?
- How many weeks' vacations will I be entitled too?
- What does the benefits package include?
- How long until I can become a manager?
- Can I apply to other jobs once I'm working here?

## Unlawful Questions

The Law in Ontario prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of: age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status (including single status),



gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance (in housing only), record of offences (in employment only), sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation. The Ontario Human Rights Commission protects job seekers against unlawful questions. For more information, check out: Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Employers' questions must be related to the job for which you are applying. However, use your discretion when answering, as questions could be asked unintentionally.

### Here is how you might respond if asked an inappropriate question:

- Ask the interviewer to clarify the meaning of the question.
- Ask the interviewer in what circumstances does the question apply to the job.
- Politely decline to answer.

## After The Interview

You made it through the interview! You're almost at the finish line, but before you decide to congratulate yourself with a big, delicious meal or night out, follow these three valuable steps to leave a lasting impression.

**Evaluate and reflect** – After the interview, it is a good idea to reflect on your performance and consider what questions you answered well and what questions could have used more information or preparation. A best practice is also to write down the questions that were asked so that you can prepare better for next time.

**Send a thank you letter** – After your interview, differentiate yourself by showing your appreciation and reiterate to the employer your interest in the position by sending a thank you letter in an e-mail format to those who took the time to interview you. Your thank you letter should be sent within a 24 hour period of when the interview was held. If you have agreed to provide additional information or samples of your work, be sure to do this as soon after the interview as possible. Remember to always proofread your e-mail to ensure there are no spelling or grammatical errors!

**Ask for feedback** – If you were not the chosen candidate, don't sweat it! Look at your experience as a practice round and take the opportunity to ask the employer for feedback on your interview. You may find that not all employers will provide you with this specific information or that the response you receive is vague. However, if you do receive feedback, this information could be very valuable in increasing your chances of successfully passing your next interview.

## Thank You Letter Sample

Below you will find an example of a Thank You letter. This example contains all the essentials needed, however when you create your own Thank You letter, you should add a personalized highlight of the interview so the letter doesn't sound generic or impersonal. For example, after the first paragraph, the candidate could add: "I very much enjoyed hearing about your upcoming Fit-For-Care fundraising campaign happening this November. Your ideas around how you plan to involve both the residents and their caregivers are very exciting." Alluding to a specific part of the interview conversation adds a small, but important personal touch to the letter.

### Letter Example

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name, (if multiple, list all the interviewers' names)

Thank you for meeting with me today to discuss the \_\_\_\_\_ position with your company. I really appreciate the time you took to get to know me and hear about my skills, experiences, and qualifications.

After speaking with you (or the interview panel), I am confident that I would be an ideal candidate for this role, offering the quick learning and adaptability that is needed to succeed with your diverse clientele. In addition to my enthusiasm and strong work ethic, I would bring the technical and analytical skills necessary to get the job done.

I am very interested in working with your talented team and I look forward to hearing from you once the final decisions are made. Please feel free to contact me at any time. If you require any further information, I can be reached at (519) \*\*\*-\*\*\*\*.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name

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## 7.7 SUMMARY

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### Summary

As you can see, being well organized and prepared is key to the job search process. Take the time to set your career goals and thoroughly research the organizations you are most interested in working for. Reflect on what sets you apart from your competition and consider upskilling with micro-credentials, volunteering and gaining part-time work experience. Don't overlook both your personal and professional network as you look to make important connections that will assist you in your job search. Use social media to make connections and research jobs, such as LinkedIn. Finally, practice answering sample questions to prepare for your job interview. Go out and land that role!



## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=778#h5p-11>*

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# CHAPTER 8: HRM-RELATED LEGISLATION

## Chapter Outline

- 8.0 Learning Objective
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Overview of Employment Legislation
- 8.3 HRM-Related Legislation: Part One
- 8.4 HRM-Related Legislation: Part Two
- 8.5 Labour Relations
- 8.6 Summary



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## 8.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

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### Learning Objectives

- List the employment legislation you need to be familiar with in Operations Management.
- Recall the main concepts of Management-Employee labour relations in the workplace.

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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When working in Operations Management, you may be responsible for work processes and/or people. Either way, you will be required to follow employment legislation that impacts the workers. In this chapter, we will review some of the pertinent employment legislation that impacts a business, such as minimum standards, safety and human rights. This text will focus on employers that fall under provincial legislation. If you are working for a federally regulated employer, such as a bank or a broadcaster, your organization will follow federal employment legislation. Some of the provincial legislation we will explore includes:

- Employment Standards
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Labour Relations
- Human Rights
- Pay Equity
- Accessibility
- Leaves of Absence
- Workers Compensation

### Legislative Impact

Every area of your business will be impacted by employment legislation as every department is made up of people. Let's look at a few areas directly impacted by employment legislation.

### Talent Acquisition

From the creation of interview questions, job descriptions, to advertising jobs, conducting job interviews and finally selecting the successful candidate, employment legislation impacts every area of this process.

### Payroll

Your organization will be responsible for the accurate payment of overtime, holiday and vacation pay. In addition, your organization will need to accurately record hours of work and maintain these records.

## Safety

Whether it be the installation of new equipment, workplace inspections, reporting injuries or hazard assessments, employment legislation outlines the expectations of the worker and the employer.

## Supervisory/Management Roles

How you treat your employees, how you promote your employees and how you reward your employees are key to the success of your company. The best way to attract and retain employees is to be known as an employer of choice for the way you conduct business and the way you respect your employees. Employment legislation reinforces the ways in which employers handle employment matters.

## Terminations

If an employer terminates the employment of a worker, employment legislation provides direction on payments that may be owed to the employee, such as severance or termination pay.

## 8.2 OVERVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION

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To better understand how employment legislation impacts your role as an Operations Manager, please watch the following four YouTube videos narrated by lawyer and Professor Joana Kuras. Each video explores how employment law affects you, your business, and processes such as talent acquisition and terminations.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1384#oembed-2>*

**Video:** “How Employment Law Impacts You and Your Business” by HIRE IEHP [3:21] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. transcript is available on YouTube.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1384#oembed-3>*

**Video:** “Ontario Employment Law during the Hiring Process” by HIRE IEHP [10:03] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. transcript is available on YouTube.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1384#oembed-4>*

**Video:** “Ontario Employment Law in the Workplace” by HIRE IEHP [4:11] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. transcript is available on YouTube.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1384#oembed-1>*

**Video:** “Ontario Law and Termination of Employment” by HIRE IEHP [3:37] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. transcript is available on YouTube.

## 8.3 HRM-RELATED LEGISLATION: PART ONE

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Here we will take a look at some of the most common pieces of employment legislation that will impact your organization from a people perspective. Remember that you should be in contact with your Human Resources representative when questions or concerns arise in any of these areas as they can provide immediate guidance and coaching. In the absence of HRM, you can contact an Employment Lawyer to answer your questions.

### Employment Standards



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The purpose of Employment Standards Legislation is to provide employers with the minimum worker requirements in areas such as:

- Hours of Work and Overtime
- Wages
- Notice of Termination of Employment and Severance Pay
- Public Holidays
- Vacation Time and Vacation Pay

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Ontario Employment Standards Act



### Did You Know?

#### Legislative Update

It is interesting to note one of the latest updates to the Employment Standards Legislation includes “Right to Disconnect” wording. Employers with more than 25 workers are required to establish a written workplace policy. The focus of this policy is the ability for workers to disconnect from their workplace e-mail, meetings, phone calls, etc. in order to allow the individual to be free from the workplace outside of their work hours. This legislative change is meant to assist workers with their work-life balance. The legislation defines the right to disconnect as “... *not engaging in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.*”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Working for Workers Act, 2021, S.O. 2021, c. 35. - Bill 27. (2021). <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/s21035>

## Occupational Health and Safety



Photo by succo, Pixabay License

Keeping workers, visitors, and contractors safe is a basic responsibility of every organization. In Operations Management, you may have workers that report directly to you. As such, you are directly responsible for their safety in the workplace. As safety is such an important part of your role, we take a close look at the following safety topics later in this text:

- Health and Safety Legislation (Chapter 10)
- WHMIS 2015 (Chapter 11)
- Hazard Recognition, Assessment and Controls (Chapter 12)
- Incident Investigations (Chapter 13)
- Disability Management and Return-to-Work (Chapter 14)



## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act



### Did You Know ?

Are you familiar with the “workplace postings” that are required by law in Ontario? Your workplace needs to ensure you have the necessary posters and information available and posted in an open area that can be viewed by your employees at all times. Some of these mandatory posters and information include a copy of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, a list containing the names/locations of the health and safety representative/members of the Joint Health and Safety Committee and a copy of your workplace safety policy.

## Labour Relations

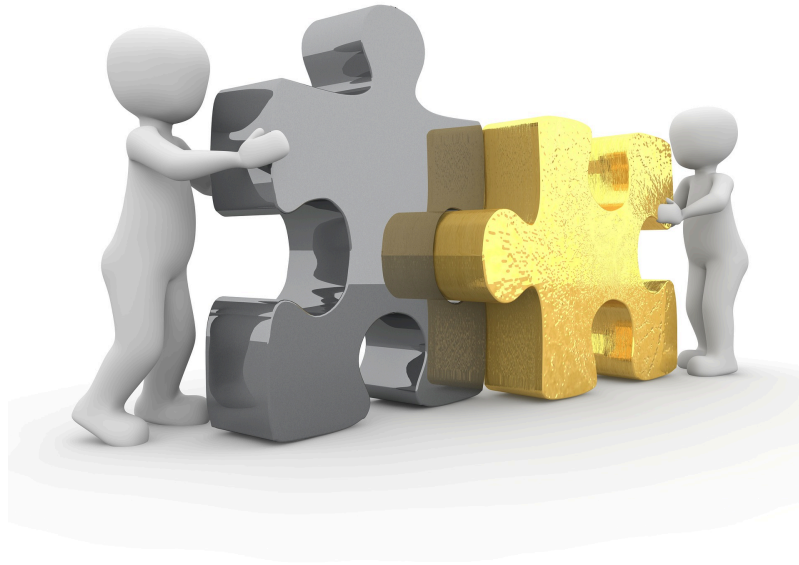


Photo by [Peggy\\_Marco](#), Pixabay License

If you work in a unionized workplace, you will be responsible for working within the parameters of the Collective Agreement that has been established between the management team and the union.

### Did You Know?

If you are wondering what types of topics the Ontario Labour Relations Board can review, they include requests for union certification, union de-certification, and accusations of unfair labour practices to name a few.

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Ontario Labour Relations Act



## Human Rights



“Human Rights” by Nick Youngson, CC BY-SA 3.0, Alpha Stock Images

It is important for employers to understand that the Ontario *Human Rights Code* is legislation that provides for an individual’s opportunities without discrimination and equal rights. In Ontario, there are five protected social areas including:

- Employment
- Housing
- Goods, services and facilities
- Contracts
- Membership in trade and vocational associations

Specifically, the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (OHRC) details protected grounds including:

- Race
- Ancestry
- Place of origin
- Colour
- Ethnic origin
- Citizenship
- Creed
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Age
- Marital status
- Family status
- Disability

### Did You Know?

When it comes to Human Rights in the workplace, inaction by a company can be to blame for an investigation and possible charge as noted in the following scenario. “**Example:** Two women suddenly quit. It is common knowledge that they left because of sexual harassment by their manager. The employer does not investigate the potential existence of sexual harassment and takes no steps to ensure future compliance with the Code or address the situation between the women and manager. If either of the women files a Human Rights claim, or if other employees later face discriminatory treatment, the lack of action by the organization and its senior employees would be considered.”<sup>2</sup>

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2. Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2008). *Human Rights at Work* (3rd ed.). <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/12-resolving-human-rights-issues-workplace#:~:text=Example%3A%20An%20employee%20complains%20to,when%20he%20raised%20his%20concerns>

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- The Ontario Human Rights Code





## 8.4 HRM-RELATED LEGISLATION: PART TWO

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### Pay Equity

Ontario's *Pay Equity Act* is the legislative document that applies to employers in the private sector that employ ten or more employees. The goal of the *Pay Equity Act* is “to redress systemic gender discrimination in compensation for work performed by employees in female job classes.”<sup>1</sup> A review and comparison of the value of work between male and female job classes and the compensation paid to each is the basis of this legislation.

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1. Pay Equity Office. (2013). *Our Guides and Tools: Introduction*. [https://www.payequity.gov.on.ca/en/LearnMore/Tools/Pages/minikit\\_introduction.aspx](https://www.payequity.gov.on.ca/en/LearnMore/Tools/Pages/minikit_introduction.aspx)

## “What is Gender Bias?”

Gender bias is where the work performed by one gender is understated/undervalued/underpaid. Usually, “women’s work” (i.e., nursing, clerical, etc.) is understated/undervalued/underpaid in relation to “men’s work” (i.e., construction, policing).”<sup>2</sup>

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Ontario Pay Equity Act



## Accessibility

Employers must make their workplaces accessible to workers. According to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), Ontario employers are expected to follow all five of the standards in the AODA legislation, including:

- Employment
- Customer Service
- The Design of Public Spaces
- Information and communications
- Transportation

2. Pay Equity Office. (2013). *Our Guides and Tools: Quick Facts*. [https://www.payequity.gov.on.ca/en/LearnMore/Tools/Pages/space\\_toy\\_co2.aspx](https://www.payequity.gov.on.ca/en/LearnMore/Tools/Pages/space_toy_co2.aspx)

“The **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act**, or **AODA**, aims to identify, remove, and prevent **barriers** for people with **disabilities**. The AODA became law on June 13, 2005 and applies to all levels of government, nonprofits, and private sector businesses in Ontario that have one or more employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal, or contract).”<sup>3</sup>

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act



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3. Accessibility Services Canada. (n.d.). *About the AODA*. <https://accessibilitycanada.ca/aoda/>



## Leaves of Absence



Photo by moshehar, Pixabay License

From time-to-time, your employees may seek a leave of absence from work. There are a number of “leaves” available to your employees, and it is important that you work closely with your Human Resources representative (or Employment Lawyer) if an employee asks about any of the following leaves from work:

- Pregnancy Leave
- Parental Leave
- Family Medical Leave
- Personal Emergency Leave
- Critical Illness Leave
- Family Caregiver Leave
- Reservist Leave

### Did You Know?

#### Critical Illness Leave

“Employees are generally entitled to up to 37 weeks of unpaid leave in relation to a minor child,

and 17 weeks in relation to an adult, to be taken in a 52-week period (and may requalify for subsequent 37 or 17 weeks of leave in subsequent 52-week periods).”<sup>4</sup>

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Part XIV – Leaves of absence – Employment Standards Act



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4. Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (n.d.). *Part XIV - leaves of Absence: Employment Standards Act Policy and interpretation manual*. Ontario. <https://www.ontario.ca/document/employment-standard-act-policy-and-interpretation-manual/part-xiv-leaves-absence#:~:text=Employees%20are%20generally%20entitled%20to,subsequent%2052%2Dweek%20periods>

## Workers Compensation



“Injury” by Nick Youngson, CC BY-SA 3.0, Pix4free

In Ontario, WSIB or the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, provides coverage when an injury or illness occurs in any workplace that is covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. WSIB not only provides compensation if a workplace injury claim is approved, but it also assists injured workers with a safe return to work. WSIB is funded by employers and they play an important role in Ontario’s Health and Safety system.

Some of the benefits and services available from WSIB include:

- Income Replacement
- Health Care Equipment and Supplies
- Return-to-Work Services
- Health Care Benefits
- Loss of Retirement Income
- Non-Economic Loss
- Survivor Benefits

## Did You Know?

Were you aware that employees can make a claim for an Occupational Disease? What is an Occupational Disease? “An occupational disease is a health problem caused by exposure to a workplace health hazard, for example:

- Cancer
- Asthma
- Asbestosis and silicosis
- Inhalation of substances and fumes
- Noise-induced hearing loss”<sup>5</sup>

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- WSIB Ontario



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5. Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. (n.d.). *Occupational disease*. WSIB. <https://www.wsib.ca/en/occupationaldisease>

## 8.5 LABOUR RELATIONS

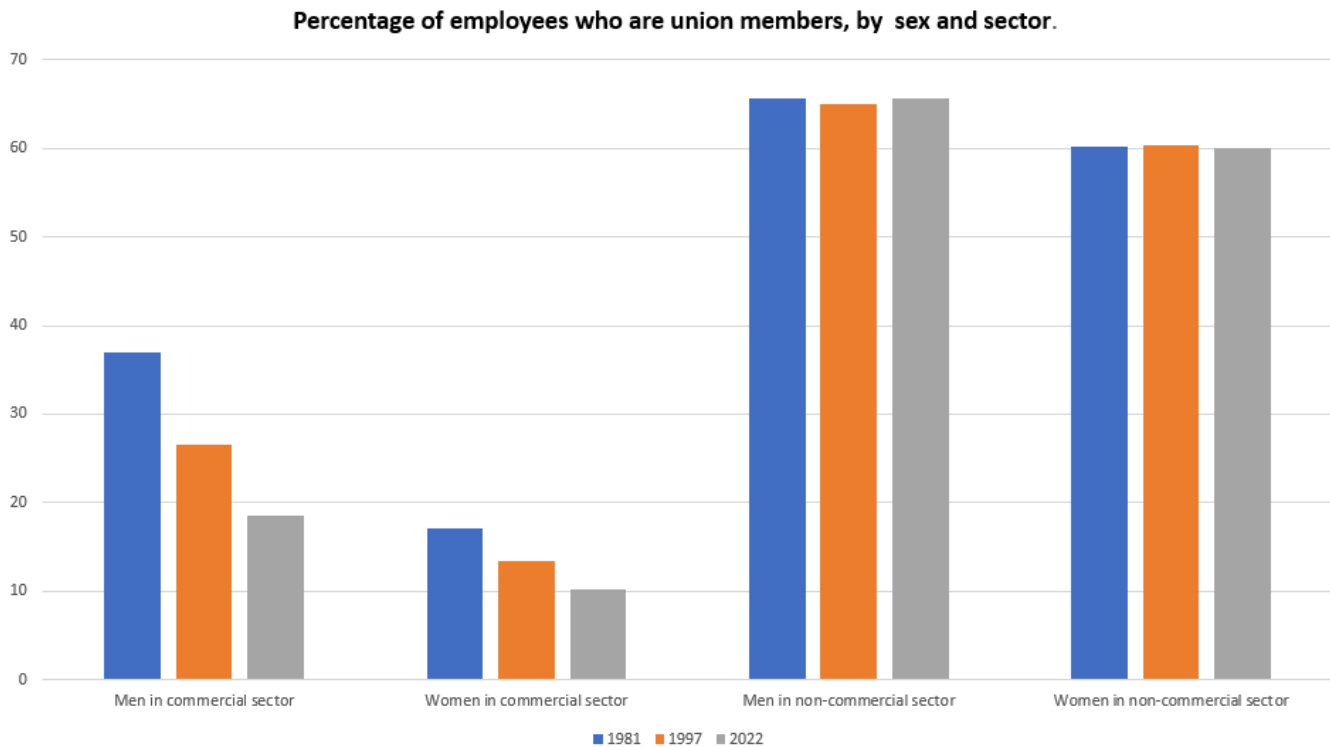
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Employees have very little power regarding their relationship with companies' management as separate individuals. However, when organized as a group, employees gain some power and can leverage it to negotiate with their employer. This section discusses the process a group of employees must undertake to become an official union.

### Unions in Canada

Since the beginning of unionization in Canada, it has seen many changes. As the economy has shifted from manufacturing to the service sector over 40 years, and technology has impacted the world of work, so have unions. Unions impact wages by increasing wages and retirement pensions. They can affect how companies hire employees and how many employees (more or less employees). Most recently during the pandemic, unions were actively negotiating working from home. Unionization has dropped primarily because of the shift from manufacturing to the service sector.

For both men and women, unionization fell in the commercial sector (industries outside educational services, health care and social assistance, and public administration) but remained stable in the non-commercial sector. For example, the percentage of men who are union members in the commercial sector fell from 31% in 1981 to 19% in 2022. However, the percentage of men who are union members in the non-commercial sector remained stable at about 66%.Note



Adapted from Statistics Canada – Percentage of employees who are union members in their main job, 1981 to 2022. This does not constitute an endorsement by Statistics Canada of this product.

The government in Canada sets the framework for unions and management through laws and role as an employer. The federal government and provincial governments have their own regulations. Jurisdiction over labour relations has impacts on HR departments. The Canadian government has jurisdiction over airlines, railways, banks and federal agencies. All other companies fall under provincial regulations. Recently, unions have been critical of government interference in collective bargaining. The Green Party of Canada has criticized the federal government by stating, “Many times the government has used its legislative power to undermine collective bargaining and interfere with the free nature of collective bargaining. The Post Office, Air Canada, and the railways are examples. When a government uses its political agenda to control working conditions and wages, to its benefit, it essentially is using its workers as political pawns” (Green Party of Canada, n.d., para. 9).

## Process of forming a union

The creation of a union follows a fairly strict process. First, an established union may contact employees and discuss the possibility of a union, or employees may contact a union on their own. The union will then help employees gather signatures to show that they want to be part of a union. The union must show signatures from over 35 percent of the organization’s employees to hold an election. Following are the steps in the unionization process.

1. *Union and employees make contact.* As a result of employee dissatisfaction, union and employees make contact and discuss the possibility of joining forces.
2. *Initial Organization Meeting.* An initial meeting with the union is scheduled to gather employee support.
3. *Formation of organizing committee Local union leadership is identified.* Its objectives are to organize a campaign to obtain the signatures of a majority of workers willing to join the union.
4. *Application to Labour Relations Board.* Once a majority of these signatures are gathered, the workers can apply for official recognition to the Labour Relations Board
5. *The Board issues the certificate.* After checking the process and the signatures, the Board certifies the union.
6. *Election of the bargaining committee and contract negotiation.* After being certified, the first step for the newly formed union is to elect a bargaining team tasked with negotiating a contract with the employer.

Unions approach prospective members with promises like higher pay, better health insurance, and more vacation time. Not surprisingly, management may resist unions because they generally add to business costs. As a result, the union organizing process can be very delicate because most employers feel the constraints of having a union organization are too great. Collective bargaining can put management at odds with its employees.

Legal protection exists for employees considering unionization, and HR and management should be educated on what can legally and illegally be said during this process. It is illegal to threaten or intimidate employees when discussing a union. Employers cannot threaten job, pay, or benefits loss due to forming a union. The image below includes what to avoid when employees consider unionization.



- Threaten with discharge or punishment.
- Threaten to terminate because of unionization.
- Threaten layoff, loss of job, benefits or salary because of unionization
- Threaten to shut down business because of unionization

- Prevention of member solicitation during nonworking hours
- Questions about union matters, such as how employees will vote in the election

Despite all of the above, some organizations will go to great lengths to prevent the unionization of their workforce. You can read about one example: Walmart wrong to close Quebec store after successful union drive, Supreme Court rules.

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## 8.6 SUMMARY

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### Summary

As you can see, Operations Managers must ensure compliance with the employment legislation in their jurisdiction. The legislation covered in this chapter impacts safety, documentation, hiring, payroll and the termination of employees. At every step, you will want to work closely with your Human Resources representative (or Employment Lawyer) to ensure you are meeting the legislative requirements to protect your people and your organization.



### Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1390#h5p-17>

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# CHAPTER 9: EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

## Chapter Outline

- 9.0 Learning Objectives
- 9.1 Diversity
- 9.2 Culturally Competent Leadership
- 9.3 Building a Culture of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- 9.4 Recruiting Diverse Talent
- 9.5 Summary



## 9.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

- Explain organizational best practices on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- List diversity management techniques needed to attract, engage, and retain employees.
- Summarize the leadership skills and cultural competencies needed to cultivate a diverse and inclusive organizational culture.

Throughout this chapter we will look at Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (or EDI) definitions, examples and strategies in order to support your role in Operations Management. Not only will you work with your HRM partner and the leadership team to achieve a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion, you will also need to access resources that will support your efforts. We have included “toolkits” throughout this chapter to help you access relevant material. It is recommended that you review the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion’s website on a regular basis to stay up-to-date on the latest EDI information.

## 9.1 DIVERSITY

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Photo by Wonder woman0731, CC BY 2.0

### What is Diversity?

**Diversity** is the inclusion of people who identify themselves differently, including but not limited to: race, gender, sexuality, religion or spirituality, and age. Diversity should be a welcomed concept in all parts of life, including the workplace.

Before diving into what it means to have a diverse and inclusive organizational culture, some terms and their definitions need to be discussed.

- **Managing Diversity:** this means an organization is ensuring that members of diverse groups are valued

and treated fairly in all parts of the environment.

- **Valuing Diversity:** often used to reflect the ways in which organizations show appreciation for diversity among applicants, employees, and customers.
- **Inclusion:** degree to which employees are accepted and treated fairly by an organization.
- **Surface-level Diversity:** includes characteristics of individuals that are readily visible to anyone.
- **Deep-level Diversity:** characteristics that are not observable, like attitude, values, and beliefs.
- **Equity:** an approach that recognizes that the systemic barriers posed for a particular person will vary; equity recognizes that different people will need different amounts of resources in order to succeed and overcome.
- **Belonging:** the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment to the point they feel themselves to be an integral part of that system.

Diversity is not just a thing to do, it is a mindset and approach that unites ethical management and high performance. It is an organizational strength, not a mere slogan or form of compliance with the law. Diversity means including talent from a wide demographic spectrum and including all employees in every aspect of the organization.

## The Operations Manager & Inclusion

So, how does an Operations Manager create a culture of inclusion? What are some best practices for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging?

### Create a culture of inclusion with attention to key practices.

- Ongoing professional development so that everyone is consistently learning and developing skills linked to inclusion.
- Adapt routines to make inclusion a foundational element in the workplace.

### Set clear expectations.

- The expectations should be measurable, here are some examples:
  - My manager asks my opinion about the work I complete.

- My manager acknowledges my contributions.
- My manager demonstrates concern about my success.
- Conduct thorough evaluations, provide professional development, and integrate learning opportunities at all levels of the organization.

### **Align the mission to advance equity.**

- Organizations must abandon one-size-fits-all mindset and tailor services to community members unique conditions and cultural factors.
- Being an inclusive leader, means an adaptive playbook for equity and the support of the board.

## **Operations Manager Toolkit**

- Queensland Government Inclusion and Diversity Commitment (2 pages)
- Why is diversity, equity, and inclusion important? (7:59)
- The Playbook for Humanizing Diversity and Inclusion (19:16)
- Diversity, Inclusion, and & Equity at SAP, How We Practice What We Preach (25:55)




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## 9.2 CULTURALLY COMPETENT LEADERSHIP

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“United colours of India” by Marco Bellucci, CC BY 2.0

**Cultural competence** is the ability of a leader to skilfully manage and support unique people, combining knowledge and skills with awareness, curiosity, and sensitivity for other cultural beliefs. It takes time, motivation, and practice to develop cultural competence. And as the world continues to evolve, cultural competence will also continue to evolve.

Operations Management leaders have the opportunity to empower others, assembling diverse and unique teams. Leaders who can do this are setting the standard for how a workplace should be run, balancing the skills of different people, recruiting talent that brings another world view, and consistently evaluating their organization for areas to improve. Moreover, culturally competent leaders can make each member of the team feel included and provide a sense of belonging.

## Developing Cultural Competence

To become culturally competent, you must first understand the meaning of **cultural awareness**. According to Collins Dictionary, cultural awareness is the “...understanding of the differences between themselves and people from other countries or other backgrounds, especially differences in attitudes and values.”<sup>1</sup>

Watch this video: Becoming Culturally Competent by Arkansas Open Educational Resources [4:02] (transcript available on Youtube) on becoming culturally competent and think about how you can add this to your own skill set in Operations Management.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=638#oembed-1>

To learn more about the ways in which a leader can become culturally competent, please refer to the resources in the toolkit below.

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- Cultural Competencies (14 pages)
- What is Cross-Cultural Competence? (2:01)
- Cultural Competency (2:08)
- Be an Inclusive Leader (1:53)
- Cultural Competence (20:23)




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1. Collins. (n.d.) Cultural awareness. In *COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary*. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/cultural-awareness>

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## 9.3 BUILDING A CULTURE OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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“Multiethnic Diverse People in a Circle Holding Hands” by Helge V. Keitel, CC BY 2.0

### Leadership of Diverse Teams

Effective leaders will build a team with greater cultural and demographic diversity. They will do this, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because they realize diversity is critical to their ability to serve diverse constituents and empower diverse communities.

Organizations that take the time to analyze their organizational make-up may realize there are fewer women than they’d like or maybe less people from differing cultures.

There are some steps to take to begin building and leading diverse teams:

1. Evaluate what groups should be included in your organization. Decide what capabilities are needed to succeed, in what roles, and set a timeline.

2. Provide on-going training to all employees to be more culturally competent as well as leadership training, when you begin to fill the gaps in the organization.
3. Detail a vision, a leadership road map if you will, that describes the plan for empowering diverse leaders in key roles.

## But, if the team isn't broke, why change it?

Fair point. Yes, your team may be working well already. Maybe your team has some diverse components. Continually searching for diverse talent and recruiting them is only going to benefit your organization. In fact, one study shows that diversity plays a role in organizational resilience. Resilience is considered an essential component for an organization in uncertain times, allowing them to better cope with crisis. Consider the COVID-19 pandemic, some organizations struggled because they could not adapt. Granted, maybe they could not adapt because they didn't have the means to adapt (money), but it could also have been because they did not have the diverse perspectives brainstorming solutions to overcome shutting down, restricted public interaction, and more. Organizations that were able to thrive during the pandemic were adapting, coming up with solutions to continue to bring in sales.

## The Benefits of Team Diversity

Diverse perspectives can enhance teams, as we have discussed. Here are some ways that diversity benefits a team, can you think of others?

1. More likely to have financial returns above their industry average
2. More likely to have higher return on equity and income growth if there is gender diversity on their board of directors
3. Perform better at decision-making and problem-solving
4. More likely to base decisions on facts rather than opinions, often remaining more objective than homogeneous teams
5. Encourage greater scrutiny, keeping cognitive resources sharp and vigilant
6. Richer discussions
7. Greater innovation, more revenue from new products and services

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Center for Open Science (1 page)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at ORCID (2 pages)
- Ask a Chief Diversity Officer (4:31)
- How to Get Serious About Diversity and Inclusion (11:04)
- Thought Leaders Episode 15: Pride in the Workplace (46:51)



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## 9.4 RECRUITING DIVERSE TALENT

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### Recruiting: Where do I begin?

So far, this content has discussed what diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging are and why they are essential to successful teams. There has also been discussion about cultural competence, learning more about different cultures and recognizing our own biases. The pieces have started falling into place regarding leading, building, and evaluating existing structures in an organization. Let's presume that your organization has started to evolve, with better professional development, the leadership is more diversity-focused, and now you are ready to recruit new people to your organization. You are looking for diverse people with unique perspectives that can help your organization be innovators, to be creative geniuses, to lead the way in your sector.

But how do you recruit talent? Or really, how do you recruit this specific kind of talent that will support your mission to include, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging? Great question.

There will always be challenges when hiring for a position, the cliché: Good help is hard to find, is a cliché for a reason. But, there are some steps that an organization can take to ensure a more successful search:

1. Communication is the keystone to success. Communicate internally and externally about your commitment to diversity, that it is critical. Make diverse qualities, like whether a person is bilingual, an essential component of the job description rather than at the end saying: Spanish-speaking preferred. Attract diverse staff by valuing the skills of the diverse staff.
2. Another step is to make your candidate pool as broad as possible from the beginning. Break into target networks by completing some research ahead of time. Search outside of the "usual" networks to find who you are looking for, including specific neighborhoods, associations, or even when perusing on networking sites like LinkedIn.
3. It may not be possible, depending on your budget, but asking firms to help with these searches may be a viable option as well. But choose carefully, it takes time for any organization or individual to develop deep networks and high-quality relationships that will make these searches a success. So, be sure to ask pointed questions about their experience and relationships. Do your homework!

Ultimately, if you want to find diverse people, you or your organization will need to commit 100% to this mission. It will be hard at times, to wriggle your way into new networks or to find that person to complete your team. But the pay off will most definitely be worth it in the end.



## Methods of Recruitment

There are two main ways to recruit talent for your organization: internally or externally. Typically, to have the broadest pool of candidates, organizations are going to use both strategies. You may have to find what works best for you and your organization.

- **Internal Recruitment:** cost-effective but may not yield the diverse results you are looking for in a candidate.
  - Advertising openings internally
  - Using networking
- **External Recruitment:** expands the available talent pool, more diversity, but can be costly.
  - Traditional advertising in newspapers, the Internet, etc.
  - Job fairs, campus visits
  - Recruitment services
  - Online recruitment (using Indeed)

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- Does Gender Diversity Affect Workplace Happiness for Academics? The Role of Diversity Management and Organizational Inclusion (17 pages)
- Essentials to Develop a Holistic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy (5:18)
- 8 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Trends in 2021 (24:32)
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (42:51)





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## 9.5 SUMMARY

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### Check Your Knowledge



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*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=644#h5p-10>*

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# CHAPTER 10: TALENT ACQUISITION

## Chapter Outline

- 10.0 Learning Objectives
- 10.1 An Introduction to Talent Acquisition
- 10.2 The Talent Acquisition Process
- 10.3 Recruitment Strategies
- 10.4 The Selection Process
- 10.5 Interviewing
- 10.6 Testing and Making the Offer
- 10.7 Summary



## 10.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

- Explain the steps to an effective recruitment strategy.
- Explain the various strategies that can be used in recruitment.
- Discuss the steps in the selection process.
- Explain how talent acquisition differs from recruitment.

## 10.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO TALENT ACQUISITION

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Individuals working in Operations Management require a constant supply of talent to fill roles within their organization. When hiring new individuals to your organization, you may be familiar with the term “recruitment.” Typically, recruitment is a short-term goal, that begins when there is a need for a new hire and ends when the role is filled. Talent Acquisition, however, is based on a long-term goal focused on creating a pipeline of talent that will continue to fill roles into the future. Talent Acquisition is particularly important for organizations that are experiencing a skills gap. The Talent Acquisition process involves planning, goal alignment, and job description review before the recruitment and selection stages begin. In this chapter, we will examine talent acquisition to ensure operations managers understand not only the process but also the ways in which they will participate in the hiring of new talent in their organizations.

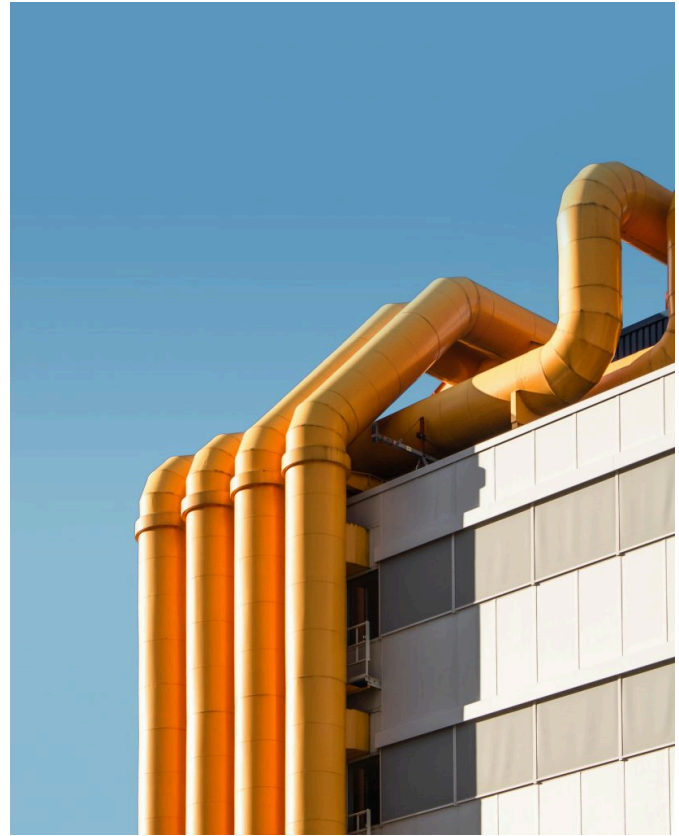


Photo by Victor, Unsplash License

## 10.2 THE TALENT ACQUISITION PROCESS

Although it might seem straightforward, obtaining the right talent at the right place and at the right time, is not easy and requires extensive planning. A human resource plan comprises six main steps:

**1. Evaluate the goals of the organization.** What is the organization's plan for growth? Does it need personnel to staff a new office or retail location? Is it hoping to multiply the size of its sales force to support a significant sales push? Does it intend to offer additional customer service or internal support to boost customer satisfaction?

**2. Identify the factors that might affect the Human Resource (Capital) Plan.** This is where the NOC and O\*Net Online can be helpful. Large and small companies alike should examine information from local Chambers of Commerce, business publications and industry associations to predict possible developments in the market. That can include new businesses or other larger employers increasing their hiring or laying off employees.

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- O\*Net Resource
- National Occupational Classification Resource



**3. Establish the current talent landscape.** Keeping the organization's objectives in mind, there is a need for a complete picture of the current workforce. A detailed company organizational chart can illustrate the jobs, skills, and competencies of each organization member.

**4. Trend analysis.** Many factors need to be accounted for when looking ahead for future needs: turnover rate, investments in new technology, the economy, the unemployment rate, and the competition (poaching) can all influence the ability to achieve one's staffing goals. Performing a trend analysis based on historical data is an effective way to forecast labour needs. To learn more about trend analysis, review this article: [Trend Analysis: What is it Used for in HR?](#)

**5. Conduct a gap analysis.** The difference between your future needs and the current landscape becomes the target to meet for your recruitment process. To learn more about conducting a gap analysis, review this article: [How to conduct a skills gap analysis](#).

**6. Develop a Recruitment Plan.** Considerations for a recruitment plan are considered in the following sections.

## Job Descriptions

Hiring Managers often think that the first step in recruiting is posting a job advertisement. They are sometimes surprised to learn that you have to have a detailed and up-to-date job description in place before posting a job advertisement. Job descriptions are comprised of several important sections that detail the requirements of the job. These sections include:

- Job Title
- Purpose of the role
- Job Responsibilities
- Skills and Qualifications
- Work environment
- Physical Demands
- Reporting Structure

You will need to complete a review of your existing job description and ensure the information is accurate and up to date as this document will be used to write the job advertisement. If you do not use the job description to write the job advertisement, candidates may be hired into the role and then be surprised by the actual scope and responsibilities of the job as the job posting was not based on fact. This can result in morale and engagement issues and may result in a new hire starting their job search with another organization.

## Recruitment Plan

The recruitment process is an important part of maintaining a rich supply of skilled candidates ready to fill upcoming roles. It is defined as a process that provides the organization with a pool of qualified job candidates from which to choose. As a process, recruitment involves an element of marketing and sales, as its objective is to raise the level of interest of customers (i.e., prospective employees) in what the company has to offer (i.e., jobs).

When devising a recruiting plan, an important element to consider is whether the pool of candidates will be sourced internally, externally or both. Each of these options have consequences for how recruiting will be



conducted. Note that, for some organizations, there is really no choice but to go internal (e.g., military) or external (e.g., small business).

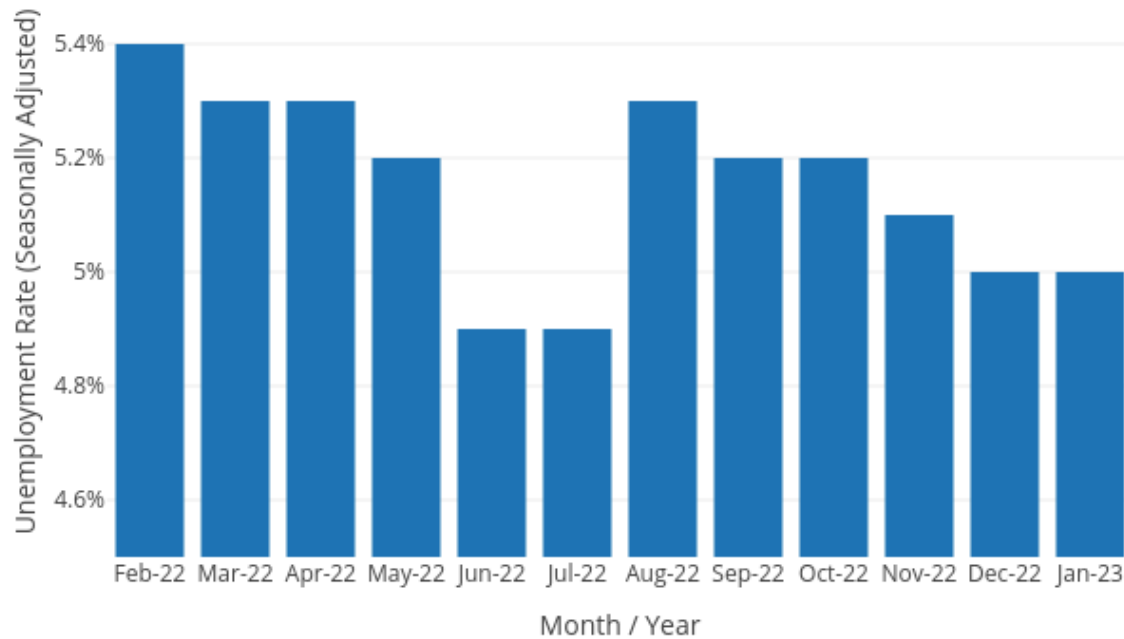
## Internal Recruitment

Assuming the job analysis and job description are ready, an organization may look at internal candidates' qualifications first. **Internal candidates** are people who are already working for the company. If an internal candidate meets the qualifications, this person might be encouraged to apply, and the job opening may not be published. Many organizations have formal job posting procedures and **job bidding systems** in place for internal candidates. For example, job postings may be sent to an internal e-mail distribution list or posted on a website so all current employees have access to them. Some of the benefits of hiring internally include cost, rewarding the contribution of existing staff, and existing knowledge of the candidates' skills and abilities.

## External Recruitment

The alternative to internal recruitment is external recruitment. For example, it may be decided to hire an outside head-hunting firm for a high-level executive position to help recruit the right person. For an entry-level position, advertising on social networking websites might be the best strategy. When recruiting externally, an understanding of the labour market is essential. For example, the pandemic had a drastic effect on unemployment rates in Canada in just a few months (see graph below). From a general recruiting perspective, this means that the available talent doubled in that period. Of course, the need for talent also shifted dramatically and, in general, most companies were not hiring as many employees (which causes the high unemployment numbers). However, the recruiting strategy requires a finer-grained analysis of general unemployment numbers because there are vast variations in the availability of specific talent in the labour market. For example, the pandemic has led to an important shortage of workers in healthcare and agricultural industries but an abundance of workers in other areas (e.g., hospitality).

## Canadian Unemployment Rate: February 2022 – January 2023



Data Source: **Stats Canada**  
Table: 14-10-0287-01

“Canadian Unemployment Rates” by Fanshawe College CC BY 4.0

## Be Proactive

When drafting a recruitment plan, it is easy to underestimate the resources and time required for the process to unfold.

On average, the time between the posting of an employment ad on a company’s website and actually having an employee sign an employment contract is around 40 days.

If you change the end-point to the time at which the new employee actually meets minimal performance requirements, the timeline is more like six months. Given this delay, Operations Managers need to be proactive and one step ahead of future vacancies. The objective is not simply hiring for open positions but hiring for positions that are likely to be open in the future.

## The Law and Recruitment

Recruiting employees can be considered a passive process, one that does not directly involve making decisions about people. A job is posted and applicants apply. Seems simple but your ‘ad’ needs to accurately reflect the requirements of the job and candidate. The process of specifying the desired knowledge, skills, abilities, others (KSAO’s) implicitly can exclude potential applicants. In the event that some criteria may affect some of the protected categories disproportionately, it is important that these criteria be proven to be job related. For example, a job advertisement that suggests an organization is looking for a “young and energetic” individual is not in compliance with the Human Rights legislation, on the basis of age. You can, however, state that a candidate needs to pass a medical test to confirm their eyesight when applying for a job as a transit driver. This requirement is known as a BFOR, or a Bona Fide Occupational Requirement and it is legally compliant as eyesight is a mandatory and legitimate requirement for this role. Refer to the Ontario Human Rights Commission website for more information on this topic.

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- Ontario Human Rights Commission



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## 10.3 RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

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As previously stated, the recruitment process is an important part of the Talent Acquisition process. It is defined as a process that provides the organization with a pool of qualified job candidates from which to choose. As a process, recruitment involves an element of marketing and sales, as its objective is to raise the level of interest of customers (i.e., prospective employees) in what the company has to offer (i.e., jobs).

Now that we have discussed the development of the job descriptions, and you are aware of the laws relating to recruitment, it is time to begin the recruiting process. In many ways, recruiting borrows from the field of marketing. The objective of any recruitment strategy and campaign is to generate as many quality applications as possible; this objective is very similar to a marketing campaign that aims to attract customers. As such, with some exceptions, many core principles of marketing apply to recruiting. A recruiting campaign must establish a clearly defined audience (e.g., future employees), create high quality, creative, and easy-to-share content (e.g., job posting, company videos, etc.), rely on multiple content channels (e.g., company website, LinkedIn), and be followed with rigorous analysis and reporting.

Let's consider the role of company branding. This marketing concept focuses on the way that organizations

differentiate themselves from each other. This can be in logo design, name selection or messaging. These marketing efforts tell a story to attract and retain customers. Today, branding is also very important for companies in their competition for talent. The rise of social media platforms has accentuated the importance of HR to manage the public image of companies. For example, Glassdoor is a site that allows current and former employees to anonymously review companies and provide salary information. In fact, a majority of job seekers aged 18-44 look at Glassdoor reviews when deciding to accept a job offer and sign at a new company. Review sites and social pages that collect ratings (e.g., Facebook) are more important than one would think.

## Professional Recruiters

Many organizations have specific employees who focus solely on the recruiting function. Recruiters have to be strong networkers and they usually attend many events where possible candidates will be present. Recruiting agencies and individual professional recruiters ('head-hunters') have a constant pipeline of possible candidates in case a position should arise that would be a good match. There are three main types of recruiters:

1. **Corporate recruiter.** A corporate recruiter is an employee within a company who focuses entirely on recruiting for his or her company. Corporate recruiters are contracted by the company for which they are recruiting. This type of recruiter may be focused on a specific area, such as technical recruiting.
2. **Temporary recruitment or staffing firm.** Suppose your receptionist is going on medical leave and you need to hire somebody to replace him or her, but you do not want a long-term hire. You can utilize the services of a temporary recruitment firm to send you qualified candidates who are willing to work shorter contracts. Usually, the firm pays the salary of the employee and the company pays the recruitment firm, so you don't have to add this person to your payroll. If the person does a good job, there may be opportunities for you to offer him or her a full-time permanent position.
3. **Executive search firm.** These firms are focused on high-level management positions, such as director, VP, and CEO roles. They typically charge 10–20 percent of the first year salary, so they can be quite expensive. However, they do an extensive amount of the upfront work, presenting candidates who have been pre-screened and interviewed, and effectively a 'short-list' candidate.

## Internet Job Sites

The internet is proliferated with job posting websites hosted by different providers and available to any company wanting to post their available jobs. From an HR perspective, there are many options to place an ad, most of which are inexpensive. The downside to this method is the immense number of resumes you may receive from these websites, all of which may or may not be qualified. To overcome this, many organizations

have implemented software that searches for keywords in resumes. Some examples of websites might include the following:

- Monster
- Indeed
- Workopolis

## Company Job Sites

Company specific websites now include a career page and are a source of pride for many businesses. The effort put into the page layout, design, and messaging, demonstrates how many organizations rely on their career page to attract the right talent. Here are some examples of high-quality career pages:

- Verizon media
- Spotify
- Square

## Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube offer interesting opportunities to gain a media presence to attract a variety of employees. The goal of using social media as a recruiting tool is to create a buzz about your organization, share stories of successful employees, and tout an interesting culture. Even smaller companies can utilize this technology by posting job openings as their status updates. This strategy is relatively inexpensive, but there are some things to consider. For example, tweeting about a job opening might spark interest in some candidates, but the trick is to show your personality as an employer early on – and you may be casting too wide of a net for applications.

## Campus Recruiting and Events

Colleges and universities can be excellent sources of new candidates, usually at entry-level positions. Consider technical colleges focused on culinary expertise, aerospace technology, or adult correctional interventions. These can be great sources of talent with specialized training in a specific area. In turn, universities can provide talent who have formal training in a specific field. Many organizations use their campus recruiting programs to onboard new talent, who will eventually develop into managers.

For this type of program to work, it requires establishing relationships with campus communities, such as campus career services departments. Attending campus events, such as job fairs, can also require time. Many

organizations or associations also hold their own events to allow people to network and learn about new technologies.

## Professional Associations

Professional associations are usually non-profit organizations aiming to further a particular profession. Almost every profession has its own professional organization. For example, Supply Chain Canada is an association that may be of interest to Operations Managers in Canada. See the link below to research the Supply Chain Canada website.

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- [Supply Chain Canada](#)



## REFERRALS

Many recruiting plans include asking current employees for referrals. The quality of referred applicants is usually high, since most people would not recommend an individual they thought was incapable of doing the job. E-mailing a job opening to current employees and offering incentives to refer a friend can be a quick way of recruiting individuals. For example, Groupe Dynamite, is a very successful fashion retailer based in Montreal. It is recognized as one of the city's best employers and offers referral bonuses as an incentive for employees to recruit candidates from their personal networks (up to \$2,500 for a successful referral).

## ***Advantages and Disadvantages of Recruiting Strategies***



Recruitment Strategy	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Outside recruiters, executive search firms, and temporary employment agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be time saving</li> <li>• Reduce demands on internal resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Less control over final candidates to be interviewed</li> </ul>
<b>Campus recruiting/educational institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can hire people to grow with the organization</li> <li>• Plentiful source of talent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Only appropriate for certain types of experience levels</li> </ul>
<b>Professional organizations and associations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry specific</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be a fee to place an ad</li> <li>• May be time-consuming to network</li> </ul>
<b>Websites/Internet recruiting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity friendly</li> <li>• Low cost</li> <li>• Quick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be too broad</li> <li>• Be prepared to deal with hundreds of resumes</li> </ul>
<b>Social media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexpensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Overwhelming response</li> </ul>
<b>Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to specific target markets of candidates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be expensive</li> <li>• May get too many non-committed candidates</li> </ul>
<b>Referrals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher quality people</li> <li>• Potential for longer retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern for lack of diversity</li> <li>• Nepotism</li> </ul>
<b>Unsolicited resumes and applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexpensive, especially with time-saving resume keyword search software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undefined targets or objectives.</li> </ul>

Recruitment Strategy	Advantages	Disadvantages
Internet and/or traditional advertisements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can target a specific audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be expensive</li> </ul>

At the beginning of this section, a comparison was made between recruiting and marketing. It is true that there are many similarities between generating quality applications and attracting customers. However, these two processes differ in one specific area: the communication of less favourable characteristics of the job. In a marketing campaign, negative elements of the product will be minimized or non-existent. When advertising pick-up trucks, a manufacturer may not stress the less positive characteristics such as gas consumption or comfort. The focus will instead be on the more favourable characteristics such as horsepower, suspension, and the large capacity of the cargo area.

## COSTS OF RECRUITMENT

Recruitment strategies, planning and execution require careful consideration of costs and budgeting.

For example, let's say you have three positions you need to fill in Operations Management, with one being a temporary hire. You have determined your advertising costs will be \$400, and your temporary agency costs will be approximately \$700 for the month. You expect at least one of the two positions will be recruited as a referral, so you will pay a referral bonus of \$500. Here is how you can calculate the cost of recruitment for the month:

### **Cost per hire**

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= \text{advertising costs} + \text{recruiter costs} + \text{referral costs} + \text{social media costs} + \text{event costs} \\
 &= \$400 + \$700 + \$500 \\
 &= \frac{\$1600}{3} \\
 &= \$533 \text{ recruitment cost per hire}
 \end{aligned}$$

Recruitment costs should also factor in the estimated time of internal resources required, this includes the time of all those involved through to making the offer. Considering the likely total cost per hire may influence your recruitment strategy choices. Combining our cost projections and analysis with yield ratio experience will provide a better basis for making these choices.

In addition, we can look at the yield ratio when we look at how effective our recruiting methods are. A **yield ratio** is the percentage of applicants from one source who make it to the next stage in the selection process (e.g., they get an interview). For example, if you received two hundred resumes from an ad you placed within a professional organization, and fifty-two of those make it to the interview stage, this means a 26 percent yield ( $52/200$ ). We can determine the best place to recruit for a particular position using these calculations. Note that some yield ratios may vary for particular jobs, and a higher yield ratio must also consider the cost of that method. For an entry-level job, corporate recruiters may yield a better ratio than using social media, but it likely has a much higher cost per hire.

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## 10.4 THE SELECTION PROCESS

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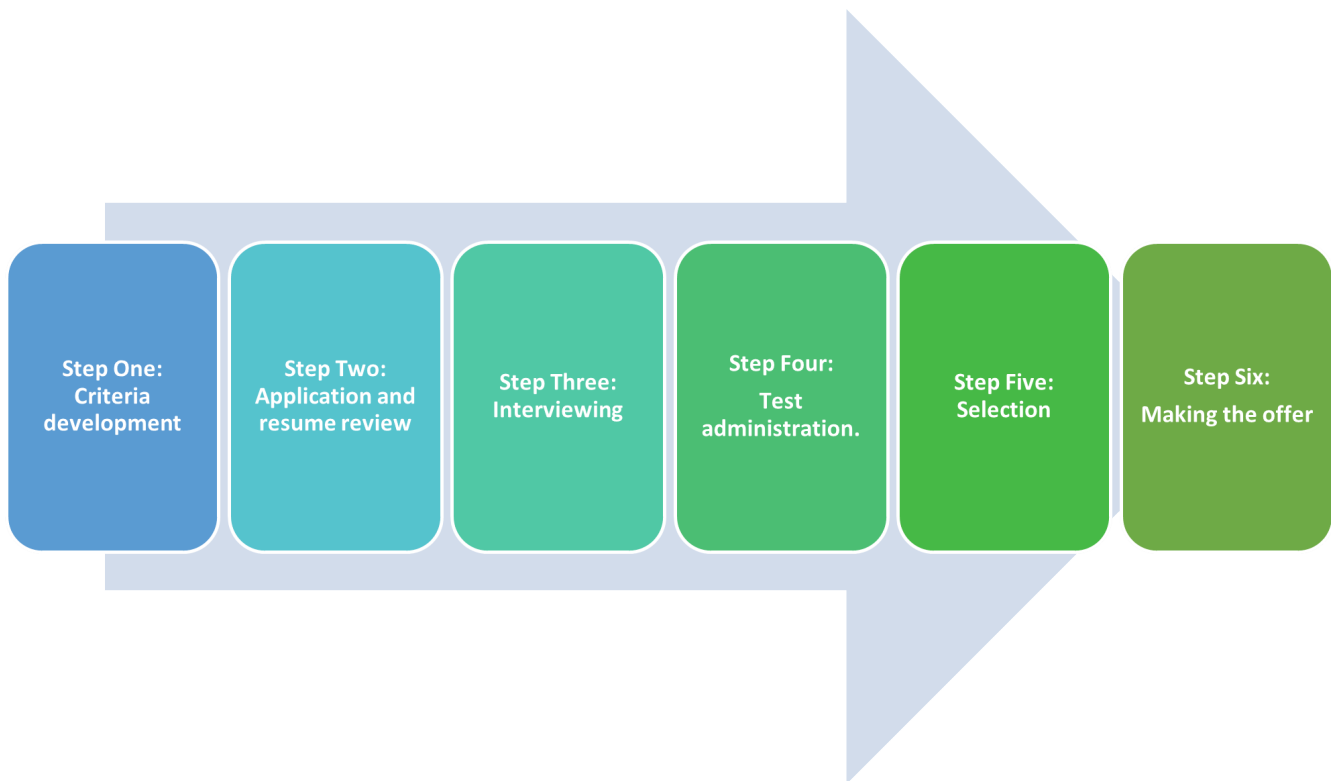
After recruitment has yielded a sufficient number of quality applications, the selection of candidates can begin. The **selection process** refers to the multiple steps involved in choosing people who have the right qualifications to fill a current or future job opening. While Operations managers and supervisors will usually have the ultimate decision as to who gets hired, you will work closely with the Human Resources Talent Acquisition team as they create a funnel, narrowing down the list of candidates and guiding managers in this process. Similar to the recruitment process, the selection process can be expensive. The time involved in the hiring process to review resumes, weigh the applications, and conduct interviews can be extensive and takes time (and money) away from other priority activities within the organization. In addition, there are financial implications of conducting testing of candidates and potential travel for in-person interviews. In fact, the US Department of Labor and Statistics estimates the combined direct and indirect cost of hiring a new employee can reach upwards of \$40,000.<sup>1</sup> Due to the high costs, it is important to hire the right person from the beginning and ensure a fair selection process.

### How to Select Employees

The selection process consists of six distinct aspects:

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1. IHD Corporation. (n.d.). *Pre-Employment Testing*. [https://ihdcorp.com/assets/ihdcorp\\_pre-employmenttesting.pdf](https://ihdcorp.com/assets/ihdcorp_pre-employmenttesting.pdf)



“Employee Selection Process” by Elizabeth Cameron, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

1. **Step One: Criteria development.** The first aspect of selection is planning the interview process, which includes criteria development. Criteria development means determining which characteristics are sought for the position and how those characteristics will be assessed during the selection process. As previously mentioned, the criteria should be related directly to the job analysis and the job specifications. By developing the criteria before reviewing resumes, the HR manager can be sure they are being fair in selecting candidates to interview as they have not been influenced by information in the candidate’s application or resume. Some organizations may need to develop an application or a biographical information sheet. Most of these are completed online and should include information about the candidate, education, and previous job experience. Finally, identification of the selection criteria and weighting of the criteria should be determined at this stage, again to prevent influence from the information contained in the candidates’ resumes.
2. **Step Two: Application and resume review.** Once the criteria have been developed, applications can be reviewed. Increasingly, HR managers use automated software to screen applications and resumes. These are based on keywords searches that narrow down the number of candidates’ resumes for review.
3. **Step Three: Interviewing.** After the HR manager and hiring manager have determined which applications meet the minimum criteria, they must select those people to be interviewed. Most people do not have time to interview twenty or thirty candidates, so the list of candidates is reduced to a ‘short-list’ – typically to 3 to 5 candidates for a final round of screening.

4. **Step Four: Test administration.** After the interview stage, a company may administer a test or series of tests before a hiring decision is made. These could include drug tests, physical fitness tests, personality tests, and/or cognitive tests. Increasingly, at this stage, companies also perform social media checks to confirm that the information in their resume is the same as posted online, or to see how applicants present themselves to the public.
5. **Step Five: Selection.** At this point in the process, hiring manager(s) should have the information they need to select the best suitable candidate for the position. All of the information gathered throughout the process is reviewed and a decision is made. Once the ideal candidate is selected, some organizations also perform reference checks and credit report checks to confirm final suitability.
6. **Step Six: Making the offer.** The last step in the selection process is to offer a position to the chosen candidate. The development of an offer via e-mail or letter is a formal part of the process and requires careful articulation of all elements and conditions of the offer. Compensation and benefits will be defined in an offer, as will any unique legal considerations.

*The Selection Process at a Glance*

Step	Objectives
<b>Criteria Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand KSAs</li> <li>• Determine sources of KSA information such as testing, interviews</li> <li>• Develop scoring system for each of the sources of information</li> <li>• Create an interview plan</li> </ul>
<b>Application and Resume Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be based on criteria developed in step one</li> <li>• Consider internal versus external candidates</li> </ul>
<b>Interview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine types of interview(s)</li> <li>• Write interview questions</li> <li>• Be aware of interview bias</li> </ul>
<b>Test Administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform testing as outlined in criteria development; could include reviewing work samples, drug testing or written cognitive and personality tests</li> </ul>
<b>Selection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather selection information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Apply selection criteria</li> <li>◦ Evaluate final candidates and select</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Making the Offer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete negotiations</li> <li>• Write the offer letter or employment agreement</li> </ul>

We will discuss each of these aspects in detail in the following section.

## Criteria Development

### Principles of Selection

Before reviewing resumes and applications, a company must have a clear idea of the education, skills, and abilities they want to hire for the position. While the job specifications derived from the job analysis will help to understand which qualifications are required, it is also important to decide **how** these will be assessed.

Organizations have access to a wide variety of tools to assess candidates' KSAOs, and when structuring the selection process, there are a few principles to keep in mind.

## Sequencing Based on Cost

Some KSAO's are objective and very easy to measure. For example, whether someone has a Bachelor's Degree in Biology or a truck driver's license is easy to determine by looking at the resumes. Whether someone is a team player or can handle stress is not as straightforward to assess. This KSAO could be measured with an interview or a simulation, two relatively costly processes. In order to efficiently narrow down a list of applicants, hiring managers will begin by screening for those more objective, easy-to-assess KSAOs and leave the expensive tests and checks for later in the process.

# ORGANIZATIONAL FIT

Fit includes not only the right technical expertise, education, and experience or the KSAO's derived from the job analysis, but also fit in the company culture and team culture. This means that companies can select based on criteria that go above and beyond the specific elements of the job. At Amazon, a core value in their company culture is a focus on developing leaders to grow with the organization. If a potential candidate is not interested in long-term career growth, he or she might not be deemed an appropriate strategic fit with the organization. In today's organizations, most people are required to work within teams. As a result, fit within a team is as important as the fit with company culture. Microsoft, for example, does an immense amount of teamwork. The company is structured so that there are marketers, accountants, developers, and many others working on one product at the same time. As a result, Microsoft looks for not only company culture fit, but also fit with other team members.

## Application and Resume Review

The selection of employees is a complex process, involving many important steps. As a result of technological advances and research in psychology, this process has also evolved dramatically over the years. Interestingly, there are two elements of the selection process that have remained very stable over the years: the use of the resume (or CV) and the use of the interview.



## Applications

In years past it was generally accepted practice to require a job candidate to complete a job application – with or without the added requirement of supplying a resume (resume is French for ‘summary’) or cv (curriculum vitae (CV) is Latin for ‘course of life’). In more recent history, the resume has displaced the need for a formal job application with many organizations.

## RESUMES

Resumes are the key piece of information used to select candidates. This document is a summary of a candidate’s education, work experience, and skill set. A quick web search will yield hundreds of articles on how to write the perfect resume. Given the prevalence of the resume in the selection process, it is very important to have one on file, ready to go if an interesting opportunity arises. The Career Services department at Fanshawe College is a unit that provides career services to assist students and alumni in their employment search.

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- Fanshawe Career and Employment Services




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## 10.5 INTERVIEWING

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As a member of the Operations Management team, you will most likely be asked to sit down with potential job candidates as part of the interview process. Interviewing, like the use of resumes, has been a staple of employee selection for many years. Human resource managers and hiring managers appreciate the first-hand contact with the candidate that the interviews provide. Compared to other selection tools available to companies, interviewing is relatively expensive. The time of the interviewer is the major factor for this cost, thus, in the sequencing of the process, interviews are often placed towards the end of the selection process.

One major downside of interviews is that they can be very subjective and fraught with biases, conscious and unconscious. For example, it is common to have different interviewers come up with diverging assessments of a candidate. All this to say that the interview can potentially be problematic. However, scientific advances have provided some solutions to help make the interview a reliable and valid selection tool. These advances lie in the use of interviewer training and structuring of the interview. We discuss these two solutions in this section.

## Interviewer Training

Unconscious biases and subjectivity tend to drastically reduce the usefulness of the interview. One effective way to counter this is to train those conducting the interviews. Research has shown that interviewer training is a very effective way to reduce biases.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a short video that explains how to reduce biases in the selection process.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=876#oembed-1>

Video: Understanding Unconscious Bias by The Royal Society [2:59] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License. Transcript available on YouTube

The interesting aspect of unconscious biases is that they are greatly reduced by simply raising awareness of their existence. Thus, knowing that they exist and what form they take, helps eliminate them. Here is a list of some common biases that can cloud an interviewer's judgment.

- **Confirmation bias:** This is the tendency to search for, interpret, favour, and recall information that confirms or supports one's personal beliefs or values. People display this bias when they gather or remember information selectively, or when they interpret it in a biased way. For example, an interviewer who meets an extremely well-dressed candidate may be biased towards empirical data that supports one's belief that this candidate is meticulous, ignoring the remainder of the data that is not supportive. This is a great video that demonstrates the strength of confirmation bias; it shows how we are deeply conditioned to look for information that confirms what we know versus seeking information that actually tests our beliefs, creating a very narrow mindset.
- **Anchoring:** A tendency to depend too heavily on an initial piece of information offered (considered to be the "anchor") to make subsequent judgments during decision making – it becomes the primary reference point for judgments. Once the value of this anchor is set, all future negotiations, arguments, estimates, etc. are considered in relation to the anchor. Information that aligns with the anchor tends to be assimilated toward it, while information that is more dissonant gets discarded. For example, research has shown that we form opinions about others very quickly, in just a few seconds<sup>2</sup>, partly because of the

1. Posthuma, R. A., Morgeson, F. P., & Campion, M. A. (2002). Beyond employment interview validity: A comprehensive narrative review of recent research and trends over time. *Personnel Psychology*, 55(1), 1–81.

effect of anchoring.

- **Stereotyping:** This is forming an opinion about how people of a given race, gender, religion, or other characteristics will think, act or respond or whether the interviewee is animated or reserved. For example, a women with children will miss a lot of work; a veteran won't be able to adjust to working in an office; a male candidate will make a more assertive leader than a female candidate.
- **Halo effect:** The halo effect occurs when a positive characteristic or strong point, held by the interviewer as a positive, and demonstrated by the candidate influences the entire interview. For instance, a candidate has a degree from a prestigious University so you think he or she must be highly competent and is therefore looked upon favourably. The opposite of this is known as the pitchfork effect, when one negative characteristic or point overshadows the interview. For example, a candidate answers the first two questions of the interview poorly which leads you to believe he or she is not qualified for the job.

## Interview Structure

Having a trained interviewer is one way in which to reduce biases in the interview and increase the chances of selecting the right candidate. The other is to structure the interview and treat it less like a free flowing conversation but rather, like a standardized test. In a structured interview, candidates are asked a set of standardized, pre-determined questions based on the job analysis. The expected or desired answers to these questions are determined ahead of time, which allows the interviewer to rate responses as the candidate provides answers. This allows for a fair interview process (everyone is treated the same way) and one that is up to twice as effective at predicting job performance than an unstructured interview.<sup>3</sup> Keeping in mind the necessity of structuring the interview, there are many forms of structured interviews that an HR manager and hiring manager can choose from.

Interviews can be time-consuming, so it makes sense to choose the right type of interview(s) for the individual job. Some jobs, for example, may necessitate only one interview, while another may necessitate a phone interview (pre-screening) and at least one or two traditional interviews. Below, we list some of these interview formats.

## Interview Types

1. **Traditional interview.** This type of interview normally takes place in the office. It consists of the

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2. Willis, J., & Todorov, A. (2006). First Impressions: Making Up Your Mind After a 100-Ms Exposure to a Face. *Psychological Science*, 17(7), 592–598.

3. Wiesner, W.H., & Cronshaw, S.F. (1988). A meta-analytic investigation of the impact of interview format and degree of structure on the validity of the employment interview. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 61, 275-290.

interviewer and the candidate, and a series of questions are asked and answered.

2. **Telephone/video interview.** A telephone interview is a relatively quick and inexpensive pre-screening to narrow the list of people before a traditional interview. It can be used to determine salary requirements or other data that might automatically rule out giving someone a traditional interview. It is an opportunity for candidates to disqualify themselves from the selection process. For example, if you receive two hundred resumes and narrow these down to twenty-five, it is still unrealistic to interview twenty-five people in person. At this point, you may decide to conduct phone interviews of those twenty-five candidates, which could narrow the in-person interviews to a more manageable ten or so people.
3. **Panel interview.** A panel interview occurs when several people are interviewing one candidate at the same time. While this type of interview can be nerve racking for the candidate, it can also be a more effective use of time. Consider some companies who require three to four people to interview candidates for a job. It would be unrealistic to ask the candidate to come in for three or four interviews, so it makes sense for them to be interviewed by everyone at once.
4. **Group interview.** In a group interview, two or more candidates interview at the same time. This type of interview can be an excellent source of information if you need to know how they may relate to other people in their job. This method can be useful if you expect to hire more than one candidate of the group and want to observe ‘team’ dynamics – or who might best work well together.
5. **Company tour/meal or cocktail interviews.** Many organizations offer to take the candidate to lunch or dinner for the interview. Others may offer a tour of the workplace. This can allow for a more casual meeting where, as the interviewer, you might be able to gather more information about the person, such as their manners, social skills, and treatment of waitstaff. This type of interview is common in certain domains (e.g., finance, accounting, client relations). While this interview may resemble an unstructured one, organizations try to structure them as much as possible with detailed assessment sheets to be completed after the event.

Most organizations include multiple interviews in their selection process. These processes may include one or more of the above types of interviews. For example, they may conduct preliminary phone interviews, then do a meal interview, and follow up with a traditional interview, depending on the type of job.

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Most interviews consist of three types of questions: ice-breakers, situational questions, and/or behavioural questions.

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## Ice-breaker

Interviews can be awkward, particularly at the beginning when tension is high. **Icebreaker** questions allow the interviewee to become more comfortable, therefore, feel more comfortable to creatively and efficiently express themselves during the interview process. It also helps the interviewer feel more at ease to ask the questions that need to be asked. The interviewer also gets a better sense of who the applicant is and what type of employee they can be in the future. Here is a list of possible ice-breaker questions that could be used.

## Situational

**Situational** questions are ones in which the candidate is given details on a hypothetical scenario and is asked how he or she might deal with this situation. Such questions help gain insight as to the candidate's analytical and problem-solving skills, as well as determine how well candidates can handle a problem that they did not prepare for. An example of this question might be: If you were the supervisor of 15 production employees and you wanted to review the emergency evacuation plan with them, how would you go about setting up this meeting and what would you include in your presentation?

## Behavioural

**Behavioural** questions focus on the candidates' past experience and what they actually did in a variety of given situations. These questions often begin with 'tell me about a time when you [...]'. The assumption in this type of interview question is that someone's past experience or actions are an indicator of future behaviour. An example of this type of question might be: Tell us about the most challenging project you have worked on. Please explain what made it so challenging and what you did to overcome this challenge.

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## 10.6 TESTING AND MAKING THE OFFER

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Organizations can draw from a wide variety of psychological tests to assess KSA's. Here we will examine some of the most common tests administered to job candidates and the exciting moment when we present the job offer to the successful candidate. A vast number of KSAs can be measured by a well-designed structured interview. However, as mentioned earlier, interviewing can be time-consuming and usually involves some costs. In addition, even in the best of cases, it remains a subjective process and biases can influence the interviewers. A common complement to interviewing that is relatively inexpensive and much more objective, is standardized testing. In this section, we will cover the most common tests used for employment decisions. These range of tests explore the candidates psychological profile, personality traits, intellect, knowledge and experience – all culminating with the final checks before selection.



## Cognitive Ability Tests

A cognitive ability test measures intelligence. The most common types are IQ tests which measure general mental ability. Other tests can specifically focus on verbal ability, math skills, spatial perception, or inductive and deductive reasoning. The GMAT, a test often required for admission in MBA programs, is an example of a cognitive ability test.

## Aptitude Tests

Aptitude tests can measure abilities such as mechanical aptitude and clerical aptitude (e.g., speed of typing or ability to use a particular computer program). Usually, an aptitude test asks specific questions related to the requirements of the job. For example, to become a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer, you need to pass the RCMP Police Aptitude Test, which is an aptitude test. The test measures memory, spatial abilities, prioritization, ability to multitask, decision-making, and listening capabilities.

## Personality Tests

Personality is a major psychological construct that is defined as patterns of individual differences in thinking, feeling, and behaving. These patterns are relatively stable across situations and over time. For that reason, they can be useful to make employment decisions because we can be confident that personality traits will manifest themselves in the workplace. Of the many personality theories that exist in psychology, the “Big Five” personality model is the most commonly used for employment decisions. It categorizes personalities into five broad dimensions: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience.

**Extroversion** focuses on how well people get along with others. Extroversion concerns sources of energy and the pursuit of interactions with others. In general, extroverts draw energy or recharge by interacting with others, while introverts get tired from interacting with others and replenish their energy with solitude. Someone who scores high on this trait is generally seen as being more assertive, outgoing, and generally talkative. Others see a person who scores high on this trait as being sociable — who actually thrives in social situations.

**Agreeableness** is a trait that describes a person’s overall kindness, affection levels, trust, and sense of altruism. A person who scores high on this trait is someone who is comfortable with being kind and friendly to others. Others see such people as being helpful and cooperative, and someone who is trustworthy and altruistic.

**Conscientiousness** can be described as the tendency to engage in goal-directed behaviours, exert control



over one's impulses, and overall thoughtfulness. Conscientious people have the ability to delay gratification, work within the rules, and plan and organize effectively.

**Emotional stability**, as the name implies, relates to the overall emotional stability of an individual. A person who scores low on this trait may be seen by others as being moody, irritable, and anxious. A person who scores high on this trait is seen as being more emotionally stable and resilient.

**Openness to experience** is a trait that describes a person's preference for imagination, artistic, and intellectual activities. People who score high on this trait are seen by others as being intellectual, creative, or artistic. They tend to be forever curious about the world around them and are interested in learning new things. A person who scores high on this trait typically has a broad range of interests and may enjoy travelling, learning about other cultures, and trying out new experiences.

If you are curious about your own personality profile, there are a lot of free tests available on the internet. Here is one example: The Big Five Project – Personality Test (outofservice.com). You may also explore the Meyers-Briggs test, widely used in identifying and understanding personality types.

## Honesty and Integrity Tests

The increasing emphasis on corporate ethics and guarding against reputational damage has led to the use of honesty and integrity test.

**Honesty and integrity tests** measure an applicant's propensity toward undesirable behaviours such as lying, stealing, taking illegal drugs, or abusing alcohol. Two types of tests assess honesty and integrity. Overt integrity tests ask explicit questions about honesty, including attitudes and behaviour regarding theft. Personality-oriented (covert) integrity tests use psychological concepts such as dependability and respect for authority. Critics have said these tools may invade privacy and generate self-incrimination. They also claim that candidates can interpret the questions' intent and provide politically correct answers. However, many organizations are motivated to use them because the behaviours that these tests attempt to capture can have disastrous impact for their bottom line. For example, employee theft is an issue that can have a significant impact on a retailer. Thus, there is tremendous motivation from retail companies to prevent these behaviours in employees.

## Physical Ability Test

For certain jobs, some organizations rely on physical ability tests. For example, to earn a position in a fire

department, you may have to be able to carry one hundred pounds up three flights of stairs. If you use physical ability tests in your hiring processes, the key to making them useful is to determine a minimum standard or expectation, specifically related to the requirements of the job. An HR manager should also consider the legality of such tests because they run the risk of discriminating against women applicants or those with physical disabilities. Thus, physical ability tests need to show direct correlation with the job duties.

## Job Knowledge Test

A **job knowledge test** measures the candidate's level of understanding about a particular job. For example, a job knowledge test may require a software engineer to write or debug a section of code in a given period of time or may ask candidates to solve a case study or specific business problem related to the job.

## Work Sample Test

**Work sample tests** ask candidates to show examples of work they have already done or to produce a new work (product) sample. In the advertising business, this may include a portfolio of designs, or for a project manager, this can include past project plans or budgets. When applying for a pharmaceutical representative position, a "brag book" might be required. A brag book is a list of recommendation letters, awards, and achievements that the candidate shares with the interviewer. Work sample tests can be a useful way to test for KSAs. These work samples can often be a good indicator of someone's abilities in a specific area. As always, before looking at samples, the interviewer should have specific criteria or expectations developed so each candidate can be measured fairly.

## Final Steps in Test Administration

Once the interview is completed and testing occurs, there are a few final checks that can be performed, for example, checking references, criminal records, and social media presence.

**Reference checking** is essential to verify a candidate's background. It is an added assurance that the candidate's abilities are parallel with what you were told in the interview. While employment dates and job titles can be verified with previous employers, many employers will not verify more than what can be found in the employment record because of privacy laws. Written consent is obtained before contacting a reference.

**Criminal background checks** may be used for employees who will be working in positions of trust or dealing with vulnerable populations such as the young, old or disabled. Since criminal background checks can easily breach human rights law and privacy issues, it is best that employers demonstrate that there is a bona fide occupational requirement for conducting one. Employers must receive written consent from their prospective employee before performing any sort of criminal background check.

**Social media checks** are now performed by a majority of organizations. According to a survey, 70 percent of

employers screen candidates' profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn before hiring. Employers are searching for the following when researching candidates via these social networking sites:

- Information that supports their qualifications for the job (61 percent)
- If the candidate has a professional online persona at all (50 percent)
- What other people are posting about the candidates (37 percent)
- Any reason at all not to hire a candidate (24 percent)<sup>1</sup>

## Making the Job Offer

After all of the planning, recruiting, interview, testing, and selection, it is time to present the job offer to the successful candidate. Constructing a formal written offer is often preceded by one or more discussions between the HR professional and/or the hiring manager, and the selected candidate. These discussions involve confirmation of the total compensation and specifics, start date, probationary period (if applicable), vacation, any special accommodations required, incentives (e.g., signing bonus and claw-backs), relocations expenses and legal considerations or agreements (e.g., non-compete, confidentiality agreements, parachute clause).

It is also important to establish and document, in the offer, the timeframe for the candidate to accept the offer. It is customary practice to establish a reasonable timeframe while not notifying other short-listed candidates not selected in order to provide a backup plan in the event your selected candidate does not accept the offer.

It is not unusual to engage in negotiations of the final terms and conditions of employment and therefore, the final offer. Much of this can be avoided early in the selection process by setting expectations and discussing with each candidate interviewed (e.g., if the candidate expects a salary or total compensation package that is significantly outside the bounds of the job). You do not want to invest a lot of time and resources to get to the offer stage only to find out that there was a gap or misunderstanding that eliminates the candidate and stops the offer.

Finally, the offer step is one that you want to ensure is a positive and efficient process for the selected candidate – making a good impression on behalf of the company is essential. You do not want to lose your top candidate or have them begin the job with a bad taste in their mouth and doubting their decision.

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1. Salm, L. (2017, June 15). 70% of employers are snooping candidates' social media profiles. Career Builder. <https://www.careerbuilder.com/advice/social-media-survey-2017>

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## 10.7 SUMMARY

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### Summary

Talent Acquisition is arguably the most important process in any organization. This process is responsible for creating a pipeline of talent to select from over time. The upfront planning that goes into talent selection, the creation of the job description, writing and posting the job advertisement, gathering and selecting from resumes, interviews, testing and presenting the job offer takes a great deal of effort and time. As an Operations Management team member, you will want to keep in mind the time, effort and cost associated with Talent Acquisition and ensure you work closely with the Human Resources team to proactively seek talent that possess the skills you are hiring for.



## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=880#h5p-13>*

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# CHAPTER 11: TRAINING

## Chapter Outline

- 11.0 Learning Objectives
- 11.1 The Business Case for Training
- 11.2 Employee Training
- 11.3 Training Delivery Methods
- 11.4 Communicating & Measuring Training
- 11.5 Summary





# 11.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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## Learning Objectives

- Explain basic legislation related to training in organizations.
- Describe employee orientation.
- Describe the steps in developing training programs.

## 11.1 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR TRAINING

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Operations Managers know the importance of consistency, quality and compliance in all that they do. Training is undoubtedly one of how an organization achieves these goals. Having an effective training program allows Operations Managers to feel confident about the abilities of the employees they work with. Let's look at the business case for having a well-defined training program at work.

### Compliance

Legislative compliance is one of the most important responsibilities of an organization. Ensuring we provide for the health and safety, human rights, and minimum work standards of our employees is not only mandated but also supports morale and engagement. Failing to comply with legislative requirements can result in serious fines, bad public relations and in some cases, prison time.

### Setting Expectations

There is no better way to ensure every worker understands the goal(s) of the organization than by way of

training. When every employee completes a set of standard training programs, the organization ensures that each employee understands the expectations set by each leader, department and the company.

## Conveying Culture

If you want to ensure an employee knows what the organization stands for and what the organization believes in, train your employees. Training courses reinforce the values and beliefs of the business, and help employees understand the kind of company they work for. For example, if the organization is a strong supporter of attaining zero emissions to the environment, this goal should be shared in a training course that explains how every employee can contribute to this goal in their own role.

## Quality

In Operations Management, quality really does matter. Regardless of the product or service you provide, you want to have systems in place that regulate the materials, the specifications and the final product. Organizations need to pass government quality audits, supplier audits, and industry audits and meet the quality expectations of the consumer.

## New Hire Orientation

Most would agree that the time and effort an organization puts into a thorough new hire orientation program pays off in dividends. From time-to-time you may hear of an organization that provides a new hire with payroll paperwork to complete and sends them off to begin their new job with no training. This means there is little to no emphasis on safety, policies, employee rights and responsibilities, expectations, quality or engagement. Your new hire orientation program is your opportunity to show a new hire your culture, your goals and your commitment to their success and safety.

## Investment in Your People

As a minimum, does your organization train your employees on the legislative requirements in your jurisdiction? Beyond that, does your organization train your employees on health and well-being, pension-benefit-financial planning, advanced computer skills, and project management? Employees that work for an organization that invests in their employees is seen as a successful organization that job candidates want to work for, and employees want to advance with.

## Training: Not Like It Used To Be



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Imagine this: You have a pile of work on your desk, and as you get started, your Outlook calendar reminds you about a sexual harassment training session in ten minutes. You groan, not looking forward to sitting in a conference room and seeing PowerPoint slide after PowerPoint slide. As you walk to the conference room, you run into a colleague who is taking the same training that day and commiserate on how boring this training is probably going to be. However, when you enter the conference room you see something very different.

Computers are set up at every chair with a video ready to start on the computer. The instructor greets you and asks you to take a seat. When the training starts, you are introduced to “It takes all of us,” a web-based training developed at Concordia University that introduces the concepts of consent, bystander interventions, and how to deal with sexual harassment using realistic scenarios. The videos stop, and there is a recorded discussion about what the videos portray. Your colleagues in the Vancouver office can see the same training, and via video conferencing, they can participate in the discussions. It is highly interactive and interesting. Once the training is finished, there are assignments to be completed via specific channels set up for this training. You communicate about the material and complete the assignments in teams with members of your Vancouver office. If you want to review the material, you simply click on ‘review’ and the entire session or parts of the training can be reviewed. In fact, on your bus ride home from work, you access the channels on your iPhone,

chatting with a colleague in your other office about the sexual harassment training assignment you have due next week. You receive an e-mail from your HR manager asking you to complete a training assessment located in a specific channel in the software, and you happily comply because you have an entirely new perspective on what training can be.

This is the training for today. People no longer sit in hot, stuffy rooms to get training on boring content. Training has become highly interactive, technical, and interesting owing to the number of multimedia we can use—just think of the possibilities offered by Virtual Reality! Due to the high cost of training, managers must develop the right training programs to meet the needs; otherwise, these funds are virtually wasted. This chapter is about assessing, developing, implementing, and measuring an effective training program.

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## 11.2 EMPLOYEE TRAINING

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**Training** is the act of increasing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of an employee for doing a particular job. Organizations invest in training to make sure employees can perform their jobs effectively. A vast amount of research supports the fact that training is positively and directly related to organizational performance.<sup>1</sup>

Even when the right person has been selected, they may need training in how your company does things. Lack of training can result in loss of productivity, loss of customers, and poor relationships between employees and managers. It can also result in dissatisfaction, which means retention problems and high turnover. All of these consequences can impact direct costs to the organization. In fact, a study performed by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) found that 41 percent of employees at companies with poor training, planned to leave within the year, but in companies with excellent training, only 12 percent planned to leave.<sup>2</sup> Thus, training can be considered as an investment in employees that is central to an organization's health.

Effective employee training can take several different approaches. A well-designed orientation program is often key to an employee's transition into a new workplace by giving them an overview of the company's policies and culture. They may receive specific in-house training on important workplace issues or job-specific areas at these sessions. In some organizations, new employees are assigned a mentor or coach to help with their transition. Depending on the organization, employees will continue to be offered in-house training specific to their jobs or enhance their knowledge of company policies and workplace initiatives. Finally, companies may send employees to external training events or bring external service providers into a company to deliver specialized training.

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1. Garavan, T., McCarthy, A., Lai, Y., Murphy, K., Sheehan, M., & Carbery, R. (2020). Training and organizational performance: A meta-analysis of temporal, institutional, and organizational context moderators. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 1–26.

2. Branham, L. (2005). *The 7 Hidden Reasons Why Employees Leave*. American Management Association.

## Training and Development

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<b>Training</b>	Refers to formal and planned efforts to help employees acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities to improve performance in their current job. Training can also be described as an endeavor aimed to improve or develop additional competency or skills in an employee on the job one currently holds in order to increase performance or productivity. Training involves a change in attitude, skills, or knowledge of a person with the result being an improvement in behaviour. For training to be effective it has to be a planned activity conducted after a thorough needs analysis and targeted at certain competencies.
<b>Development</b>	Refers to formal and planned efforts to help employees acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform future job responsibilities and for the long-term achievement of individual goals and/or organizational objectives.

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### Training & Education, is there a difference?

The terms education and training are often used interchangeably. However, **education** is the process of acquiring knowledge and information, usually in a formal manner, while **training** is the mastery of a skill or skill set.

All organizations should be aware that training will not solve all problems. Organizations sometimes attempt to use training to solve a problem when a lack of skill is not the issue. Training is not an intervention to a situation that is caused by poor performance or other root causes that are not skill-related.

Let's think about it this way, if we are working with employees who are having difficulty with job execution, missing tasks, or not following through, training might not be the best intervention. Instead, we could correct the deficiency by providing more objective feedback, or by adding or removing behavioural consequences. For example, if an individual is not performing the job but could do so if his or her life depended on it, retraining is not the answer.



# EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

Probably the most basic and common training that organizations invest in is an employee orientation program. **Employee orientation** is the process used for welcoming a new employee into the organization. The objectives of employee orientation are as follows:



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1. **To reduce start-up costs.** If an orientation is done right, it can help get the employee up to speed on various policies and procedures, so the employee can start working right away. It can also be a way to ensure all hiring paperwork is filled out correctly, so the employee is paid on time.
2. **To reduce anxiety.** Starting a new job can be stressful. One goal of an orientation is to reduce the stress and anxiety people feel when going into an unknown situation.
3. **To reduce employee turnover.** Employee turnover tends to be higher when employees don't feel valued or are not given the tools to perform. Employee orientation can show that the organization values the employee and provides the tools necessary for a successful entry.
4. **To save time for the supervisor and coworkers.** A well-done orientation makes for a better prepared employee, which means less time having to teach the employee.
5. **To set expectations and attitudes.** If employees know from the start what the expectations are, they tend to perform better. Likewise, if employees learn the values and attitudes of the organization from the beginning, there is a higher chance of a successful tenure at the company.

Some companies use employee orientation as a way to introduce employees not only to the company policies and procedures but also to the staff.



## Operations Manager Toolkit

- How To Create a New Employee Orientation Program in 8 Steps



## In-House Training

**In-house training programs** are learning opportunities developed by the organization in which they are used. This is usually the second step in the training process and often is ongoing. In-house training programs can be training related to a specific job, such as using a particular kind of software. In a manufacturing setting, in-house training might include an employee learning how to use a particular kind of machinery.

Many companies also provide in-house training on various HR topics, meaning it doesn't always have to relate to a specific job. Some examples of in-house training include the following:

- Ethics training
- Sexual harassment training
- Multicultural training
- Communication training
- Management training
- Customer service training
- Operation of special equipment
- Basic skills training

## External Training

**External training** includes any type of training that is not performed internally by the organization. It can include sending an employee to a seminar to help further develop leadership skills or helping pay tuition for an employee who wants to take an advanced excel class. Those in Operations Management may use external trainers for safety courses such as Joint Health and Safety Committee training. In addition, an organization

may send an employee to an external train-the-trainer course so they may return to their place of work and become in the in-house trainer as they are now a subject matter expert.

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## 11.3 TRAINING DELIVERY METHODS

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A very important step in the training process is creating a framework that will help guide the training program. Information on how to use the framework is included in this section.

### TRAINING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

When developing a training plan, there are several considerations to keep in mind. Training is a process that should be planned and developed in advance. Operations Managers must work closely with the Human Resources team to assess and define the organization's needs.

The framework for developing a training program is as follows:

1. *Needs assessment and learning objectives.* Articulating specific and measurable learning objectives will in turn guide you in determining the learnings required – and specific areas for training.
2. *Learning Strategies.* Determine the right learning strategies best suited to the learning styles of your employee audience to ensure the training is successful.
3. *Delivery mode.* What is the best way to get your message across? Is web-based training more appropriate, or should mentoring be used? Can simulation training be used for a portion of the training while job shadowing be used for another part of the training? Most training programs will include a variety of delivery methods.
4. *Budget.* How much money do you have to spend on this training?
5. *Content.* What needs to be taught? How will you organize and sequence the information and course materials?
6. *Timelines.* How much time is required for the training – is it one-time only, are there multiple segments, is it repeated annually (e.g., safety training)? Is there a deadline for training to be completed?

## STEP 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The first step in developing a training program is to determine exactly what the organization needs in terms of training. There are three levels of training needs assessment: **organizational assessment**, **occupational (task) assessment**, and **individual assessment**.

1. **Organizational assessment.** In this type of needs assessment, we can determine the skills, knowledge, and abilities a company needs to meet its strategic objectives. This type of assessment considers things such as changing demographics and technological trends, and is forward-looking. To perform an organizational assessment, one can look at future trends and the overall company's strategic plan. HR managers can also see how jobs and industries are changing. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has made the use of technology much more important than in the past. Some individuals are working from home and some will continue to work from home going forward. Overall, this type of assessment looks at the types of KSA's that will be needed for the success of the organizations and whether training can help in developing them.
2. **Occupational (task) assessment.** This type of assessment looks at the specific tasks, skills knowledge, and abilities required to do the different jobs within the organization. Data for this step can come from a review of performance evaluations that can uncover a pattern where employees in specific jobs are not meeting expectations. As a result, this may provide data as to where your training is lacking.
3. **Individual assessment.** An individual assessment looks at an individual employee's performance and determines what training should be provided for that individual. If an organization relies on technology, they must assess each employee's level of comfort with the new technology.

## STEP 1: LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have determined what type of training should occur, learning objectives for the training should be set. A **learning objective** is what you want the learner to be able to do, explain, or demonstrate at the end of the training period. Good learning objectives are performance-based and clear, and the result of the learning objective can be observable or measured in some way. Examples of learning objectives might include the following:

1. Be able to explain the company policy on sexual harassment and give examples of sexual harassment.

2. Be able to show the proper way to take a customer's order.
3. Perform a variety of customer needs analyses using company software.
4. Understand and utilize the new expense-tracking software.
5. Explain the safety procedure in handling chemicals.
6. Be able to explain the types of communication styles and strategies to effectively deal with each style.
7. Demonstrate ethics when handling customer complaints.
8. Be able to delegate to employees effectively.

Once we have set our learning objectives, we can utilize information on learning styles then to determine the best delivery mode for our training.

## Step 2: Learning Strategies or the Psychology of Learning

Learning styles refer to individual preferences in how people learn new material. The concept of learning styles has gained much popularity in training circles and a whole industry has been built around this concept. Unfortunately, the research evidence supporting the concept is very weak.<sup>1</sup> However, this is not to say that psychological principles do not play a role in the effectiveness of training. Learning strategies refer to techniques that have been proven to facilitate learning and increase the effectiveness of training programs. These strategies are based on known psychological processes to enhance the retention of learned material.

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<b>Retrieval Practice</b>	or practice testing, is a form of low-stakes or no-stakes quizzing that attempts to force retrieval of material from one's memory.
<b>Distributed Practice</b>	or spaced practice, refers to distributing the practice of material over time. This spacing of practice aids in the retention of material much better than cramming. The amount of spacing depends on the complexity of the task and can range from hours to months.
<b>Interleaved Practice</b>	involves shifting the focus of one's studies among differing topics. This is in contrast to studying and practicing all of one topic before moving on to the next topic of study. While this does make studying more difficult, studies have shown far greater retention of material on summative evaluations with the interleaving of material.

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1. Pashler, H., McDaniel, M., Rohrer, D., & Bjork, R. (2008). Learning styles: Concepts and evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 9, 105-119.

## STEP 3: DELIVERY MODE

Depending on the type of training that needs to be delivered, you will likely choose a different method to deliver the training. An orientation might lend itself best to vestibule training, while sexual harassment training may be better for web-based training. When choosing a delivery mode, it is important to consider learning objectives, the audience, and any budget constraints.

### On-the-Job Coaching

On-the-job coaching is one way to facilitate employee skills training. **On-the-job coaching** refers to an approved person training another employee on the skills necessary to complete tasks. A manager or someone with experience shows the employee how to perform the actual job. The selection of an on-the-job coach can be done in a variety of ways, but usually, the coach is selected based on personality, skills, and knowledge. This type of skill training is normally facilitated in-house. The disadvantage of this training is that success revolves around the person delivering the training. If he or she is not a good communicator, the training may not work.

### Mentoring

Mentoring is a type of training delivery that has gained popularity in organizations. A mentor is a trusted, experienced advisor who has direct interest or investment in the development of an employee. **Mentoring** is a process by which an employee is coached, supported, and developed by an experienced person. Normally, mentoring is used as a ongoing method to train and develop an employee. While mentoring may occur informally, a formal mentorship program can help ensure the new employee not only feels welcome, but is paired up with someone who already knows the ropes and can help guide them through any on-the-job challenges. Formal mentorship programs are common practice in most mid-size to large organization providing a very structured framework. Typically, the mentor and mentee relationship is established when an employee demonstrates high performance and high potential.

#### Mentoring Program Example

For example, Mila is a research institute in artificial intelligence which rallies 500 researchers

specializing in the field of deep learning. Based in Montreal, Mila's mission is to become a global pole for scientific advances in Artificial Intelligence. Recently, Mila launched a mentoring program for its researchers. The program, which unfolds over nine-months, aims to help researchers achieve their personal and professional development objectives. The program used very clear criteria for mentors and mentees and a very detailed schedule with mandatory monthly meetings to ensure its success.

## WEB-BASED

Web-based training delivery has several labels: e-learning, Internet-based, computer-based, or technology-based learning. Regardless of the terminology used, any **web-based training** involves the use of technology to facilitate training. There are two types of web-based learning. First, **synchronous** learning uses instructor-led facilitation. **Asynchronous** learning is self-directed, and no instructor facilitates the course. There are several advantages to web-based training. First, it is available on-demand, does not require travel, and can be cost-efficient. However, disadvantages might include an impersonal aspect to the training and limited bandwidth or technology capabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Web-based training delivery lends itself well to certain training topics. For example, this might be an appropriate delivery method for safety training, technical training, quality training, and professional training. However, for some training, such as soft-skills training, job skills training, managerial training, and team training, more personalized methods may be better for delivery. However, there are many different platforms that lend themselves to an interactive approach to training, such as Sun Microsystems' Social Learning eXchange (SLX) training system, which has real-time video and recording capabilities. Hundreds of platforms are available to facilitate web-based training. Some companies use SharePoint, an intranet platform, to store training videos and materials.<sup>3</sup> Moodle, Blackboard and Angel (used primarily by higher education institutions) allows managers to create training modules, which can be moderated by a facilitator or managed in a self-paced format.

2. Web Based Training Information Center. (n.d.). Advantages and Disadvantages. [http://www.webbasedtraining.com/primer\\_advdis.aspx](http://www.webbasedtraining.com/primer_advdis.aspx).

3. Microsoft. (n.d.) *SharePoint: Your mobile, intelligent intranet*. <http://sharepoint.microsoft.com/en-us/Pages/default.aspx>.

In terms of web-based delivery, advances in virtual reality have the potential to transform how training is done. Virtual reality allows the training to take place in a simulated environment, reducing costs, and in some cases, reducing the risks associated with learning on the job.

## JOB SHADOWING

**Job shadowing** is a training delivery method that places an employee who already has the skills with another employee who wants to develop those skills. Apprenticeships use job shadowing as one type of training method. For example, an apprentice electrician would shadow and watch the journeyman electrician perform the skills and tasks and learn by watching. Eventually, the apprentice would be able to learn the skills to do the job alone. The downside to this type of training is the possibility that the person job shadowing may learn “bad habits” or shortcuts to perform tasks that may not be beneficial to the organization.

## STEP 4: BUDGET

Training programs can be very expensive and HR managers are often required to have a detailed budget before implementing them. According to the 2017 State of the Industry report from the Association for Talent Development, organizations spend an average of \$1,273 per employee for direct learning expenditures. If we extrapolate this figure for a large company like CAE, which is headquartered in Montreal (10,000 employees), you get an approximate training budget of \$13 million!<sup>4</sup> Thus, tight budgeting is important for organizations to obtain the maximum value from their investment in training. Budgeting for training programs should include direct costs such as travel, trainers’/programmers’ fee, training material, and catering. It should also consider the time of employees. If employees are in training for two hours, the cost to the organization of them not performing their job is an indirect cost of training.

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4. Association for Talent Development. (2017). *2017 State of the Industry Report*. <https://www.td.org/research-reports/2017-state-of-the-industry>



## STEP 5: CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

The content that HR managers want to deliver is perhaps one of the most important parts of training and one of the most time-consuming to develop. Development of learning objectives and content development go hand-in-hand. The things you want your learners to know after the training makes for more focused training. Think of learning objectives as goals—what should someone know after completing this training? Here are some samples of learning objectives:

1. Be able to define and explain the handling of hazardous materials in the workplace.
2. Be able to utilize the team decision process model.
3. Understand the definition of sexual harassment and be able to recognize sexual harassment in the workplace.
4. Understand and be able to explain the company policies and structure.

After the objectives and goals have been developed, HR managers can begin to develop the content of the training. Consideration of the learning methods you will use, such as discussion and role-playing, will be outlined in the content area.

## STEP 6: TIMELINES



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For some types of training, timelines may be required to ensure the training is completed within a specified period of time. This is often the case for safety training. In other words, in what time frame should an employee complete the training?

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Ontario Health and Safety Training



Another consideration regarding timelines is how much time you think you need to complete the training. Perhaps one hour will be enough, but sometimes, training may take a day or even a week – it may also have to be repeated annually with refreshed content (e.g., safety regulations). After you have developed your training content, you will likely have a better idea as to how long it will take to deliver. The time demands of any training must be integrated with the employee(s) work schedule to ensure the least amount of disruption to production and job demands.

From a long-term approach, it may not be cost-effective to offer an orientation each time someone new is hired. One consideration might be to offer orientation training once per month so that all employees hired within that month are trained at the same time. Developing a standard training schedule allows for better planning and scheduling for employees and managers.

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## 11.4 COMMUNICATING & MEASURING TRAINING

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### Communication

Communication. Many companies have e-mail distribution lists that can relay the message to only certain groups of employees who require training. It is essential to consider a variety of communication forums when advertising upcoming training opportunities. Some of these forums include town hall meetings and postings in staff lunch areas.

### Measuring Training Effectiveness

After we have completed training, It is important to make sure the training objectives were met and that the training was effective. Given the resources required to train employees, managers are increasingly required to justify their budget and show the return on investment (ROI) of their activities. For training, this involves demonstrating that the investment in training has led to increased effectiveness of the employee and, ultimately, of the organization.

The classic model to measure the effectiveness of training is the Kirkpatrick model.<sup>1</sup> His model has four levels:

1. **Reaction:** How did the participants react to the training program?
2. **Learning:** To what extent did participants improve knowledge and skills?
3. **Behaviour:** Did behaviour change as a result of the training?
4. **Results:** What benefits to the organization resulted from the training?

Each of Kirkpatrick's levels can be assessed using a variety of methods. We will discuss those next.

#### *Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation*

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1. Kirkpatrick, D. (2006). *Evaluating Training Programs* (3rd ed.). Berrett-Koehler.

“Kirkpatrick’s Four Levels of Training Evaluation” by Elizabeth Cameron, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0



## Level 1: Reaction

The first level, reaction, assesses whether people feel that the training was valuable. By measuring how engaged participants were, how actively they contributed, and their reaction to the training, this will help understand how well they received the training. In addition, it guides improvements to future programs. Questions to ask trainees include:

- Did you feel that the training was worth your time?
- Did you think that it was successful?
- What were the biggest strengths and weaknesses of the training?
- Did you like the venue and presentation style?
- Were the training activities engaging?
- What are the three most important things that you learned from this training?
- From what you learned, what do you plan to apply in your job?
- What support might you need to apply what you learned?

## Level 2: Learning

Level 2 focuses on measuring what the trainees have and have not learned. This demonstrates how training has developed their skills, attitudes, and knowledge, as well as their confidence and commitment.

To measure how much your trainees have learned, start by identifying what you want to evaluate. Training sessions should have specific learning objectives, so those should be the starting point. You can measure learning in different ways, depending on the objectives but it's helpful to measure it before and after training. Before the training begins, trainees can be tested to determine their initial knowledge, skill levels, and attitudes. Then, when the training is finished, a second test can measure what has been learned.

## Level 3: Behaviour

This level asks managers to assess whether people apply what they have learned in the training. This level is also called 'transfer of learning' because it is the stage where the knowledge imparted in the training is 'transferred' to behaviours, from 'knowing' to 'doing.'

This step can reveal where people might need help because behaviour can only change when conditions are favourable. Imagine that you're assessing your team members after a training session. You see little change, and you conclude that they learned nothing and that the training was ineffective. However, it is possible that they actually learned a lot, but that the organizational or team culture obstructs behavioural change. Perhaps existing processes restricts the application of new thinking. As a result, employees do not feel confident in applying the new knowledge or see few opportunities to do so. In addition, they may not have had enough time to put it into practice. Transfer of learning is difficult to achieve.

## Level 4: Results

At this level, managers analyze the final results of the training. This includes outcomes that the organization has decided are good for business and good for employees, and which demonstrate a good return on investment (ROI). This level is the most costly and time-consuming. The biggest challenge is to identify which outcomes, benefits, or final results are most closely linked to the training, and to come up with an effective way to measure these outcomes in the long term. For example, a retailer that trained its salespeople on various customer service elements. It would be sensible for this organization to expect that the training had an impact on the average weekly sales of these salespeople, or that the customer's reviews of the overall store experience have improved.

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## 11.5 SUMMARY

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### Summary

The importance of employee training in Operations Management cannot be overstated. Training demonstrates your compliance with legislation, your investment in people, and the importance of quality in your organization. As you can see in this chapter, you have many options when it comes to training your people. The use of in-house or external trainers allows for flexibility. Making use of programs such as mentorship, on-the-job coaching or job shadowing allows employees to learn those with more experience in a safe environment. Don't forget to take a look at your new hire orientation program, it is your organizations opportunity to set the stage for a new hire's safety and success. An investment in people is truly an investment in your organizational success.





## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=987#h5p-14>*

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# CHAPTER 12: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

## Chapter Outline

- 12.0 Learning Objectives
- 12.1 An Introduction to Performance Management
- 12.2 Performance Appraisals
- 12.3 Components of a Performance Management System
- 12.4 Appraisal Methods
- 12.5 Completing and Conducting the Appraisal
- 12.6 Organizing the Performance Appraisal Process
- 12.7 Types of Performance Issues
- 12.8 Investigations and Discipline
- 12.9 Performance Management and Compensation
- 12.10 Summary



## 12.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

- Deliver a performance appraisal to your employees.
- Write an improvement plan for an employee.
- Explain the types of performance issues in the workplace and the internal and external reasons for poor performance.
- Develop a process for handling employee performance issues.
- Outline current compensation and benefit administration procedures.

## 12.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

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Performance Management often conjures up an image of discipline. Performance management, however, does not have to involve correction, it can simply involve an evaluation of an individual's performance at work. Strong organizations have established a method and cadence to deliver performance feedback to their employees. These organizations use the performance management process to develop their employees, strengthen their relationships, share expectations and coach employees on areas of improvement. In this chapter, we will look at performance appraisals, performance issues, investigations, discipline and ending the employment relationship.

## 12.2 PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

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As an Operations Manager, providing employees with continual feedback is an important part of the business. An argument can be made for annual performance appraisals versus semi-annual performance appraisals, but most agree they need to occur. Although most conversations will be positive, from time-to-time a leader must have a challenging talk with an employee. Let's look at what it is like to have a difficult conversation with an employee.

## A TOUGH CONVERSATION

As you wake up this morning, you think about the performance evaluation or appraisal you will give later this morning to one of your employees, Sean. Sean has been with your company for two years, and over the last six months his performance has begun to decline. As their manager, it is your responsibility to talk with him about his performance, which you have done on several occasions. However, the performance evaluation will make his nonperformance more formalized. You know that Sean has had some personal troubles that can account for some of the performance issues, but despite this, you really need to get his performance up to par. Your goal in the performance evaluation interview today is to create a performance improvement plan (PIP) for Sean while documenting his non-performance.

When you arrive at work, you look over the essay rating part of Sean's evaluation. It details two client project deadlines that were missed and the over-budget amounts of the two client projects. It was Sean's responsibility to oversee both aspects of this project. When Sean arrives at your office, you greet him, ask him to take a seat, and begin to discuss the evaluation with him.

"Sean, while you have always been a high performer, these last few months have been lacklustre. On two of your projects, you were over budget and late. The client commented on both of these aspects when they filled out the client evaluation. As a result, you can see this is documented in your performance evaluation."

Using defensive nonverbal language, Sean says, "Missing the project deadlines and budget was not my fault. Emily said everything was under control, and I trusted her. She is the one who should have a bad performance review."

You respond, "Ultimately, as the account director, you are responsible, as outlined in your job description. As you know, it is important to manage the accountability within your team, and in this case, you did not perform. In fact, in your 360 reviews, several of your colleagues suggested you were not putting in enough time on the projects and seemed distracted."

"I really dislike those 360 reviews. It really is just a popularity contest, anyway," Sean says. "So, am I fired for these two mistakes?" You have worked with people who exhibited this type of defensive behaviour before, and you know it is natural for people to feel like they need to defend themselves when having this type of conversation. You decide to move the conversation ahead and focus on future behaviour rather than past behaviour.

You say, "Sean, you normally add a lot of value to the organization. Although these issues will be documented in your performance evaluation, I believe you can produce high-quality work. As a result, let's work together to develop an improvement plan so you can continue to add value to the organization. The improvement plan addresses project deadlines and budgets, and I think you will find it helpful for your career development."

Sean agrees begrudgingly and you begin to show him the improvement plan document the company uses, so you can fill it out together.



When you head home after work, you think about the day's events and Sean. As you had suspected, he was defensive at first but seemed enthusiastic to work on the improvement plan after you showed him the document. You feel confident that this performance evaluation was a step in the right direction to ensure Sean continues to be a high producer in the company, despite these mistakes.

## Performance Management Systems

A **performance management system** is an integrated set of processes aimed at helping employees contribute to organizational effectiveness. At their core, these systems involve the assessment of individual performance. To 'manage performance,' the first thing you need to do is find out who does what and how well they do it. After this information is collected, managers can feed the data in various systems to help the employee and improve the organization in general. Some of these processes include **compensation**, **employee development**, and **employee records**. Performance management is an important HR process because it goes to the essence of employee performance and relates to every other organizational processes. For example, to understand whether or not the design of a job is efficient you use the performance of employees as data. If you want to see whether your new interview protocol is suitable you look at whether candidates who score well on it also become superior employees. For training, you can base your needs analysis on performance appraisal data to target who requires training.

Some researchers suggest that the performance appraisal system is perhaps one of the most important parts of the organization,<sup>1</sup> while others suggest that performance appraisal systems are doomed and should be abolished,<sup>2</sup> making them worthless. One of the most interesting (and thorny) facets of performance management systems is that, while very important, they are also very much disliked by employees and managers. The reality is that no one likes to be evaluated and 'judged'. As a result, managers are often not comfortable evaluating (and judging) their employees because it can strain relationships. This makes performance management difficult to manage: it is very important, and the organization needs the information, but people dislike it. This is not to say that successful performance management is not possible, just that it requires careful consideration, design and implementation.

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1. Lawrie, J. (1990). Prepare for a Performance Appraisal. *Personnel Journal*, 69(4), 132–136.

2. Derven, M. (1990). The Paradox of Performance Appraisals. *Personnel Journal*, 69(2), 107–111.

## Why Performance Management?

### Performance Management and Compensation

How will salaries and bonuses be determined if not by employee performance? You shouldn't reward non performance? How do you define performance for the employee/job, i.e. quantity, quality, sales volume, team work, client satisfaction, team objectives, company objectives? The answer to these questions might seem obvious but managers have to consider it carefully when developing a performance evaluation process. There is research that shows employees have a greater acceptance of performance reviews if the review is linked to rewards.<sup>3</sup>

### Performance Management and Employee Development

Performance management is important for employee development. In order for this development to occur, employees need to know what is expected of them and where they stand: what aspect of their work they need to work on (weaknesses) and what aspects they can capitalize on (strengths). Performance management provides the feedback essential for this awareness and change to take place. However, for most people, receiving feedback is not an easy thing. One often becomes defensive and finds ways to discredit the feedback, especially if it is negative. Conversely, giving feedback is also difficult. Managers tend to shy away from these difficult conversations by either avoiding them or by simply 'sugar coating' the message. Operations Managers need to work closely with the HR team to ensure both the employees and managers are equipped and supported when they have these conversations.

### Performance Management and Employee Records

A third and final use for performance management is to document management decisions and actions – maintaining a full employee history. Basically, this data provides a record of performance ratings and discussions that took place over the years and the actions agreed upon by employees and supervisors. These records are important in the case of employee discipline and termination, or further development and advancement. It is important to note that employee records, and 'paper trails', are a legal requirement when taking legal action against an employee for non-performance and termination.

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3. Bannister, B. & Balkin, D. (1990). Performance Evaluation and Compensation Feedback Messages: An Integrated Model. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63(2), 97–111.

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## 12.3 COMPONENTS OF A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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### Frequency of the Performance Appraisal

Every organization must determine how often performance appraisals should be given. Please keep in mind that managers should constantly be giving feedback to employees. The performance appraisal is a formal process for managing performance on a scheduled basis. Some organizations choose to give performance evaluations once per year, while others give them twice per year or more. The advantages to giving an evaluation twice per year, of course, are more feedback and more opportunity for employee development. The downside is the time it takes for the manager to write the evaluation and discuss it with the employee. If done well, it could take several hours for just one employee. You may choose one or the other depending on your organization's structure. For example, if a manager has five or ten people to manage (this is called **span of control**), it might be worthwhile to give performance evaluations more than once per year since the time cost is not high. If a manager has twenty or more employees, performing this process more than once per year may not be feasible. This does not preclude the manager or supervisor from providing ongoing continuous feedback throughout the year.

### Evaluators

The person evaluating (evaluator) an employee's performance is most often their direct manager. However, performance input may also be provided by subordinates, clients, other managers and those who having regular work related dealings with. The employee is also encouraged to conduct a self-evaluation or appraisal. The table below **"Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Source for Performance Evaluations"** shows some of the advantages and disadvantages of each source of information for performance evaluations. Ultimately, using a variety of sources might garner the best results.

A **360-degree performance appraisal** method is a way to appraise performance by using several sources to measure the employee's effectiveness. Organizations must be careful when using peer-reviewed information. Organizations may want to purchase software programs to help administer and assess 360 review feedback.

***TABLE: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES  
OF EACH SOURCE FOR PERFORMANCE  
EVALUATIONS***

Source	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Manager/Supervisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually has extensive knowledge of the employee's performance and abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bias</li> <li>Favouritism</li> </ul>
<b>Self</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-analysis can help with employee growth</li> <li>Works well when the supervisor does not always directly observe the employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the employee's interest to inflate his or her own ratings</li> <li>Relationships can create bias in the review</li> </ul>
<b>Peer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can bring different perspectives, since peers know the job well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If evaluations are tied to pay, this can put both the employee and the peer in an awkward situation</li> <li>If confidential, may create mistrust within the organization</li> <li>Personal relationships may introduce bias</li> </ul>
<b>Customer/Client</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers often have the best view of employee behaviour</li> <li>Can enhance long-term relationships with the customer by asking for feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be expensive to obtain this feedback</li> <li>Possible bias</li> </ul>
<b>Subordinate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data garnered can include how well the manager treats employees</li> <li>Can determine if employees feel there is favouritism within their department</li> <li>Can be used as self-development tool for managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible retaliation if results are not favourable</li> <li>Subordinates may not understand the "big picture" and rate low as a result</li> <li>Rating inflation</li> <li>If confidential, may create mistrust within the organization</li> <li>If nothing changes despite the evaluation, could create motivational issues among employees</li> </ul>

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## 12.4 APPRAISAL METHODS

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This section will discuss some of the main methods used to assess performance. However, before discussing these methods, we must discuss how they approach the assessment of individual performance. Some methods focus on the employee's specific traits about the job. For these methods, the objective is to capture whether or not the employees possess the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO's) required for the job. An example would be to assess whether a salesperson is outgoing or whether the accounts payable clerks are conscientious and pay attention to detail. Another way to approach performance assessment is to look at individual actions within a specific job. This focus on behaviour, for example, would measure whether the salesperson uses a specific protocol when approaching customers or whether the accounts payable clerk follows up on her phone calls. The focus is on 'what employees do' instead of 'who the employee is' (for the trait methods). **Comparative methods** compare one employee with other employees. Finally, **results methods** are focused on objective employee accomplishments. Note that many organizations will use these methods in combination.

### Graphic Rating Scale

The graphic rating scale, a trait method, is perhaps the most popular choice for performance evaluations. This type of evaluation lists the traits required for the job and asks the source to rate the individual on each attribute, such as dependability and creativity. For example, the ratings can include a scale of 1–10; excellent, average, or poor; or exceeds, meets, or does not meet expectations.

Poor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Exceptional
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

## Employee Performance Appraisal XYZ Company

Employee's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Please put an X in the area which best describes this employee's performance.

Attribute	Above Average	Average	Below Expectations
Dependable			
Shows problem solving ability			
Works well in a team			
Takes initiative			
Produces high quality work			
Shows leadership within department			
Communication ability			

Please provide specific comments which describe the ratings for each category.

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of employee \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of manager \_\_\_\_\_



“Example of Graphic Rating Scale” by Elizabeth Cameron CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

## Essay Appraisal

In an essay appraisal, the evaluator answers a series of questions about the employee’s performance in essay form. Depending on how the manager writes the essay, this can be a trait and/or a behavioural method. These statements may include strengths and weaknesses about the employee or statements about past performance. They can also have specific examples of past performance.

## Employee Performance Appraisal XYZ Company

Employee's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Please write comments about the employee's performance in the space below.

Attribute	Comments
What does this employee do well?	
What aspects of his/her job performance should be improved upon?	
Describe performance challenges.	
Aspects of job to continue doing	
Aspects of job the employee should improve	

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of employee \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of manager \_\_\_\_\_

“Example of Essay Rating” by Elizabeth Cameron CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

## Checklist Scale

A checklist method for performance evaluations lessens subjectivity, although subjectivity will still be present in this rating system. With a **checklist scale**, a series of questions are being asked, and the manager simply responds yes or no to the questions, which can fall into either the behavioural or the trait method, or both. Another variation to this scale is a checkmark in the criteria the employee meets and a blank in the areas the employee does not meet.

## Employee Performance Appraisal XYZ Company

Employee's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Please select yes or no for each of the statements.

	Yes	No	Comments
This employee works well with the people on his/her team.			
He/she is well liked and respected by people on the team.			
The employee has in depth knowledge of his or her job.			
The employee needs minimum supervision in performing his or her job.			
Aspects of job the employee should improve			

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of employee \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of manager \_\_\_\_\_

“Example of Checklist Scale” by Elizabeth Cameron CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

## Critical Incident Appraisals

While Critical Incident Appraisals are more time-consuming to develop, they can be effective because they provide specific examples of behaviour to anchor the ratings. With a **critical incident appraisal**, the manager records examples of the employee’s effective and ineffective behaviour during the time period between evaluations, which is in the behavioural category. When it is time for the employee to be reviewed, the manager will pull out this file and formally record the incidents that occurred over the time period. This method can work well if the manager has the proper training to record incidents (perhaps by keeping a weekly diary) in a fair manner. This approach can also work well when specific jobs vary greatly from week to week, unlike, for example, a factory worker who routinely performs the same weekly tasks.

## Work Standards Approach

A work standards approach could be the more effective way of evaluating employees for certain specific jobs in which productivity is essential. With this results-focused approach, a minimum level is set and the employee’s performance evaluation is based on this level. This approach works best in long-term situations, in which a reasonable measure of performance can be over a certain period. For example, in an automotive assembly line, the focus is on how many cars are built in a specified period, and therefore, employee performance is measured this way. Since this approach is centred on production, it does not allow for rating of other factors, such as ability to work on a team or communication skills, which can be important parts of the job.

## Ranking Method

In a ranking method system, employees in a particular department are ranked based on their performance. This system is a comparative method for performance evaluations. This method is stack ranking of employees based upon individual performance appraisal ratings (numeric or classification). A performance distribution chart is developed to show what percentage are rated as poor, marginal, meets, and exceeds with respect to performance.

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## 12.5 COMPLETING AND CONDUCTING THE APPRAISAL

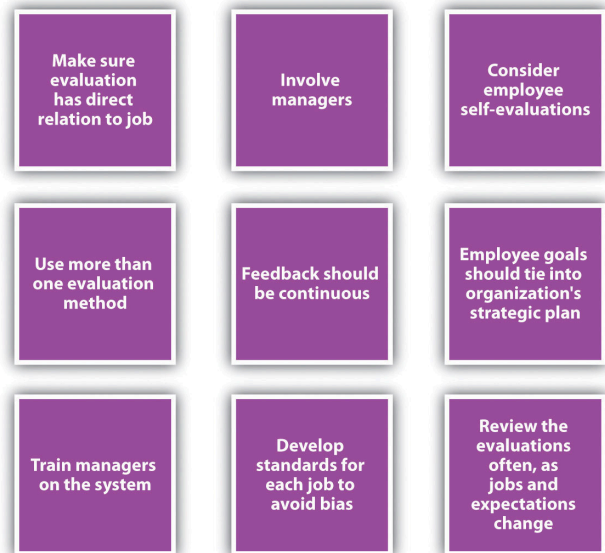
So far, we have discussed the necessity of providing formal employee feedback through a systematic performance evaluation system. We have stressed the importance of ensuring managers understand how often performance evaluations should be given and whether they should be tied to pay increases.

The next step is to make sure you know the goals of the performance evaluation; for example, are the goals to improve performance and also identify people for succession planning? You will then determine the source for the performance evaluation data and then create criteria and rating scales that relate directly to the employee's job description.

### Best Practices in Performance Appraisals

The most important aspects to remember when developing a performance evaluation system include the following:

1. Make sure the evaluation has a direct relationship to the job. Consider developing specific criteria for each job based on the individual job specifications and description.
2. Involve managers when developing the process. Garner their feedback to obtain “buy-in” for the process.
3. Consider involving the employee in the process by asking the employee to fill out a self-evaluation.
4. Use a variety of methods to rate and evaluate the employee.
5. Avoid bias by standardizing performance evaluation systems for each job.
6. Give feedback on performance throughout the year, not just during performance review times.
7. Ensure the performance evaluation goals tie into the organizational and department goals.



“Best Practices in Performance Appraisal Systems”  
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8. Ensure the performance appraisal criteria also ties into the goals of the organization.
9. Often review the evaluation for each job title since jobs and expectations change.

The performance appraisal aspect is just one part of the entire process. We can call this a performance review system. The first step of the process is goal setting with the employee. Building out the performance appraisal criteria with the employee before the appraisal timeframe is a very effective way to communicate and set expectations – get on the same page. This could mean showing the employee his or her performance appraisal criteria or sitting down with the employee to develop management by objectives MBOs. The basic idea is that the employee should know the expectations and how his or her job performance will be rated.

Constant monitoring, feedback, and coaching are the next steps. Ensuring the employee knows what they are doing well and what is not being done well more informally will allow for a more productive employee.

Next is the formal performance evaluation process. Choosing the criteria, rating scale, and source of the evaluation are steps we have already discussed. The next step is to work with the employee to develop improvement plans (if necessary) and offer any rewards resulting from excellent performance. The process then begins again, setting new goals with the employee.



“Performance Review System” by Elizabeth Cameron CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

## Training Managers and Employees

As Operations Managers, we know the importance of performance evaluation systems in developing employees. Managers and employees must be educated on the standards for completing performance evaluation forms, as well as how to complete the necessary documents (criteria and ratings), how to develop improvement plans when necessary, and how to deliver the performance appraisal interview.

## Employee Feedback

Delivering meaningful employee feedback is essential as it provides employees with positive reinforcement in their strongest areas and coaching where there is room to improve. Please watch this YouTube video titled “The Secret to Giving Great Feedback.” This video provides Operations Managers with tips on providing feedback to employees during the performance appraisal process and beyond.

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- The secret to giving great feedback | The Way We Work, a TED series



First, after you have developed the new performance appraisal system (or adjusted an old one), consider offering training on how to effectively use it. The training, if required, can later save time and make the process more valuable. What we want to avoid is making it seem as if the performance appraisal process is “just one more thing” for managers to do. Show the value of the system in your training or, better yet, involve managers in developing the process to begin with.

Set standards should be developed for managers filling out the performance ratings and criteria. The advantage of this is the accuracy of data and limiting possible bias. Consider these “ground rules” to ensure that information is similar no matter which manager is writing the evaluation:

1. Use only factual information and avoid opinion or perception.
2. For each section, comments should be at least two sentences in length, and examples of employee



behaviour should be provided.

3. Reviews must be complete and shared with the employee before the deadline.
4. Make messages clear and direct.
5. Focus on observable behaviours.

## SMART Goals

In Operations Management, it is a good idea to train both people leaders and your employees on SMART goals. SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound. If everyone in the organization understands how to write and measure goals, delivering performance appraisals to your staff becomes that much easier.

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- SMART Goals: How to Make Your Goals Achievable



Here are some important steps to consider before you sit down to meet with an employee to deliver their performance review:

1. Review the employee's last performance evaluation. Note goals from the previous evaluation period.
2. Review the employee's file and speak with other managers who interface with this person. In other words, gather data about performance.
3. Fill out the necessary forms for this employee's appraisal. Note which areas you want to address with the employee in the appraisal interview.
4. If your organization bases pay increases on the performance evaluation, know the pay increase you are able to offer the employee.

5. Write any improvement plans as necessary.

Most people feel nervous about giving and receiving performance evaluations. One way to limit this is to show the employee the written evaluation before the interview so the employee knows what to expect. To keep it a two-way conversation, many organizations have the employee fill out the same evaluation, and answers from the employee and manager are compared and discussed in the interview. When the manager meets with the employee to discuss the performance evaluation, the manager should be clear, direct, and to the point about strengths and weaknesses. The manager should also discuss goals for the upcoming period, as well as any pay increases or improvement plans as a result of the evaluation. The manager should also be prepared for questions, concerns, and reasons for the employee not being able to meet performance standards.

## Performance Improvement Plans (PIP)

Performance improvement plans are written documents defining areas for improvement. They should not be punitive, rather the goal of an improvement plan should be to help the employee succeed. Coaching and development should occur throughout the employee's tenure. The employee should know before the performance evaluation whether expectations are or are not being met. This way, the introduction of an improvement plan is not a surprise. There are six main components to an employee improvement plan:

1. Define the problem.
2. Discuss the behaviours that should be modified, based on the problem.
3. List specific strategies to modify the behaviour.
4. Develop long- and short-term goals.
5. Define a reasonable time line for improvements.
6. Schedule "check-in" dates to discuss the improvement plan.

An employee improvement plan works best if it is written with the employee to obtain maximum buy-in.

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## 12.6 ORGANIZING THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS

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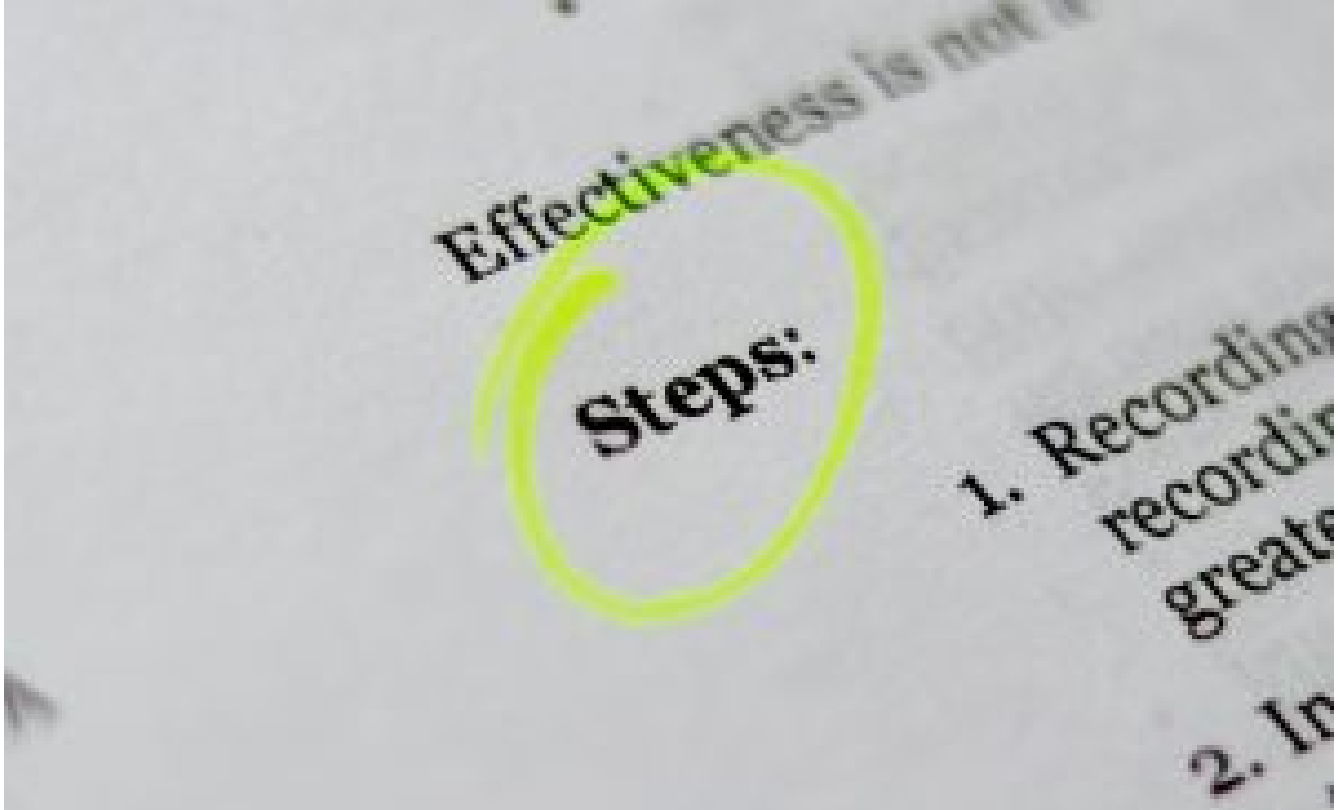


Photo by Clayton Robbins, Unsplash License

While it will be up to the individual manager to give performance appraisals to employees, your HR team will develop the process and help to manage the process. Here are some aspects to consider to manage the process effectively:

1. Ensure you have a job description for each employee. The job description should highlight the expectations of each job title and provide a sound basis for review.
2. Ensure you have the necessary documents, such as the criteria and rating sheets for each job description.
3. Understand the instructions and ground rules for filling out the documents.
4. If your organization has decided to tie performance evaluations with pay increases, determine the pay for each employee. If you are given a budget, clearly understand what the pay increase budget (total) and target percentage increase are for each range of performance ratings.

5. If necessary, ask for coaching assistance on the development of objectives and improvement plans.
6. Ensure you know the time lines for each performance review that you are responsible for writing.

It is helpful to keep a spreadsheet or other documents that lists all your employees and time-lines for completion of performance evaluations. This makes it easier to keep track of when performance evaluations should be given.

Of course, the above process assumes the organization is not using software to manage performance evaluations. Numerous types of software are available that allow leaders to manage key job responsibilities and goals for every employee in the organization. This software tracks progress on those goals and allows the manager to enter notes (critical incidents files) online. The software can track 360 reviews and send e-mail reminders when it is time for an employee or manager to complete evaluations. This type of software can allow for a smoother, more streamlined process. Of course, as with any new system, it can be time-consuming to set up and to train managers and employees on how to use the system. However, many organizations find the initial time to set up software or web-based performance evaluation systems well worth the easier recording and tracking of performance goals.

No matter how the system is managed, it must be managed and continually developed to meet the ultimate goal—continuing development of employees.

## APPRAISAL INTERVIEWS

Once a good understanding of the process is developed, it is time to think about the actual meeting with the employee. A performance review process could be intricately detailed and organized, but if the meeting with the employee does not go well, the overall strategic objective of performance reviews may not be met. There are three types of appraisal interview styles. The first is the **tell and sell interview**. In this type of interview, the manager does most of the talking and passes his or her view to the employee. In the **tell and listen** type of interview, the manager communicates feedback and then addresses the employee's thoughts about the interview. In the **problem-solving interview**, the employee and the manager discuss the things that are going well and those that are not going well, which can make for a more productive discussion. To provide the best feedback to the employee, consider the following:

1. **Be direct and specific.** Use examples to show where the employee has room for improvement and where the employee exceeds expectations, such as, "The expectation is zero accidents, and you have not had any accidents this year."

2. **Do not be personal; always compare the performance to the standard.** For example, instead of saying, “You are too slow on the production line,” say, the “expectations are ten units per hour, and currently, you are at eight units.”
3. **Remember, it is a development opportunity.** As a result, encourage the employee to talk. Understand what the employee feels he does well and what he thinks he needs to improve.
4. **Thank the employee and avoid criticism.** Instead of the interview being a list of things the employee does not do well (which may give the feeling of criticizing), thank the employee for what the employee does well, and work on action plans together to fix anything the employee is not doing well. Think of it as a team effort to get the performance to the standard it needs to be.

The result of a completed performance evaluation usually means there are a variety of ramifications that can occur after evaluating employee performance:

1. The employee now has written, documented feedback on his or her performance.
2. The organization has documented information on low performance, in case the employee needs to be dismissed.
3. The employee has performed well and is eligible for a raise.
4. The employee has performed well and could be promoted.
5. Performance is not up to expectations, so an improvement plan should be put into place.
6. The employee has not done well, improvement plans have not worked (the employee has been warned before), and the employee should be dismissed.

In each of these cases, planning in advance of the performance appraisal interview is important, so all information is available to communicate to the employee. Consider Robin, an employee at Blewett Gravel who was told she was doing an excellent job. Robin was happy with the performance appraisal, and when asked about promotion opportunities, the manager said none were available. This can devalue a positive review and impact employee motivation. The point is to use performance evaluations as a development tool, which will positively impact employee motivation.

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## 12.7 TYPES OF PERFORMANCE ISSUES

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As you know, the time and money investment in a new employee is significant. The cost to select, hire, and train a new employee is staggering. But what if that new employee is not working out? This next section will provide some examples of performance issues and examples of processes to handle these types of employee problems.

One of the most difficult parts of managing others is not when they are doing a great job—it is when they are not doing a good job. In this section, we will address some examples of performance issues and how to handle them.

1. *Constantly late or leaves early.* While we know that flexible schedules can provide a work-life balance, managing this flexible schedule is key. Some employees may take advantage, and instead of working at home, perform non-work-related tasks instead.
2. *Too much time spent doing personal things at work.* Most companies have a policy about using a

computer or phone for personal use. For most companies, some personal use is acceptable, but it can become a problem if someone does not know where to draw the line.

3. *Inability to handle proprietary information.* Many companies handle important client and patient information. The ability to keep this information private for the protection of others is important to the success of the company.
4. *Absenteeism.* This is defined as a habitual pattern of not being at work. There could be a number of personal or professional reasons for an employee being absent from work.
5. *Drug and alcohol abuse.* Substance abuse can cause obvious problems, such as tardiness, absenteeism, and nonperformance, but it can also result in accidents or other more serious issues.
6. *Non-performing.* Sometimes employees are just not performing at their peak. Some causes may include family or personal issues, but frequently it can mean motivational issues or lack of tools and/or ability to do their current job.
7. *Conflicts with management or other employees.* While it is normal to have the occasional conflict at work, some employees seem to have more than the average owing to personality issues. Of course, this affects an organization's productivity.
8. *Theft.* Employees sometimes engage in theft at work. This may involve the theft of money, of goods or the theft of time.
9. *Ethical breaches.* Sharing certain proprietary information when it is against company policy and violating non-compete agreements are considered ethical violations. Other examples of ethical breaches include theft of time by way of submitting inaccurate hours of work for payroll processing, inappropriate employee behaviour such as falsifying a sales report or lying to a colleague.
10. *Harassment.* Engagement of sexual harassment, bullying, or other types of harassment is illegal and must be dealt with in a timely manner.
11. *Employee conduct outside the workplace.* Speaking poorly of the organization on blogs or Facebook is an example of conduct occurring outside the workplace that could violate company policy.

While certainly not exhaustive, this list provides some insight into the types of problems that may be experienced. As you can see, some of these problems are more serious than others. Some issues may only require a warning, while some may require immediate dismissal.

## WHAT INFLUENCES PERFORMANCE?

When an employee is not performing as expected, it can be very disappointing. When you consider the amount

of time it takes to recruit, hire, and train someone, it can be disappointing to find that a person has performance issues. Sometimes performance issues can be related to something personal, but often it is a combination of factors. Some of these factors can be internal while others may be external. Internal factors may include the following:

1. Career goals are not being met with the job.
2. There is conflict with other employees or the manager.
3. The goals or expectations are not in line with the employee's abilities.
4. The employee views unfairness in the workplace.
5. The employee manages time poorly.
6. The employee is dissatisfied with the job.

Some of the external factors may include the following:

1. The employee does not have the correct equipment or tools to perform the job.
2. The job design is incorrect.
3. External motivation factors are absent.
4. There is a lack of management support.
5. The employee's skills and job are mismatched.

All the internal reasons speak to the importance once again of hiring the right person from the start. The external reasons may be something that can be easily addressed and fixed. Whether the reason is internal or external, performance issues must be handled promptly.

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## 12.8 INVESTIGATIONS AND DISCIPLINE

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### INVESTIGATION OF PERFORMANCE ISSUES

Some performance issues require an investigation, such as an accusation of bullying at work. It is the responsibility of the people leaders and human resources to investigate the matter. Proper documentation is necessary should the employee need to be terminated later for that performance issue. The documentation should include the following information:

1. Date of incident
2. Time of incident
3. Location (if applicable) of incident
4. A description of the performance issue
5. Notes on the discussion with the employee on the performance issue
6. An improvement plan, if necessary
7. Next steps, should the employee commit the same infraction
8. Signatures from both the manager and employee



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With this proper documentation, the employee and the manager will clearly know the next steps that will be taken should the employee commit the same infraction in the future. Once the issue has been documented, the manager and employee should meet about the infraction. This type of meeting is called an **investigative interview** and is used to make sure the employee is fully aware of the discipline issue. This also allows

the employee the opportunity to explain their side of the story. These types of meetings should always be conducted in private, never in the presence of other employees. In a unionized organization, the employee is entitled to have a union representative present during the investigation.

## DEFINING DISCIPLINE

If an employee is not meeting the expectations, discipline might need to occur. **Discipline** is defined as the process that corrects undesirable behaviour. The goal of a discipline process shouldn't necessarily be to punish but to help the employee meet performance expectations. Often supervisors choose not to apply discipline procedures because they have not documented past employee actions or did not want to take the time to handle the situation. When this occurs, the organization lacks consistency among managers, possibly resulting in motivational issues for other employees and loss of productivity.

To have an effective discipline process, rules and policies need to be in place and communicated so all employees know the expectations. Here are some guidelines on the creation of rules and organizational policies:

1. All rules or procedures should be in a written document.
2. Rules should be related to the safety and productivity of the organization.
3. Rules should be written clearly, so no ambiguity occurs between different managers.
4. Supervisors, managers, and human resources should communicate rules clearly in orientation, training, and via other methods.
5. Rules should be revised periodically as the organization's needs change.

Of course, there is a balance between too many "rules" and giving employees the freedom to do their work. However, the point of written rules is to maintain consistency. Suppose, for example, you have a manager in operations and a manager in marketing. They both lead with a different style; the operations manager has a more rigid management style, while the marketing manager uses more of a laissez-faire approach. Suppose one employee in each of the areas is constantly late to work. The marketing manager may not do anything about it, while the operations manager may decide each tardy day merits a "write-up," and after three write-ups, the employee is let go. See how lack of consistency might be a problem? If this employee is let go, he or she might be able to successfully file a lawsuit for wrongful termination, since another employee with the same performance issue was not let go. **Wrongful termination** means an employer has fired or laid off an employee for illegal

reasons, such as violation of discrimination laws or violation of oral and/or written employee agreements. To avoid such situations, a consistent approach to managing employee performance is crucial.

## THE ROLE OF THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN DISCIPLINE

Besides the written rules, each individual job analysis should have rules and policies that apply to that specific job. The performance appraisal is a systematic process to evaluate employees on (at least) an annual basis. The organization's performance appraisal and general rules and policies should be the tools that measure the employee's overall performance. If an employee breaks the rules or does not meet the expectations of the performance appraisal, the performance issue model, which we will discuss next, can be used to correct the behaviour.

## OPTIONS FOR HANDLING PERFORMANCE ISSUES

From time-to-time you will need to address a performance issue using disciplinary intervention. Often this is called the **progressive discipline process**. It refers to a series of steps that take corrective action on non-performance issues. The progressive discipline process is useful if the offence is not serious and does not demand immediate dismissal. The progressive discipline process should be documented and applied to all employees committing the same offence. The steps in progressive discipline are normally the following:

1. First offence: Unofficial verbal warning. Counselling and restatement of expectations.
2. Second offence: Official written warning, documented in employee file.
3. Third offence: Second official warning. Improvement plan (discussed later) may be developed. Documented in employee file.
4. Fourth offence: Possible suspension or other punishment, documented in employee file.

5. Fifth offence: Termination and/or alternative dispute resolution.

## Termination of the Employment Relationship

# EMPLOYEE SEPARATION

Employee separation can occur in any of these scenarios. First, the employee resigns and decides to leave the organization. Second, the employee is terminated for one or more of the performance issues listed previously. Lastly, **absconding** is when the employee leaves the organization without resigning and following the normal process. For example, if an employee simply stops showing up to work without notifying anyone of his or her departure, this would be considered absconding.

# EMPLOYEE SEPARATIONS AND LAYOFFS

**Resignation** means the employee chooses to leave the organization. First, if an employee resigns, normally they will provide the manager with a formal resignation written notification – letter or e-mail. Then the human resources team will schedule an exit interview, which can consist of an informal confidential discussion as to why the employee is leaving the organization. If the human resources team thinks the issue or reasons for leaving can be fixed, he or she may discuss with the manager if the resignation will be accepted. Assuming the resignation is accepted, the employee will work with the manager to determine a plan for his or her workload. Some managers may prefer the employee leave right away and will redistribute the workload. For some jobs, it may make sense for the employee to finish the current project and then depart. This will vary from job to job, but two weeks' notice is normally the standard time for resignations.

If it is determined that an employee should be terminated, different steps would be taken than in a resignation situation. First, documentation is necessary, which should have occurred in the progressive discipline process. Performance appraisals, performance improvement plans, and any other performance warnings the employee received should be readily available before meeting with the employee. It should

be noted that the reliability and validity of performance appraisals should be checked before dismissing an employee based upon them. Questionable performance appraisals come from the real-world conditions common to rating situations, particularly because of limitations in the abilities of the raters.<sup>1</sup>

Remember that if the discipline process is followed as previously outlined, a termination for nonperformance should never be a surprise to an employee. Normally, the manager and HR manager would meet with the employee to deliver the news. It should be delivered with compassion but be direct and to the point. Depending on previous contracts, the employee may be entitled to a severance package. A **severance package** can include pay, benefits, or other compensation for which an employee is entitled when they leave the organization. The purpose of a severance plan is to assist the employee while he or she seeks other employment. The human resources team in conjunction with legal counsel develops the severance package and follow legislative requirements such as employment standards language.

The last topic that we should discuss in this section is the case of an absconded employee. If an employee stops showing up to work, a good effort to contact this person should be the first priority. It would be prudent to stop pay and seek legal help to recover any company items he or she has, such as laptops or parking passes.

Sometimes rather than dealing with individual performance issues and/or terminations, we find ourselves having to perform layoffs of several to hundreds of employees. Let us address your role in this process next.

## RIGHTSIZING AND LAYOFFS

**Rightsizing** refers to the process of reducing the total size of employees to ultimately save on costs. Downsizing ultimately means the same thing as rightsizing, but the usage of the word has changed, in that rightsizing seems to better define the organization's goals, which would be to reduce staff to save money, or rightsize. When a company decides to rightsize and, ultimately, engage in layoffs, some aspects should be considered.

First, is the downturn temporary? There is nothing worse than laying people off, only to find that as business increases, you need to hire again. Second, has the organization looked at other ways to cut expenses? Perhaps cutting expenses in other areas would be advisable before choosing to lay people off. Finally, consideration should be given to offering temporary sabbaticals, voluntary retirement, or changing from a full- to a part-time position. Some employees may even be willing to take a temporary pay cut to reduce costs. Organizations

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1. Weekley, J. A., & Gier, J. A. (1989). Ceilings in the Reliability and Validity of Performance Ratings: The Case of Expert Raters. *Academy of Management*, 32(1), 213-222.

find they can still keep good people by looking at some alternatives that may work for the employee and the organization, even on a temporary basis.

If the company has decided the only way to reduce costs is to cut full-time employees, this is often where HR and/or an employment lawyer should be directly involved to ensure legal and ethical guidelines are met. Articulating the reasons for layoffs and establishing a formalized approach to layoffs is the first consideration. Before it is decided who should get cut, criteria should be developed on how these decisions will be made. Similar to how selection criteria might be developed, the development of criteria that determines which jobs will be cut makes the process of cutting more fair, albeit still difficult. Establishing the criteria ahead of time can also help avoid managers' trying to "save" certain people from their own departments. After the development of criteria, the next phase would be to sit down with management and decide who does or does not meet the criteria and who will be laid off. It is key to have a solid communication plan as to how the layoffs will be announced. The important thing to remember during layoffs is to keep your employees' dignity; they did not do anything wrong to lose their job—it was just a result of circumstances.

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## 12.9 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND COMPENSATION

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### MATCHING COMPENSATION WITH CORE VALUES

As you review the compensation package your company offers, one thing that stands out is that it no longer matches the core values of your organization. When your organization merged five years ago with a similar firm that specializes in online shoe retailing, your company had to hire hundreds of people to keep up with growth. As a result—and what happens with many companies—the compensation plans are not revised and revisited as often as they should be. The core values your company adopted from the merging company focused on customer service, freedom to work where employees felt they could be most productive, and continuing education of employees, whether or not the education was related to the organization. The compensation package, providing the basic salary, health benefits, and retirement plan, seems a bit old-fashioned for the type of company yours has become.

After reviewing your company's strategic plan and your human resource management (HRM) strategic plan, you begin to develop a compensation strategy that includes salary, health benefits, and retirement plan. You decide a good place to start would be with a better understanding of what is important to your employees. For example, you are considering implementing a team bonus program for high customer service ratings and coverage for alternative forms of medicine, such as acupuncture and massage. Instead of guessing what employees would like to see in their compensation packages, you decide to develop a compensation survey to assess what benefits are most important to your employees. As you begin this task, you know it will be a lot of work, but it's important to the continued recruitment, retention, and motivation of your current employees.

So, what is compensation, and how is it determined?

### Developing A Compensation Package

There are a few basic aspects of compensation packages we should discuss before moving into the specific

aspects of compensation. These foundations can assist in the development of a compensation strategy that meets the goals of your organization and is in line with your strategic plan.

Before beginning to work on your compensation packages, some analysis should be done to determine your organization's philosophy in regard to compensation. Before developing your compensation philosophies, there are some basic questions to address:

1. From the employee's perspective, what is a fair wage?
2. Are wages too high to achieve financial health in your organization?
3. Do managers and employees know and buy into your compensation philosophy?
4. Does the pay scale reflect the importance of various job titles within the organization?
5. Is your compensation competitive enough to attract and retain employees?
6. Are you abiding by the laws with your compensation package?
7. Is your compensation philosophy keeping in line with labour market changes, industry changes, and organizational changes?

Once these basic questions are addressed, we can see where we might have “holes” in our compensation package and begin to develop new philosophies in line with our strategic plan, which benefits the organization. Some possible compensation policies might include the following:

1. Are salaries higher or lower depending on the location of the business? When looking at what to pay in a given country or area of a province different facets come into play...these could include cost of living in the area and fewer qualified people in a given area.
2. Are salaries lower or higher than the average in your region or area? If the salary is lower, what other benefits will the employee receive to make up for this difference? For example, wages might not be as high, but offering flextime or free day care might offset the lower salary.
3. Should there be a specific pay scale for each position in the organization, or should salaries be negotiated on an individual basis? If there is no set pay scale, how can you ensure individual salary offers are fair and nondiscriminatory?
4. What balance of salary and other rewards, such as bonuses, should be part of your compensation package? For example, some organizations prefer to offer a lower salary, but through bonuses and profit-sharing, the employee has the potential to earn more.
5. When giving raises, will the employee's tenure be a factor, or will pay increases be merit-based only, or a combination of both?

Let's discuss some pay policies that are used in determining compensation in more detail.



# COMPENSATION POLICY

Some organizations choose a market compensation policy, market plus, or market minus philosophy. A market compensation policy is to pay the going rate for a particular job, within a particular market based on research and salary studies. The organization that uses a market plus philosophy will determine the going rate and add a percentage to that rate, such as 5 percent. So if a particular job category median pays \$57,000, the organization with a market plus of 5 percent philosophy will pay \$59,850. A market minus philosophy pays a particular percentage less than the market; so in our example, if a company pays 5 percent less, the same job would pay \$54,150.

## Market Plus Philosophy

An example of an organization with a market plus philosophy is Cisco Systems, listed as one of the top-paying companies on *Fortune*'s annual list. For example, they pay \$131,716 for software engineers, while at Yahoo! software engineers are paid an average of \$101,669, using a market philosophy. The pay at Cisco reflects its compensation philosophy and objectives:

Cisco operates in the extremely competitive and rapidly changing high-technology industry. The Board's Compensation Committee believes that the compensation programs for the executive officers should be designed to attract, motivate, and retain talented executives responsible for the success of Cisco and should be determined within a framework based on the achievement of designated financial targets, individual contribution, customer satisfaction, and financial performance relative to that of Cisco's competitors. Within this overall philosophy, the Compensation Committee's objectives are to do the following:

1. Offer a total compensation program that is flexible and takes into consideration the compensation practices of a group of specifically identified peer companies and other selected companies with which Cisco competes for executive talent.
2. Provide annual variable cash incentive awards that take into account Cisco's overall financial performance in terms of designated corporate objectives, as well as individual contributions and a measure of customer satisfaction.
3. Align the financial interests of executive officers with those of shareholders by providing appropriate long-term, equity-based incentives.

## Market Minus Philosophy

Organizations that compensate staff based on a market minus philosophy pay lower than the average market

rate. This can be particularly positive when it comes to the wages of upper management. Employees often resent the significant disparity in wages between themselves and the executive team.

There are many reasons why an organization would choose one philosophy over another. A market minus philosophy may tie into the company's core values, as in Whole Foods, or it may be because the types of jobs require an unskilled workforce that may be easier and less expensive to replace. A company may use a market plus philosophy because the industry's cutting-edge nature requires the best and the brightest.

Other internal pay factors might include the employer's ability to pay, the type of industry, and the value of the employee and the particular job to the organization. In addition, the presence of a union can lead to mandated pay scales.

External pay factors can include the current economic state. Unemployment rates are a factor in this assessment. As a result of surplus workers, compensation may be reduced within organizations because of the oversupply of workers. Inflation and the cost of living in a given area can also determine compensation in a given market. Finally, government legislation such as the Employment Standards Act determines the minimum amount that can be paid to certain workers in Ontario.

Once an organization has looked at the internal and external forces affecting pay, it can begin to develop a pay system within the organization.

## Goals of a Compensation Package

Most of us, no matter how much we like our jobs, would not do them without a compensation package. When we think of compensation, often we think of only our paycheck, but compensation in terms of HRM is much broader.

This is the concept of Total Compensation Package. A compensation package can include pay, health-care benefits, and other benefits such as retirement plans, which will all be discussed in this chapter.

A compensation package should be positive enough to attract the best people for the job. An organization that does not pay as well as others within the same industry will likely not be able to attract the best candidates, resulting in poorer overall company performance.

Once the best employees and talent come to work for your organization, you want the compensation to be competitive enough to motivate people to stay with your organization. Although we know that compensation packages are not the only thing that motivates people, compensation is a key component.

Compensation can be used to improve morale, motivation, and satisfaction among employees. If employees are not satisfied, this can result not only in higher turnover but also in poor quality of work for those employees who do stay. A proper compensation plan can also increase loyalty in the organization.

Pay systems can also be used to reward individual or team performance and encourage employees to work at their own peak performance.

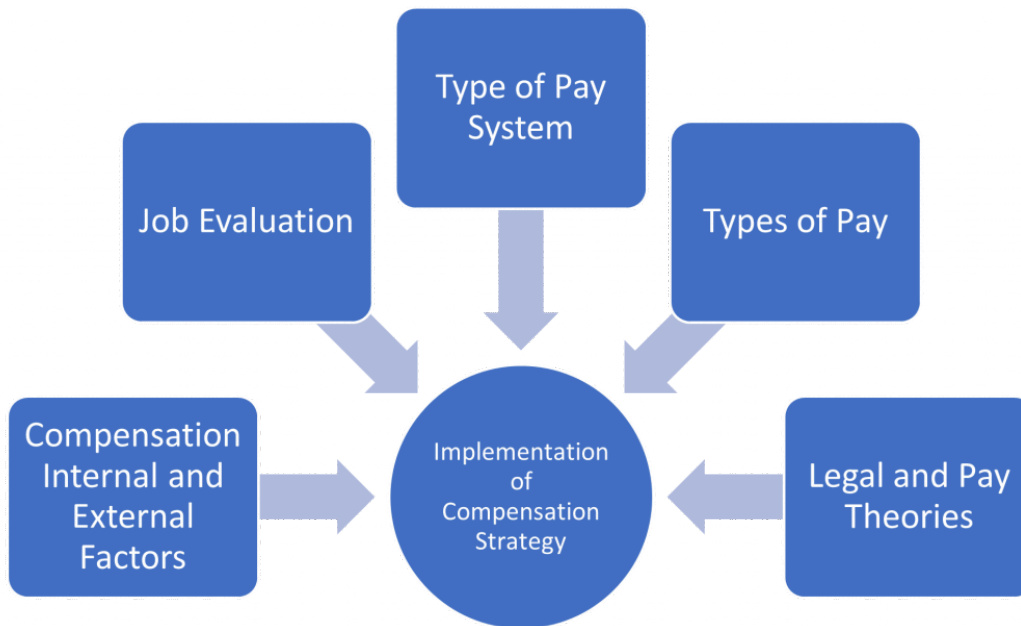
With an appropriate pay system, companies find that customer service is better because employees are happier. In addition, having fairly compensated, motivated employees not only adds to the bottom line of the

organization but also facilitates organizational growth and expansion. Motivated employees can also save the company money indirectly, by not taking sick days when the employee is not really sick, and companies with good pay packages find fewer disability claims as well. Websites such as Glassdoor or Indeed give you easy access to salary information of companies.

So far, our focus on HRM has been a strategic focus, and the same should be true for the development of compensation packages. Before the package is developed for employees, it's key to understand the role compensation plays in the bottom line of the organization. The next few sections will detail the aspects of creating the right compensation packages for your organization, including legal considerations.

## Types of Pay Systems

Once you have determined your compensation strategy based on internal and external factors, you will need to evaluate jobs, develop a pay system, and consider pay theories when making decisions.



“The Process for Implementing Compensation Strategy” by Elizabeth Cameron  
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## JOB EVALUATION SYSTEMS

As mentioned when we discussed internal and external factors, the value of the job is a major factor when determining pay. There are several ways to determine the value of a job through job evaluation. Job evaluation is defined as the process of determining the relative worth of jobs to determine pay structure. Job

evaluation can help us determine if pay is equitable and fair among our employees. There are several ways to perform a job evaluation.

## Job Ranking System

One of the simplest methods, used by smaller companies or within individual departments, is a job ranking system – to assist in attributing a pay grade to each job.

In this type of evaluation, job titles are listed and ranked in order of importance to the organization. A paired comparison can also occur, in which individual jobs are compared with every other job, based on a ranking system, and an overall score is given for each job, determining the highest-valued job to the lowest-valued job. For example, in the table below **“Example of a Paired Comparison for a Job Evaluation”**, four jobs are compared based on a ranking of 0, 1, or 2. Zero indicates the job is less important than the one being compared, 1 means the job is about the same, and 2 means the job is more important. When the scores are added up, it is a quick way to see which jobs are of more importance to the organization. Of course, any person creating these rankings should be familiar with the duties of all the jobs. While this method may provide reasonably good results because of its simplicity, it doesn’t compare differences between jobs, which may have received the same rank of importance.

### Example of a Paired Comparison for a Job Evaluation

Job	Receptionist	Project Manager	Account Manager	Sales Director	Total
Receptionist	X	0	0	0	0 = 4th
Project Administrative Assistant	1	X	0	0	1 = 3rd
Account Manager	2	1	X	0	3 = 2nd
Sales Director	2	2	2	X	6 = 1st

*Based on the paired ranking system, the sales director should have a higher salary than the project administrative assistant, because the ranking for that job is higher. Likewise, a receptionist should be paid less than the project administrative assistant because this job ranks lower.*

## Job Classification System

In a job classification system, every job is classified and grouped based on the knowledge and skills required for the job, years of experience, and amount of authority for that job. Tied to each job are the basic function, characteristics, and typical work of that job classification, along with pay range data.

## Point Factor System

Another type of job evaluation system is the point-factor system, which determines the value of a job by calculating the total points assigned to it. The points given to a specific job are called compensable factors. These can range from leadership ability to specific responsibilities and skills required for the job. Once the compensable factors are determined, each is given a weight compared to the importance of this skill or ability to the organization. When this system is applied to every job in the organization, expected compensable factors for each job are listed, along with corresponding points to determine which jobs have the most relative importance. Some organizations use a point-factor system. Examples of some compensable factors include the following:

1. Knowledge
2. Autonomy
3. Supervision
4. Psychological demands
5. Interpersonal skills
6. Internal and external contacts

Each of the compensable factors has a narrative that explains how points should be distributed for each factor. The points are then multiplied by the weight to give a final score on that compensable factor. After a score is developed for each, the employee is placed on the appropriate pay level for his or her score.

Another option for job evaluation is called the Hay profile method. This proprietary job evaluation method focuses on three factors called know-how, problem solving, and accountability. Within these factors are specific statements such as “procedural proficiency.” Each of these statements is given a point value in each category of know-how, problem solving, and accountability. Then job descriptions are reviewed and assigned a set of statements that most accurately reflect the job. The point values for each of the statements are added for each job description, providing a quantitative basis for job evaluation and eventually, compensation. An advantage of this method is its quantitative nature, but a disadvantage is the expense of performing an elaborate job evaluation.

# PAY SYSTEMS

Once you have performed a job evaluation, you can move to the third step, which we call pay grading. This is the process of setting the pay scale for specific jobs or types of jobs.

The first method to pay grade is to develop a variety of pay grade levels. Then once the levels are developed, each job is assigned a pay grade. When employees receive raises, their raises stay within the range of their individual pay grade, until they receive a promotion that may result in a higher pay grade. The advantage of this type of system is fairness. Everyone performing the same job is within a given range and there is little room for pay discrimination to occur. However, since the system is rigid, it may not be appropriate for some organizations in hiring the best people. Organizations that operate in several cities might use a pay grade scale, but they may add percentages based on where someone lives. For example, the cost of living in rural Ontario is much lower than in Toronto. If an organization has offices in both places, it may choose to add a percentage pay adjustment for people living within a geographic area—for example, 10 percent higher in Toronto.

One of the downsides to pay grading is the possible lack of motivation for employees to work harder. They know even if they perform tasks outside their job description, their pay level or pay grade will be the same. This can incubate a stagnant environment. Sometimes this system can also create too many levels of hierarchy. For large companies, this may work fine, but smaller, more agile organizations may use other methods to determine pay structure.

For example, some organizations have moved to a delayering and banding process, which cuts down the number of pay levels within the organization. General Electric delayered pay grades in the mid-1990s because it found that employees were less likely to take a reassignment that was at a lower pay grade, even though the assignment might have been a good development opportunity.<sup>1</sup> So, delayering enables a broader range of pay and more flexibility within each level. Sometimes this type of process also occurs when a company downsizes. Let's assume a company with five hundred employees has traditionally used a pay grade model but decided to move to a more flexible model. Rather than have, thirty pay levels, it may reduce this to five or six levels, with greater salary differentials within the grades themselves. This allows organizations to better reward performance, while still having a basic model for hiring managers to follow.

Rather than use a pay grade scale, some organizations use a going rate model. In this model, analysis of the going rate for a particular job at a particular time is considered when creating the compensation package. This model can work well if market pressures or labour supply-and-demand pressures greatly impact your particular business. For example, if you need to attract the best project managers, but more are already employed (lack of supply)—and most companies are paying \$75,000 for this position—you will likely need to pay the same or more, because of labour supply and demand.

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1. Ferris, G., *Handbook of Human Resource Management* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995)

# COMPENSATION STRATEGIES

In addition to the pay level models we just looked at, other considerations might include the following:

1. **Skill-based pay.** With a skill-based pay system, salary levels are based on an employee's skills, as opposed to job title. This method is implemented similarly to the pay grade model, but rather than job title, a set of skills is assigned a particular pay grade.
2. **Competency-based pay.** Rather than looking at specific skills, the competency-based approach looks at the employee's traits or characteristics as opposed to a specific skill set. This model focuses more on what the employee can become as opposed to the skills he or she already has.
3. **Broadbanding.** Broadbanding is similar to a pay grade system, except all jobs in a particular category are assigned a specific pay category. For example, everyone working in customer service, or all administrative assistants (regardless of department), are paid within the same general band. McDonald's uses this compensation philosophy in their corporate offices, stating that it allows for flexibility in terms of pay, movement, and growth of employees.<sup>2</sup>
4. **Variable pay system.** This type of system provides employees with a pay basis but then links the attainment of certain goals or achievements directly to their pay. For example, a salesperson may receive a certain base pay but earn more if he or she meets the sales quota.

## PAY THEORIES



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1953#oembed-1>*

*hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1953#oembed-1*

2. McDonald's Corporation, "Your Pay and Rewards," accessed July 23, 2011, [http://www.aboutmcdonalds.com/mcd/corporate\\_careers/benefits/highlights\\_of\\_what\\_we\\_offer/pay\\_and\\_rewards.html](http://www.aboutmcdonalds.com/mcd/corporate_careers/benefits/highlights_of_what_we_offer/pay_and_rewards.html)

Know your worth, and then ask for it by Casey Brown [8:12]

Now that we have discussed pay systems, it is important to look at some theories on pay that can be helpful to know when choosing the type of pay system your organization will use.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1953#oembed-2>*

### Employee Motivation: Equity Theory by Ben Baran [8:17]

The equity theory is concerned with the relational satisfaction employees get from pay and inputs they provide to the organization. It says that people will evaluate their own compensation by comparing their compensation to others' compensation and their inputs to others' inputs. In other words, people will look at their own compensation packages and at their own inputs (the work performed) and compare that with others. If they perceive this to be unfair, in that another person is paid more, but they believe that person is doing less work, motivational issues can occur. For example, people may reduce their own inputs and not work as hard. Employees may also decide to leave the organization as a result of the perceived inequity. In HR, this is an important theory to understand because even if someone is being paid fairly, they will always compare their own pay to that of others in the organization. The key here is perception, in that fairness is based entirely on what the employee sees, not what may be the actual reality. Even though HR or management may feel employees are being paid fairly, this may not be the employee's belief. In HR, we need to look at two factors related to pay equity: external pay equity and internal pay equity. External pay equity refers to what other people in similar organizations are being paid for a similar job. Internal pay equity focuses on employees within the same organization. Within the same organization, employees may look at higher level jobs, lower level jobs, and years with the organization to make their decision on pay equity. Consider Walmart, for example. In 2010, Michael Duke, CEO of Walmart, earned roughly \$35 million in salary and other compensation,<sup>3</sup> while employees earned the minimum wage or slightly higher in their respective states. While Walmart contends that its wages are competitive in local markets, the retail giant makes no apologies for the pay difference, citing the need for a specialized skill set to be able to be the CEO of a *Fortune* 500 company. There are hundreds of articles addressing the issue of pay equity between upper level managers and employees of an organization. To make a compensation strategy work, the perceived inputs (the work) and outputs (the pay) need to match fairly.

3. Gomstyn, A., "Walmart CEO Pay," ABC News Money, July 2, 2010, accessed July 23, 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/walmart-ceo-pay-hour-workers-year/story?id=11067470>



The expectancy theory is another key theory in relation to pay. The expectancy theory says that employees will put in as much work as what they expect to receive in return for it. In other words, if the employee perceives they are going to be paid favourably, they will work to achieve the outcomes. If they believe the rewards do not equal the amount of effort, they may not work as hard.

The reinforcement theory, developed by Edward L. Thorndike,<sup>4</sup> says that if high performance is followed by some reward, that desired behaviour will likely occur in the future. Likewise, if high performance isn't followed by a reward, it is less likely the high performance will occur in the future. Consider an extreme example of the reinforcement theory in the world of finance. On Wall Street, bonuses for traders and bankers are a major part of their salary. The average bonus in 2010 was \$128,530,<sup>5</sup> which does not take into account specific commissions on trades, which can greatly increase total compensation. One interesting consideration is the ethical implications of certain pay structures, particularly commission and bonus plans. Traditionally, a bonus structure is designed to reward performance, rather than be a guaranteed part of the compensation plan. Bonus and commission plans should be utilized to drive the desired behaviour and act as a reward for the desired behaviour, as the reinforcement theory states.

All these theories provide us with information to make better decisions when developing our own pay systems. Other considerations are discussed next.

## PAY DECISION CONSIDERATIONS

Besides the motivational aspect of creating a pay structure, there are some other considerations. First, the size of the organization and the expected expansion of the organization will be a factor. For example, if you are the HR manager for a ten-person company, you likely use a going rate or management fit model. While this is appropriate for your company today, as your organization grows, it may be prudent to develop a more formal pay structure.

If your organization also operates overseas, a consideration is how domestic workers will be paid in comparison to the global market. One strategy is to develop a centralized compensation system, which would be one pay system for all employees, regardless of where they live. The downside to this is that the cost of living may be much less in some countries, making the centralized system possibly unfair to employees who live and

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4. Indiana University, "Edward L. Thorndike," accessed February 14, 2011, <http://www.indiana.edu/~intell/ethorndike.shtml>

5. Smith, A., "The 2010 Wall Street Bonus," CNN Money, February 24, 2011, accessed July 23, 2011, [http://money.cnn.com/2011/02/24/news/economy/wall\\_street\\_bonus/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2011/02/24/news/economy/wall_street_bonus/index.htm)

work in more expensive countries. Another consideration is in what currency employees will be paid. Most US companies pay even their overseas workers in dollars, not in the local currency where the employee is working. Currency valuation fluctuations could cause challenges in this regard.<sup>6</sup>

How you communicate your pay system is extremely important to enhance the motivation that can be created by fair and equitable wages. In addition, where possible, asking for participation from your employees through the use of pay attitude surveys, for example, can create a transparent compensation process, resulting in higher performing employees.

Organizations should develop market pay surveys and review their wages constantly to ensure the organization is within expected ranges for the industry.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1953#oembed-3>*

Why you should know how much your coworkers get paid by David Burkus [7:20]

**Table 6.2 Types of Pay**

6. Watson, B., “Global Pay Systems, Compensation in Support of a Multinational Strategy,” *Compensation Benefits Review* 37, no. 1 (2005): 33–36

<b>Pay</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
Salary	Fixed compensation calculated on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis. May/may not be paid overtime work.
Hourly Wage	Employees are paid on the basis of number of hours worked.
Piecework System	Employees are paid based on the number of items that are produced.

<b>Types of Incentive Plans</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
Commission Plans	An employee may or may not receive a salary but will be paid extra (e.g., a percentage for every sale made).
Bonus Plans	Extra pay for meeting or beating some goal previously determined. Bonus plans can consist of monetary compensation, but also other forms such as time off or gift certificates.
Profit-Sharing Plans	Annual bonuses paid to employees based on the amount of profit the organization earned.
Stock Options	When an employee is given the right to purchase company stock at a particular rate in time. Please note that a stock “option” is different from the actual giving of stock, since the option infers the employee will buy the stock at a set rate, obviously, usually cheaper than the going rate.

<b>Other Types of Compensation</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
Fringe Benefits	This can include a variety of options. Sick leave, paid vacation time, health club memberships, daycare services.
Health Benefits	Most organizations provide health and dental care benefits for employees. In addition, disability and life insurance benefits are offered.
Retirement Savings Plans	Some organizations provide a retirement plan for employees. The company would work with a financial organization to set up the plan so employees can save money, and often, companies will “match” a percentage of what the employee contributes to the plan.

## TYPES OF PAY

After a pay system has been developed, we can begin to look at specific methods of paying our employees. Remember that when we talk about compensation, we are referring to not only an actual paycheck but

additional types of compensation, such as incentive plans that include bonuses and profit sharing. We can divide our total pay system into three categories: pay, incentives, and other types of compensation. Pay is the hourly, weekly, or monthly salary an employee earns. An incentive, often called a pay-for-performance incentive, is given for meeting certain performance standards, such as meeting sales targets. The advantage to incentive pay is that company goals can be linked directly to employee goals, resulting in higher pay for the employee and goal achievement by the organization. The following are desirable traits of incentive plans:

- Clearly communicated
- Attainable but challenging
- Easily understandable
- Tied to company goals

## Laws Relating to Pay

As you have already guessed from our earlier chapter discussions, people cannot be discriminated against when it comes to the development of pay systems. One issue hotly debated is the issue of comparable worth. Comparable worth states that people should be given similar pay if they are performing the same type of job. Evidence over the years shows this isn't the case, with women earning less than men in many industries. On average, a woman earns 79 cents for every \$1.00 a man earns.

Remember that gender is one of the protected categories in the Canadian Human Rights Act and thus gender should not be a factor in pay determination.

## Other Types of Compensation

As you already know, there is more to a compensation package than just pay. There are many other aspects to the creation of a good compensation package, including not only pay but incentive pay and other types of compensation.

Some of the benefits are mandatory, and they are provided by the employer due to the laws and the provincial regulations. These include Canada and Quebec pension plans, Employment Insurance, leaves without pay (Compassion leave or other) as well as those that are governed by the Employment Standards (ex. holidays). These can be seen by direct deductions on your paycheck. Every pay has a deduction that is taken for the pension plans and for employment insurance. These deductions are there to protect the employee in the future during retirement or any lost income due to loss of job. By contributing to Employment Insurance if the employee would unfortunately lose their job, they would be entitled to unemployment benefits.

Other benefits are voluntary and are at the discretion of the employer. Many different benefits can be offered by the employer. The most common ones will be highlighted here. Most employers will offer health benefits,

such as extended medical plans and dental coverage, with different providers such as SunLife or others. These can include private medical consultations, eye doctor examinations, private professional consultations, dental consultations and procedures etc.

In addition to the standard Quebec and Canada Pension Plans, some companies allow employees to contribute even further to their retirement plans. This can be done with a defined benefit or defined contribution plans, or Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs). (Employer-sponsored pension plans – Canada.ca).

Depending on the company/industry, some paid time off provisions are legislated (e.g., ESA), while some employers may offer additional paid time off (e.g., personal days). This will vary from organization to organization, and the details will be highlighted in the company policy and procedures.

More and more employers are also offering employees wellness programs that include access to mental wellness and alternate programs such as gym memberships, yoga, Employee Assistance programs and so forth.

Furthermore, some also allow educational assistance programs where they will reimburse for courses taken.

Another key benefit that some employees look for and that may be supplied by the employer includes childcare services and elderly care.

The range of offers depends on the employer, their size, and their capability to offer the benefits.

One aspect to note is that once these benefits are offered, the employer should not remove them as this will cause employees to feel unmotivated.

## A FINAL NOTE ON COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS STRATEGY

When creating your compensation plan, of course the ability to recruit and retain should be an important factor. But also, consideration of your workforce needs is crucial to any successful compensation plan. The first step in development of a plan is to ask the employees what they care about. Some employees would rather receive more pay with fewer benefits or better benefits with fewer days off. Surveying the employees allows you, as a company, to better understand the needs of your specific workforce. Once you have developed your plan, understand that it may change to best meet the needs of your business as it changes over time.

Once the plan is developed, communicating the plan with your employees is also essential. Inform your employees via an HR blog, e-mails, and traditional methods such as face to face. Your employees might not always be aware of the cost of the benefits to the company, so making sure they know is your responsibility. For

example, if you pay for 80 percent of the medical insurance premiums, let your employees know this. This type of communication can go a long way to allowing the employees to see their value within the organization.

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## 12.10 SUMMARY

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### Summary

In this chapter, we have reviewed performance appraisals, performance issues, investigations and disciplinary processes. As an Operations Manager, you will not only be required to be familiar with these processes, you will often lead the process. Delivering timely and effective feedback is essential in the employee-manager relationship. Providing employees with a regularly scheduled performance review allows the manager to share expectations, highlight successes and coach if there are any areas for improvement. Should there be performance concerns, investigations, performance improvement plans and possible disciplinary action may be required to resolve such matters. Overall, taking the time to share performance feedback with your team will strengthen the business by ensuring everyone is working towards the goals of the organization.



## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1124#h5p-15>*

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# CHAPTER 13: EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

## Chapter Outline

13.0 Learning Objectives

13.1 An Introduction to Employee Development

13.2 The Business Case for Employee Development

13.3 Employee Development: Part One – Succession Planning

13.4 Employee Development: Part Two – Employee Personal Development

13.5 Summary



## 13.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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### Learning Objectives

- Describe the importance of succession planning at work.
- List the various methods used to develop an employee.
- Explain the use of a career development plan.

## 13.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

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“Professional development” by Nick Youngson, CC BY-SA 3.0, Pix4free

Employee development should be considered a natural extension of training. In Chapter 5 we talked about employee training. In Chapter 6 we reviewed performance management. Like training, this process is concerned with the growth of employees. However, unlike training which occurs in a short period and is targeted at specific KSAs, employee development unfolds over a longer period of time and targets a more general set of competencies. Thus, career development focuses on programs and systems that manage and track employees’ broad progress over many years – ensuring long term personal development.

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## 13.2 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

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As an Operations Manager, you will need to invest time, money and effort into developing existing employees in preparation for future roles and the growth of your organization. While hiring managers typically turn to the Talent Acquisition team to hire such talent, competition for qualified job candidates is high and organizations must look within and develop their existing talent. Let's review the business case for employee development within your organization.

- Staffing and Skills Shortage
- Employee Turnover
- The Competition
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Talent Acquisition
- Strategic Planning
- Productivity
- Culture of Learning
- Institutional Knowledge
- Morale and Engagement
- Specialized Competencies

### Staffing and Skills Shortages

Those that work in Talent Acquisition will tell you, it is hard to find employees who possess the skills needed to fill existing job openings. Some employers are partnering with higher education facilities to develop courses for their employees. Often titled micro-credentials, these courses are laser-focused on specific skills needed to fill a recognized skills gap. Examples might include leadership skills, communication skills and workplace investigation skills.

In addition to skills shortages, the recent pandemic has caused several people to change industries and career paths, leading to an overall staffing shortage. This scarcity of talent is causing the overall labour pool to shrink.

Lastly, organizations face demographic changes as some individuals are taking part in “the great resignation”. Individuals that were subject matter experts in their chosen field have decided they are no longer interested in

working in the “corporate” environment and have opted for jobs that allow them to explore the passion and creativity. Add this to the high number of baby boomers retiring, the skills shortage is upon us.

## Employee Turnover

Why does an employee decide to leave an organization? Some individuals suggest their manager is the problem, their workload is too great, or the culture is lacking. Others point to a lack of flexibility or a lack of employee development.

### Reasons for Employee Turnover



Problematic  
Manager



Workload  
Is Too Heavy



Culture  
Is Lacking



Lack of  
Flexibility



Lack of  
Employee  
Development

“Employee Turnover” by Alyssa Giles, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Employee development takes time. Organizations that fail to offer an employee development program to their employees may signal they do not recognize the value of their existing employees. Employees expect their company will invest in their development to assist with their career path and promotability.

## The Competition

Regardless of your industry, there is always “the competition”. They are happy to hire your employees and take from your business. The competition for skilled staff has never been so high. Taking the time to develop and

promote a career development plan for your employees and invest in relevant courses to build their skills is a strategic way to ward off the competition.

## Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

If an organization wants to be known as an employer of choice, the business needs to hire individuals at every level of the organization that represent the community in which they work. Don't overlook the opportunity to provide upskilling to everyone in the organization, not just a selected few. Your organization's ability to promote women, individuals with disabilities and employees from a wide variety of backgrounds makes your company more desirable to the job seeker.

## Employer of Choice

It is easy for your Talent Acquisition team to attract skilled candidates if you have a reputation as an employee that invests in its people. During the interview process, your Talent Acquisition team will highlight the structured training and employee development programs available to them if they join your organization. Aside from pay and benefits, candidates will add employee development to their "pro's" list when deciding which company to join. Make your organization an employer of choice.

## Strategic Planning

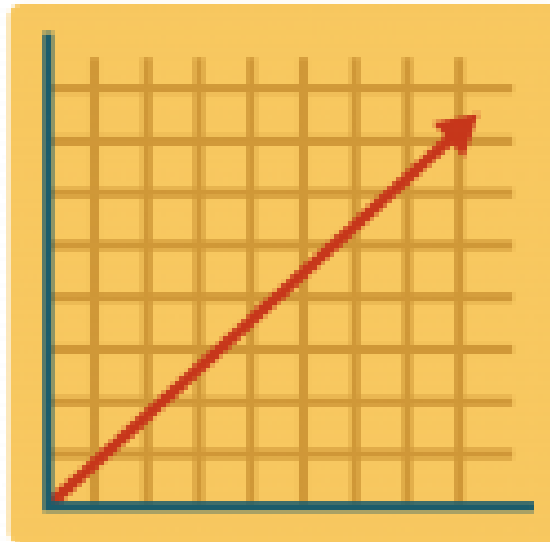
Does your organization conduct regular needs analysis to determine the skills your employees need? Perhaps you have three Operations Managers that will be retiring in the next 5 years. When you review your "bench strength", do you have a few individuals that are on track to take on these management roles? Since you have data that shows the age of each worker, you can project how many retirements you are likely to experience in the next 20 years and plan for the future needs of your business.

## Productivity

Workers who recognize the time and effort an organization is investing into their career are motivated to work hard. You will seldom find individuals that are bored at work if they are valued and included in the future of the company .



Productivity



Investment in  
Employee Development

“Productivity Influence” by Alyssa Giles, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

## Culture of Learning

The culture of an organization matters. Prospective employees are often attracted to company’s that are made up of good people, exhibit a concern for the environment, and are effective in what they do. What if your organization also has a culture of learning? Employees talk. They talk to their friends, family, neighbours and they most certainly talk by way of social media. When your employees talk about your workplace, do they refer to the amazing employee development program and growth opportunities? Word spreads quickly and job seekers are intrigued by stories of employee investment and career development.

## Institutional Knowledge

Think about the institutional knowledge your employees possess. After years of working for your organization, many of your employees are paid for their analytical and problem solving (what they know) instead of what they do for your company. We are paying people to think. As these individuals near retirement, does your organization have a plan to extract this institutional knowledge and share it with those that will take their place? An employee development plan allows for job shadowing, mentorship and coaching to transfer this intrinsic knowledge to the next generation of workers.

## Morale and Engagement

How happy are your employees? An employee's attitude, participation, engagement and morale tend to increase when offered meaningful employee development programs such as a career development plan. Sitting down with your manager on a regular basis to chart your progress, identify skills gaps and put plans in place for upcoming employee development sessions will have a positive impact.

## Specialized Competencies

There is a good chance that your organization employs a number of individuals that will be difficult to replace. Perhaps your CEO is going to retire, or your subject matter expert in the quality department is going on a leave. By instituting a succession plan for these highly specialized roles, an organization can avoid the costly mistake of allowing for a gap between one individual leaving an organization and another replacing them.

## 13.3 EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT: PART ONE - SUCCESSION PLANNING

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“Metal Bench” by daryl\_mitchell, CC BY-SA 2.0

An employee **development program** is a process developed to help people manage their careers, learn new things, and take steps to improve personally and professionally. Employee development is vital for the long term viability of any organization. Most organizations will pursue employee development on at least two fronts – succession planning and employee personal development. Here we will look at succession planning in the workplace.

Succession planning is key to the success of organizations. An organization should always be concerned with the growth and development of its next generation of leaders. This is sometimes referred to as an organization’s

**“bench strength”**, meaning who is ready and up next to take on a role within your business. Because this development unfolds over many years, succession planning has to be a constant priority for HR managers and Senior Management. It usually takes 20 years to develop the CEO of a large organization, so one must start early and be very proactive to ensure that the pipeline of leadership talent for top positions is healthy. Remember how the success of Apple was so closely tied to its charismatic CEO, Steve Jobs, and how his untimely death in 2011 created much speculation as to the future of the company? It turns out that Apple did not miss a beat with its successor, Tim Cook, and is now one of the most profitable companies in the world with a market capitalization of \$2 trillion! The development of Tim Cook as a successor of Steve Jobs did not occur overnight. Cook was carefully groomed, along with many others, to succeed Jobs just like the potential successor of Cook is currently being groomed at Apple.

## Terminology

Becoming familiar with some of the terminology surrounding succession planning, such as career planning and career management is helpful.

- *Career Planning* focuses on the employee and their career interests. An organization would provide the individual with development options that align with their individual goals.
- *Career Management* focuses on the business objectives of the organization. The goal is to create positions and structures that support these business objectives.
- *Succession Planning* focuses on the future. It involves the identification of skills and abilities needed to perform jobs within the organization and developing a pipeline of people to fill these roles.
- *Replacement Planning* involves the identification of employees that would be suitable replacements for open roles in key areas of the operation.
- *Training* focuses on an individual’s current role and provides them with the skills, ability and knowledge to perform their job.
- *Development* focuses on the long-term game to prepare employees for roles and responsibilities they will take on in the future.

## Factors to Take into Consideration

Let’s review some key factors an organization should consider as they develop their succession plan. Have you defined the **scope** of your succession plan program? Will you only identify potential candidates, or will you also identify specific roles that are perfect training grounds for future job candidates? It is also important to reflect on the candidates you will choose to take part in your program. Based on conversations with their managers,

you will want to select individuals that are considered *flexible*, adaptable, eager to learn new skills and can handle change.

In addition to identifying the right participants, your organization will need to identify the right *positions* to build your talent pipeline. Think about positions in your organization that align with the goals of the company, have the greatest impact on sales and service, are highly specialized in your industry, and require a long time to develop such as a lead quality auditor.

Have you brought together the right *team* to implement this succession planning program? You will want to include subject matter experts, leaders, organizational development specialists and human resources as these individuals know about developing people, adult learning, performance management and mentorship. Your team will also need to decide what *success* looks like. How will you know if your succession plan is working? You will need to determine if the necessary skills have been acquired and if you have a strong group of internal candidates in the *talent pipeline* ready to fill future roles.

## Succession Planning Obstacles

While we want to focus on the positives of succession planning, being aware of the possible challenges allows the implementation team to plan for and mitigate such obstacles. **Leadership Support** is essential to the success of any internal program. Do your leaders understand the skills gaps, the staffing shortages, the competition to hire candidates and why your organization needs to build a talent pipeline? Ensuring you have leadership buy-in will help launch your succession planning program forward and draw the attention of prospective internal candidates.

**Resistance to Change** is yet another challenge to overcome. This resistance to change could come from your leaders and/or your employees. The fear of the unknown can sideline a program. This is your opportunity to communicate the purpose of the program, including alignment with organizational goals and creating a pipeline of internal talent.

**Departmental Resistance** can be expected. You are asking departmental managers to let some of their best talent join your succession planning program. It is natural for a manager to be hesitant and protect their talent. It will be extremely important to ensure that your departmental managers understand the overall goals of the organization and that every department must participate in building the company's talent pipeline.

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## 13.4 EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT: PART TWO - EMPLOYEE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Employee personal development helps with employee motivation and retention. There are few things more motivating for employees than knowing that the company that they work for is committed to their professional development. Conversely, an employer who does not focus on employee learning is going to suffer from low performance, engagement and retention. According to LinkedIn's 2018 Workforce Learning Report, a whopping 93% of employees say that they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their careers. People want to know how their goals and aspirations fit with the plans of the company that they work for.

### Employee Development Guidelines

A successful employee development program involves buy-in and a connection to the organization's overall goals. Let's look at a few guidelines that help support this initiative:

- *Buy-In:* Holding meetings ahead of time to get upper-management buy-in can speed up the process. Answering their questions, providing clarity and communicating how your succession planning program supports the business is critical to your success.
- *Involvement:* Have the upper-management team involved in the program roll-out. Asking them to communicate the highlights of the program will emphasize the value they see in their employees.
- *Connection:* Ensure your employee development program is related to your performance management program. Employees want to know what to expect and how these programs relate to one another.
- *Values:* How do your employees see employee development and what value do they put on such programs? Employees are often very interested in their development and appreciate when an organization invests time and money in these initiatives.
- *Outcome:* Has your organization communicated the skills, abilities and knowledge each employee will achieve as a result of the employee development program? It is important to focus on the skills your organization will need most going forward.

### Employee Development Methods

Let's review methods of enhancing an employee's skills, ability and knowledge for future job assignments.



“Employee Development” by Alyssa Giles, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

## 9-Box Grid

When assessing an employee’s current contribution to your organization as well as their potential contribution, the 9-box grid is an effective tool. This visual tool allows people leaders to see an employee’s likelihood of filling a leadership role in the future. A manager can include both performance appraisal information and the results of employee assessments in the grid. To learn more about the use of a 9-box gride, please visit the following site: [Using The 9-Box Grid With The Performance Values Matrix \(workdove.com\)](http://workdove.com)

## “Stretch” Goals

Providing employees with opportunities to work on projects or assignments that require skills typically associated with next-level positions will stretch an individual and allow them to attain new competencies they will need for future job postings.

## Job Rotation

Allowing employees to move between jobs in the organization is known as job rotation. Regardless of the size of your company, you can identify roles that can be shared by many individuals. Job rotation allows an employee to gain skills and abilities in a variety of roles that will assist with their promotability.

## Job Enrichment

Adding a higher level of responsibility and control to an existing employee's job description can be motivating. Explaining to an individual that part of their growth at this organization involves taking on a greater degree of responsibility for people or a process demonstrates that the organization believes they are ready for the challenge.

## Corporate Universities

Some industry leading organizations put a lot of effort into employee development and even invest in what is classified as 'corporate universities'. These in-house learning institutions are modeled after universities with programs, courses, and credits. CGI, for example, at the CGI Leadership Institute which offers courses such as CGI 101 and CGI 201 as well as courses on leadership and project management. Another famous example is McDonald's Hamburger University which was founded in 1961 and has more than 275,000 graduates.

## High Potential Programs

High potential (hi-po) programs are concerned with the early identification and the development of employees who have the potential to assume leadership positions in the future. If we would transpose such a program in the hockey world, it would be a system that identifies pee-wee players with the most potential and make sure that they get the coaching and the team environment needed to develop into elite NHL players. Keys to these programs are (a) the identification of talent and (b) the development of this talent. First, potential has to be identified early. Large organizations often flag hi-po's in their very first years in the company. This early identification is difficult to do and often leads to false positives (or employees identified as hi-po's who do not develop into superior executives). This is the reason why companies tend to cast a wide net and identify as many hi-po's as possible. After talent has been identified, it needs to be groomed. Over time, the careers of hi-po's are carefully managed to make sure that they reach their full potential. For example, HR managers often use developmental experiences such as international assignments to make sure that hi-po's are put in situations where they can grow.



## Career Development Plans

A career development plan usually includes a list of short- and long-term goals that employees have about their current and future jobs, and a planned sequence of formal and informal training and experiences needed to help them reach their goals. As this chapter has discussed, the organization can and should be instrumental in defining what types of training. Both in-house and external that can be used to help develop employees.

### *Sample Career Development Plan Developed by an Employee and Commented on by Her Manager*

<b>Today's Date</b>	February 15, 2020
<b>Employee</b>	Sammie Smith
<b>Current Job Title</b>	Clerk, Accounts Payable
<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop management skills</li> <li>• Learn accounting standards</li> <li>• Promoted to Accounts Payable Manager</li> </ul>
<b>Estimated Costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management training</li> <li>• Peachtree accounting software Advanced training</li> <li>• Earn AAAS online degree in accounting</li> <li>• Take tax certification course</li> <li>• Communications training</li> </ul>
<b>Completion Date</b>	Spring of 2020

#### **Manager Notes:**

- In-house training offered yearly: "Reading Body Language," and "Writing Development," and "Running an Effective Meeting"
- External Training needed: Peachtree software, AAAS Degree, Tax Certification Training Course
- Assign Sammie to Dorothy Redgur, the CFO for mentorship
- Next steps: Sammie should develop a timeline for seminar completion.

The budget allows us to pay up to \$1,000 per year for external training for all employees. Talk with Sammie about how to receive reimbursement.

As you can see, the employee developed goals and made suggestions on the types of training that could help Sammie meet their goals. Based on this data, the manager suggested in-house training and external training to reach their goals within the organization.

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- CIPD: Coaching and Mentoring



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## 13.5 SUMMARY

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### Summary

How will your organization fill the roles of the future? Are your existing employees ready with the skills, knowledge and experience needed to fill these roles? As employee development takes time and investment, managers must continually provide their team members with opportunities to further develop their skills.

When it comes to succession planning, or your “bench strength,” it can take years to develop the talent needed to fill management or specialized roles. Succession planning is a strategic initiative that pays off in dividends if it is carried out correctly. It makes an organization competitive and it prevents companies from facing the dreaded skills gap.

Employee personal development is meant to equip your employees with the skills needed to move within your organization. Create a career development plan that highlights both short-term and long-term development goals and specific initiatives to achieve such goals. Take the time to develop both succession planning and employee personal development programs to become an employer of choice.



## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1495#h5p-18>*

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# CHAPTER 14: COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## Chapter Outline

- 14.0 Learning Objectives
- 14.1 Communication in the Digital Age
- 14.2 Electronic Written Communication
- 14.3 Netiquette and Social Media
- 14.4 Traditional Written Communication
- 14.5 Delivering Difficult Messages
- 14.6 Non-verbal Communication
- 14.7 Conflict Resolution Strategies
- 14.8 Summary



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# 14.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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## Learning Objectives

- Explain how social media communication impacts the workplace.
- List effective conflict resolution strategies.
- Explain how to deliver difficult messages.

## 14.1 COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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How many texts or instant messages do you send in a day? How many e-mails? Do you prefer communicating by text, instant message app (e.g., SnapChat), or generally online instead of face-to-face in person with businesses? Given the many text messages some individuals send in one day, they probably write more than most people in their demographic have at any point in human history. This is primarily an advantage because it gives you baseline comfort with writing.

Developing conversational skills is essential when they enter a workforce populated mainly by older generations that grew up without smartphones, developed those advanced conversational skills the hard way by making mistakes and learning from them, and expect well-developed conversational skills of younger generations entering the workforce. Though plenty of business is done online these days, there really is no good substitute for face-to-face interaction.

Customer service aside, face-to-face interactions are still vitally important to the functioning of any organization. In a study on the effectiveness of in-person requests for donations versus requests by e-mail, for instance, the in-person approach was found to be 34 times more successful.<sup>1</sup> We instinctively value human over machine interaction in many (but not all) situations we find ourselves. Though some jobs like nurse or therapist simply cannot function without in-person interaction and would be the last to be automated (if ever), most others will involve a mix of written and face-to-face communication.

Our responsibility in handling that mix requires that we become competent in using various devices that bring us a competitive advantage in our work. By working in the cloud with our smartphones and laptop, desktop, or tablet devices, for instance, we can collaborate with individuals or teams anywhere and anytime, as well as secure our work in ways we couldn't when files were tied to specific devices. Through the years,

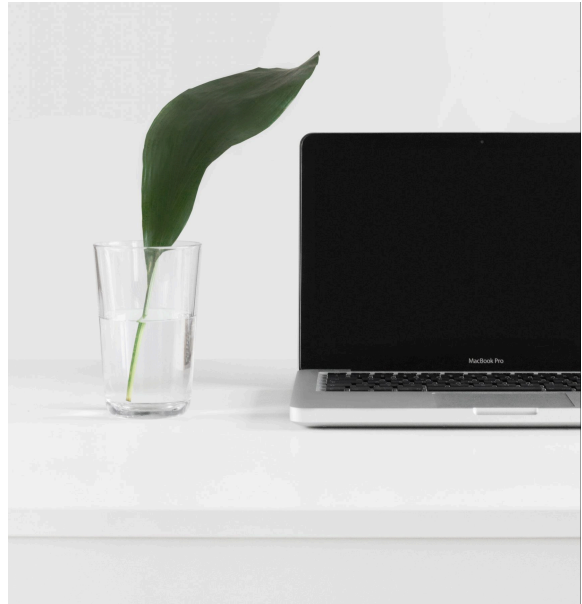


Photo by Sarah Dorweiler, Unsplash License

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1. Bohns, V. K. (2017, April 11). *A face-to-face request is 34 times more successful than an email*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2017/04/a-face-to-face-request-is-34-times-more-successful-than-an-email>



new technology trends will offer up new advantages with new devices that we will have to master to stay competitive.

Those advantages are double-edged swords, however, so it is important that we manage the risks associated with them. With so much mobile technology enabling us to communicate and work on the go, from home, or anywhere in the world with a Wi-Fi connection, we are expected to always be available to work, to always be “on”—even after hours, on weekends, and on vacation—lest we lose a client to someone else who is available at those times. Add to that the psychological and physiological impacts of adults averaging 8.8 hours of screen time per day,<sup>23</sup> and it’s no wonder that problematic technology use, including screen addiction, is a growing concern among both health and technology experts.<sup>4</sup> Beyond being an effective communicator and professional in general, just being an effective *person*—in the sense of being physically and mentally healthy—requires knowing when *not* to use technology.

But in the workplace, especially if it’s a traditional office environment, we must be savvy in knowing which technology to use rather than always reaching for our smartphones. The modern office offers up a variety of tools that increase productivity and raise the bar on the quality and appearance of the work we do. You must be competent in the use of the latest in presentation technology, voice and video conferencing, company intranets, multifunctional printers, and so on. Even using the latest industry-wide software and social media apps ensures that your communication looks and functions on-point rather than in an antiquated way that makes you look like you stopped trying six years ago.

All such technology will change rapidly in our lifetimes; some will disappear completely, and new devices and software will emerge and either dominate or also disappear. So long as others are using the dominant technology for an advantage in your type of business, then it’s on you to use them also to avoid falling behind and getting stuck on obsolete technology that fewer and fewer people use. Depending on how successful you’re driven to be, you would be wise to even get ahead of the curve by adopting emerging technology early.

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2. Dunckley, V. L. (2014, February 27). *Gray matters: Too much screen time damages the brain*. Psychology Today.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/mental-wealth/201402/gray-matters-too-much-screen-time-damages-the-brain>

3. Twenge, J. M. (2017, September). *Have smartphones destroyed a generation?* The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>

4. Phillips, B. (2015). *Problematic technology use: The impact of capital enhancing activity* [SAIS 2015 Proceedings]. Association for Information Systems Electronic Library. <http://aisel.aisnet.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=sais2015>

## 14.2 ELECTRONIC WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

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While working in Operations Management, you will be required to use electronic channels of communication. E-mail deserves a close look because it is the most widespread and established of the electronic forms. Since so much of our lives are wrapped up in electronic interaction, reviewing the netiquette principles established at the outset of the electronic communications revolution can actually help us move forward as we look at the newest and fastest communication channels, texting and instant messaging.

By volume, e-mails are the most popular written communication channel in the history of human civilization. With e-mails being so cheap and easy to send on desktop and laptop computers, as well as on mobile phones and tablets, a staggering 280 billion e-mails are sent globally per day.<sup>1</sup> —that’s over a hundred trillion per year. Most are for business purposes because e-mail is such a flexible channel ideal for anything from short, routine information shares, requests, and responses, to important formal messages delivering the content that letters and memos used to handle. Its ability to send a message to one person or as many people as you have addresses for, integrate with calendars for scheduling meetings and events, send document attachments, and send automatic replies makes it the most versatile communication channel in the workplace.

### The Writing Process

When creating an e-mail, it is important to consider your audience, the intended message and the desired outcome. Let’s begin with the audience. Is your e-mail intended for one person, a department or an entire organization? Next, consider the purpose of your e-mail. Perhaps you are providing information to others, such as the results of a recent survey. Finally, consider whether you are going to provide the reader with an action item, such as providing you with their feedback within 2 days.

It is best to create a draft of your e-mail and review it for accuracy. For extremely important e-mails, it may be helpful to draft the e-mail one day early and return to it the following day for a final proofread before hitting “send”. Should you write an e-mail while upset, it is best to create a draft of your proposed e-mail and then revisit the e-mail the following day before sending it to the intended audience. Once 24 hours have passed, you

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1. The Radicati Group, Inc. (2017). *Email statistics report, 2017-2021*. <https://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Email-Statistics-Report-2017-2021-Executive-Summary.pdf>

will often read your draft e-mail and decide not to send it as time has passed and you can see the situation more clearly.

Although e-mail is certainly a convenient method of communication, it isn't always the right method of communication. Stop and ask yourself why you aren't calling to speak to the other party, or better yet, speaking to them face-to-face if that option is available to you. Speaking to a person by phone or in person typically alleviates the need for back-and-forth e-mails and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings as individuals may misread the tone or the intent of your e-mail.

## Structure and Content

Before delving into the details of how to construct e-mails, let's review the advantages, disadvantages, and occasions for their use.

Advantages	Disadvantages	Expectations	Appropriate Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivers messages instantly anywhere in the world</li> <li>• Sends to one or many people at once</li> <li>• Allows you to attach documents or links to internet sites.</li> <li>• Allows for a back-and-forth thread on the topic</li> <li>• Archives written correspondence</li> <li>• This can be done on any mobile device with a Wi-Fi connection</li> <li>• It is somewhat permanent in that e-mails exist somewhere on a server even if deleted by both sender and receiver</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It gives the illusion of privacy: your messages can be forwarded to anyone, monitored by your company or an outside security agency, retrieved with a warrant, or hacked, even if both you and the receiver delete them</li> <li>• It can be slow when used for back-and-forth dialogue</li> <li>• It may be sent automatically to the recipient's spam folder or otherwise overlooked or deleted</li> <li>• Subject to errors such as hitting "Send" prematurely</li> <li>• Subject to limits on document attachment size</li> <li>• Requires a working internet connection on a computing device, which isn't available everywhere in the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reply within 24 hours, or sooner if company policy requires it</li> <li>• Follow conventions for writing</li> <li>• Netiquette: be as kind as you should be in person; don't write e-mails angrily</li> <li>• Edit to ensure coverage of the subject indicated in the subject line with no more or less information than the recipient needs to do their job</li> <li>• Proofread to ensure correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling because errors compromise your credibility</li> <li>• Avoid confusion due to vagueness that requires that the recipient respond asking for clarification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickly deliver a message that doesn't need an immediate response</li> <li>• Send a message and receive a response in writing as evidence for future review (lay down a paper trail)</li> <li>• Use when confidentiality isn't necessary</li> <li>• Send electronic documents as attachments</li> <li>• Send the same message to several people at once, including perhaps people whose e-mail address you need to hide from the others (using BCC) to respect their confidentiality</li> </ul>

## E-mail Address

The first thing you see when an e-mail arrives in your inbox is who it's from. The address determines immediately how you feel about that e-mail—whether excited, uninterested, curious, angry, hopeful, scared or just obliged to read it. Your e-mail address will create similar impressions on those you e-mail, depending on your relationship with them. It's therefore important that you send from the right e-mail address. While at work, you must use your company e-mail address for company business.

## Timestamp & Punctuality

The timestamp that comes with each e-mail means that punctuality matters and raises the question of what the

expectations are for the acceptable lag time between receiving an e-mail and returning an expected response. Of course, you can reply as soon as possible as you would when texting and have a back-and-forth recorded in a thread. What if you need more time, however?

Though common wisdom used to be that the business standard is to reply within 24 hours, the availability of e-mail on the smartphones that almost everyone carries in their pockets has reduced that expectation to a few hours. Recent research shows that half of e-mail responses in business environments comes within two hours.<sup>2</sup> Some businesses have internal policies that demand even quicker responses because business moves fast. If you can get someone's business sooner than the competition because you reply sooner, then of course you're going to make every effort to reply right away. Of course, the actual work you do can get in the way of e-mail, but you must prioritize incoming work in order to stay in business.

What if you can't reply within the expected number of hours? The courteous course of action is to reply as soon as possible with a brief message saying that you'll be turning your attention to this matter as soon as you can. You don't have to go into detail about what's delaying you unless it's relevant to the topic, but courtesy requires that you at least give a timeline for a fuller response and stick to it.

## Subject Line

The next most important piece of information you see when scanning your inbox is the subject line of the e-mail. The busy professional who receives dozens of e-mails each day prioritizes their workload and response efforts based largely on the content of the subject lines appearing in their inbox. Because the subject line acts as a title for the e-mail, the subject line should accurately summarize its topic in 3-7 words.

The word count range here is important because your subject line shouldn't be so vague that its one or two words will be misleading, nor so long and detailed that your inbox layout will cut off its eight-plus words. Though it must be specific to the e-mail topic, details about specific times and places, for instance, should really be in the message itself rather than in the subject line (see Table 8.2 below). Also, avoid using words in your subject line that might make your e-mail look like spam. A subject line such as *Hello* or *That thing we talked about* might appear to be a hook to get you to open an e-mail that contains a malware virus. This may prompt the recipient to delete it to be on the safe side, or their e-mail provider may automatically send it to the junk mailbox, which people rarely check. It will be as good as gone, in any case.

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2. Vanderkam, L. (2016, March 29). What is an appropriate response time to email? *Fast Company*. <https://www.fastcompany.com/3058066/what-is-an-appropriate-response-time-to-email>

Too Short	Just Right	Too Long and Detailed
Problem	Problem with your product order	Problem with your order for an LG washer and dryer submitted on April 29 at 11:31 p.m.
Meeting	Rescheduling Nov. 6 meeting	Rescheduling our 3 p.m. November 6 meeting for 11am November 8
Parking Permits	Summer parking permit pickup	When to pick up your summer parking permits from security

Stylistically, notice that appropriately sized subject lines typically abbreviate where they can and avoid articles (*the, a, an*), capitalization beyond the first word (except for proper nouns), and excessive adjectives.

Whatever you do, don't leave your subject line blank. Even if you're just firing off a quick e-mail to send an attachment to yourself, the subject line text will be essential to your ability to retrieve that file later.

## Opening Salutation & Recipient Selection

When a reader opens your e-mail, its opening salutation indicates not only who the message is for but also its level of formality. As you can see in Table 8.3 below, opening with *Dear [Full Name]* or *Greetings, [Full Name]*: strikes an appropriately respectful tone when writing to someone for the first time in a professional context. When greeting someone you've e-mailed before, *Hello, [First name]*: maintains a semi-formal tone. When you're more casually addressing a familiar colleague, a simple *Hi [First name]*, is just fine.

First-time Formality	Ongoing Semi-formal	Informal
<i>Dear Ms. Melody Nelson:</i> <i>Dear Ms. Nelson:</i> <i>Greetings, Ms. Melody Nelson:</i> <i>Greetings, Ms. Nelson:</i>	Hello, Melody: Hello again, Melody: Thanks, Melody. (in response to something given)	Hi Mel, Hey Mel, Mel,

Notice that the punctuation includes a comma after the greeting word and a colon after their name for formal and semi-formal occasions. Informal greetings, however, relax these rules by omitting the comma after the greeting word and replacing the colon with a comma.

Depending on the nature of the message, you can use alternative greeting possibilities. If you're thanking someone for information they've sent you, you can do so right away in the greeting; e.g., *Many thanks for the contact list, Maggie*. When your e-mail exchange turns into a back-and-forth thread involving several e-mails, it's customary to drop the salutation altogether and treat each message as if it were a text message even in formal situations.

Formality also dictates whether you use the recipient's first name or full name in your salutation. If you're

writing to someone you know well or responding to an e-mail where the sender signed off at the bottom using their first name, they've given you the green light to address them by their first name in your response. If you're addressing someone formally for the first time, however, strike an appropriately respectful tone by using their full name. If you're addressing a group, a simple *Hello, all: or Hello, team:* will do.

Be careful when selecting recipients. First, spell their name correctly because e-mail addresses often have non-standard combinations of name fragments and numbers; any typos will result in the server bouncing your e-mail back to you as being unsent. Wait before entering their name in the recipient or "To" field in case you accidentally hit the Send button before you're finished drafting your e-mail. If you prematurely send an e-mail, immediately send a quick follow-up apologizing for the confusion and the completed message. Another preventative measure is to compose a message offline, such as in an MS Word or simple Notepad document devoid of formatting, then copy and paste it into the e-mail field when you're ready to send.

Never "reply all" so that everyone included in the "To" line and CC'd sees your reply unless your response includes information that everyone absolutely must see. Bear in mind that, concerning **e-mail security**, no matter who you select as the primary or secondary (CC'd) recipients of your e-mail, always assume that it may be forwarded on to other people, including those you might not want to see it. E-mails are not private. You have no control over whether the recipients will forward an e-mail on to others, and if your e-mail contains any legally sensitive content, it can even be retrieved from the server storing it with a warrant from law enforcement. A good rule of thumb is to **never send an e-mail that you would be embarrassed by if it were read by your boss, your family, or a jury**. No technical barriers prevent it from falling into their hands.

## Message Opening

Most e-mails will be direct-approach messages where you get right to the point in the opening sentence immediately below the opening salutation. The **direct-approach** pattern does the reader a favour by not burying the main point under a pile of contextual background. If you send a busy professional on a treasure hunt for your main point, a request for information for example, don't blame them if they don't find it and don't provide the information you asked for. They might have given up before they got there or missed it when skimming, as busy people tend to do. By stating in the opening exactly what you want the recipient to do, however, you increase your chances of achieving that goal.

Sample Direct Opening	Sample Indirect Opening
We have reviewed your application and are pleased to offer you the position of retail sales manager at the East 32nd and 4th Street location of Swansong Clothing.	Thank you very much for your application to the retail sales manager position at the East 32nd and 4th Street location of Swansong Clothing. Though we received a large volume of high-quality applications for this position, we were impressed by your experience and qualifications.

**Indirect-approach** e-mails should be rare and only sent in extenuating circumstances. Using e-mail to deliver bad news or address a sensitive topic can be seen as a cowardly way of avoiding difficult situations that should be dealt with in person or, if the people involved are too far distant, at least by phone. Other circumstances that might force you to use the indirect approach for e-mails include the following:

- Needing to use persuasive techniques
- Having no other means of contacting the recipient
- Needing to get the e-mail exchange in writing in case the situation escalates and must be handled as evidence by higher authorities
- Needing to deliver a large number of bad-news messages without having the time or resources to individually customize each, such as when you are sending rejection notices to job applicants (see the sample indirect opening in Table 8.4 above); out of expedience, it's understandable if these are boiler-plate responses

In such cases, the indirect approach means that the opening should use buffer strategies to ease the recipient into the bad news or set the proper context for discussing the sensitive topic.

Otherwise, your e-mail must pass the **first-screen test**, which is that everything the recipient needs to see is visible in the opening without forcing them to scroll further down for it. Before pressing the Send button, put yourself in your reader's shoes and consider whether your message passes the first-screen test. If not, and if you have no good reason to take the indirect approach, then re-organize your e-mail message by moving (copying, cutting, and pasting, or ctrl. + C, ctrl. + X, ctrl. + v) its main point up to make it the opening of your message.

## Message Body

E-mails long enough to divide into paragraphs follow the three-part message organization where the message body supports the opening main point with explanatory details such as background information justifying an information request. With brevity being so important in e-mails, keeping the message body concise, with no more information than the recipient needs to do their job, is extremely important to the message's success. The



message body, therefore, doesn't need proper three-part paragraphs. In fact, one-sentence paragraphs (single spaced with a line of space between each) and bullet-point lists are fine. If your message grows in length beyond the first screen, document design features such as bold headings help direct readers to the information they need. If your message gets any larger, moving it into an attached document is better than writing several screens of large paragraphs. Keep e-mail messages brief by sticking to one topic per e-mail.

## Message Closing

An e-mail closing usually includes **action information** such as direction on what to do with the information in the message above and deadlines for action and response. If the message doesn't call for action details, some closing thought (e.g., I'm happy to help. Please drop me a line if you have any questions) ends it without giving the impression of being rudely abrupt. Goodwill statements, such as Thanks again for your feedback on our customer service, are necessary especially in e-mails involving gratitude.

## Closing Salutation

A courteous closing to an e-mail involves a combination of a pleasant sign-off word or phrase and your first name. As with the opening salutation, closing salutation possibilities depend on the nature of the message and where you want to position it on the formality spectrum, as shown in Table 8.5 below.

Formal	Semi-formal	Informal
Best wishes, Kind regards, Much appreciated, Sincerely, Warm regards,	Best, Get better soon, Good luck, Take care, Many thanks,	All good things, Be well, Bye for now, Cheers, Ciao,

Your first e-mail to someone in a professional context should end with a more formal closing salutation. Later e-mails to the same person can use the appropriate semi-formal closing salutation for the occasion. If you're on friendly, familiar terms with the person but still want to include e-mail formalities, an informal closing salutation can bring a smile to their face. Notice in Table 17.5 that you capitalize only the first word in the closing salutation and add a comma at the end.

Including your first name after the closing salutation ends in a friendly way as if to say, "Let's be on a first-name basis" if you weren't already, greenlighting your recipient to address you by your first name in their reply. In your physical absence, your name at the end is also a way of saying, like politicians chiming in at the end of campaign ads, "I'm [name] and I approve this message." It's a stamp of authorship. Omitting it gives the impression of being abrupt and too busy or important to stop for even a second of formal niceties.

## E-signature

Not to be confused with an electronic version of your handwritten signature, the e-signature that automatically appears at the very bottom of your e-mail is like the business card you would hand to someone when networking. Every professional should have one. Like a business card, the e-signature includes all relevant contact information. At the very least, the e-signature should include the details given in Table 8.6 below.

E-signature Parts	Examples
Full Name, Professional Role Company Name Company address Phone Number(s) Company website, E-mail address	<b>Jessica Day</b> , Graphic Designer UXB Designs 492 Atwater Street Toronto, ON M4M 2H4 416-555-2297 (c) uxb.com   jessica.day@uxb.com
Full Name, Credentials Professional Role Company Name Company Address Phone Number(s) Company website, e-mail address	<b>Winston Schmidt</b> , MBA Senior Marketing Consultant Tectonic Global Solutions Inc. 7819 Cambie Street, Vancouver, BC V5K 1A4 604.555.2388 (w)   604.555.9375 (c) tectonicglobal.com   m.bennington@tgs.com

## Attachments

E-mail's ability to help you send and receive documents makes it an indispensable tool for any business. Bear in mind a few best practices when attaching documents:

- Always **announce an attachment** in an e-mail message with a very brief description of its contents. For instance, Please find attached the minutes from today's departmental meeting might be all you write between the opening and closing salutations.
- **Never leave a message blank** when attaching a document in an e-mail to someone else. Your message should at least be like the one given above. Of course, including a message is up to you if you're sending yourself an attachment as an alternative to using a dedicated cloud storage service like Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive. Even if it's just for yourself, however, at least including a subject line identifying the nature of the attachment will make locating the file easier months or even years later.
- Ensure that your **attachment size**, if it's many megabytes (MB), is still less than your e-mail provider's maximum allowable for sending and receiving. Gmail and Yahoo, for instance, allow attachments up to 25 MB, whereas Outlook/Hotmail allow only 10 MB attachments.
- Always **check to ensure that you've attached a document** as part of your editing process. It shows that you lack attention to detail if your recipient responds to remind you to attach the document.

## Before Sending Your E-mail

Before hitting the send button, follow through on the entire writing process, especially the editing stage with its evaluation, revision, and proofreading sub-stages. Put yourself in your reader's position and assess whether you've achieved the purpose you set out to achieve in the first place.

After revising generally, **always proofread** an e-mail. In any professional situation, but especially in important ones related to gaining and keeping employment, any typo or error related to spelling, grammar, or punctuation can cost you dearly.

### Poorly Written E-mail Example

hey, think you made a mistake marking my last assinement i did what is supposed to do if its cuz i didnt get it in by the 5th its cuz i had a bad breakup it was so bad i had to see a councilor thats why i havnt bin around hope you understand. should of said that earlier maybe. oh and whens the next thing due. let me know as soon as u get this ok thanks bye

### Improved E-mail Draft

Hello, Professor Morgan: Please clarify why I failed the previous assignment.

I followed the instructions but may have been confused about the due date while dealing with personal issues. If so, I apologize for my late submission and understand if that's the reason for the failure. I just wanted to confirm that that's the reason and whether there's anything I can do to make up for it.

I assure you it won't happen again, and I'll pay closer attention to the syllabus deadlines from now on.

Much appreciated,

Taylor

**Analysis:** The poorly written draft has the look of a hastily and angrily written text to a “frenemy.” An e-mail to a superior, however, calls for a much more formal, tactful, courteous, and apologetic approach. The undifferentiated wall of text that omits or botches standard e-mail parts such as opening and closing salutations is the first sign of trouble. The lack of capitalization, poor spelling (e.g., *councilor* instead of *counsellor*), run-on sentences and lack of other punctuation such as apostrophes for contractions, as well as the inappropriate

personal detail all suggest that the writer doesn't take their studies seriously enough to deserve any favours. Besides tacking on a question at the end, one that could be easily answered by reading the syllabus, the writer is ultimately unclear about what they want; if it's an explanation for why they failed, then they must be upfront about that. The rudeness of the closing is more likely to enrage the recipient than get them to deliver the requested information.

**Analysis:** The improved version stands a much better chance of a sympathetic response. It corrects the problems of the first draft starting with properly framing the message with expected formal e-mail parts. It benefits from a more courteous tone in a message that frontloads a clear and polite request for information in the opening. The supporting detail in the message body and apologetic closing suggests that the student, despite their faults, is well aware of how to communicate like a professional to achieve a particular goal.

After running such a quality-assurance check on your e-mail, your final step before sending it should involve protecting yourself against losing it to a technical glitch. Get in the habit of copying your e-mail message text (ctrl. + A, ctrl. + C) just before hitting the Send button, then checking your Sent folder immediately to confirm that the e-mail sent properly. If your message vanished due to some random malfunction, as can happen occasionally, immediately open a blank MS Word or Notepad document and paste the text there (ctrl. + V) to save it. That way, you don't have to waste five minutes rewriting the entire message after you solve the connectivity issues or whatever else caused the glitch.

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“6.1: Emailing” from *Professional Communications* by Jordan Smith; Melissa Ashman; eCampusOntario; Brian Dunphy; and Andrew Stracuzzi is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

## 14.3 NETIQUETTE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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We create and curate personal profiles, post content and comments, and interact via social media as a normal part of our personal and professional lives. How we conduct ourselves on the open internet can leave a lasting impression, one not so easily undone if it's regrettable. The hilarious but compromising selfie you posted on Instagram five years ago is still there for your potential employer to find, judge what it says about your professionalism, and speculate about what customers might think if they saw it too. Some guidance about what can be done about those mistakes and how to conduct ourselves properly moving forward can help improve your employability.



Photo by Brett Jordan, Unsplash License

### Shea's Netiquette

Virginia Shea's Rules of Netiquette offer helpful guidelines for online behaviour:

- Remember the human on the other side of the electronic communication.
- Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life.
- Know where you are in cyberspace.
- Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
- Make yourself look good online.
- Share expert knowledge.
- Keep flame wars under control.
- Respect other people's privacy.
- Don't abuse your power.
- Be forgiving of other people's mistakes.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Shea, V. (1994). *Netiquette*. Albion Books.

Her rules speak for themselves and remind us that the golden rule (treat others as you would like to be treated) is relevant wherever there is human interaction.

## Legal Responsibilities

Your writing in a business context means that you represent yourself and your company. What you write and how you write it can be part of your company's success but can also expose it to unintended consequences and legal responsibility. When you write, remember that your words will continue existing long after you have moved on to other projects. They can become an issue if they exaggerate, state false claims, or defame a person or legal entity, such as a competing company.

## Using Social Media Professionally

Review sites, blogs, tweets, and online community forums are some continually developing means of social media being harnessed by businesses and industries to reach customers and other stakeholders. People's comfort in the online environment forces businesses to market and interact there or risk a massive loss in sales and interest. Though most users learn how to use social media as an extension or facilitator of their social lives, using the same platforms for professional reasons requires some behaviour change.

First, recognize that every modern business or organization should have a social media presence in the sites they expect their customer base to frequent, especially popular sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Messaging here must be consistent across the platforms when alerting the customer base of important information such as special events, deals, and other news.

Next, follow expert advice on properly taking advantage of social media in detail to promote your operation and reach people. Large companies will dedicate personnel to run their social media presence, but small businesses can do much of it themselves if they follow some decent online advice.

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- The Do's and Don'ts of How to Use Facebook for Business [Infographic]
- How to Use Instagram for Business: A Complete Guide for Marketers



Know also that social media is a constantly evolving environment. Stay on trend by continually searching out and implementing the latest advice similar to the above.

Finally, always consider how the sites you access and what you post represent you and your employer, even if you think others don't know where you work or who you are. By law, Internet service providers (ISPs) are required to archive information concerning the use and traffic of information that can become available under subpoena. Any move you make leaves a digital footprint, so you must answer for any misstep that disgraces you or your company.

## Texting and Instant Messaging

Whatever digital device you use, written communication in the form of Short Message Service (SMS), or texting has been a convenient and popular way to connect since the 1990s. Instant messaging (IMing) apps like Snapchat, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger have increased the options people have to send and respond to brief written messages in real time when talking on the phone would otherwise be inconvenient. In business, texting and IMing are especially advantageous for hashing out details precisely in writing so that they can be referred to later. Texting and IMing are not useful for long or complicated messages but are great for connecting while on the go. However, consider your audience and company by choosing words, terms, or abbreviations that will deliver your message most effectively using these communication tools.

### Tips for Effective Business Texting:

- Know your recipient; “? % dsct” may be an understandable way to ask a close associate what the proper discount is to offer a certain customer, but if you are texting or IMing your boss, it might be wiser to

write, “what % discount does Murray get on \$1K order?”

- Anticipate unintentional misinterpretation. Texting often uses symbols and codes to represent thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Given the complexity of communication and the valuable but limited tool of texting, be aware of its limitations and prevent misinterpretation with brief and clear messages.
- Contacting someone too frequently can border on harassment. Texting is a tool. Use it when appropriate, but don’t abuse it.
- Unplug yourself once in a while. Do you feel constantly connected? Do you feel lost or “out of it” if you don’t have your cell phone and cannot connect to people, even for fifteen minutes? Sometimes, being unavailable for a time can be healthy—everything in moderation, including texting.
- Don’t text and drive.

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## 14.4 TRADITIONAL WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

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Traditional document forms are still vital to the functioning of modern businesses. Despite their origins as handwritten and typed hard-copy documents, letters, memos, reports, and proposals continue to prove their worth in the form of printed hard copies and electronic documents shared by e-mail. Every professional should familiarize themselves with the conventions associated with each type of document so that they can use them to achieve their particular purposes.

### Letters

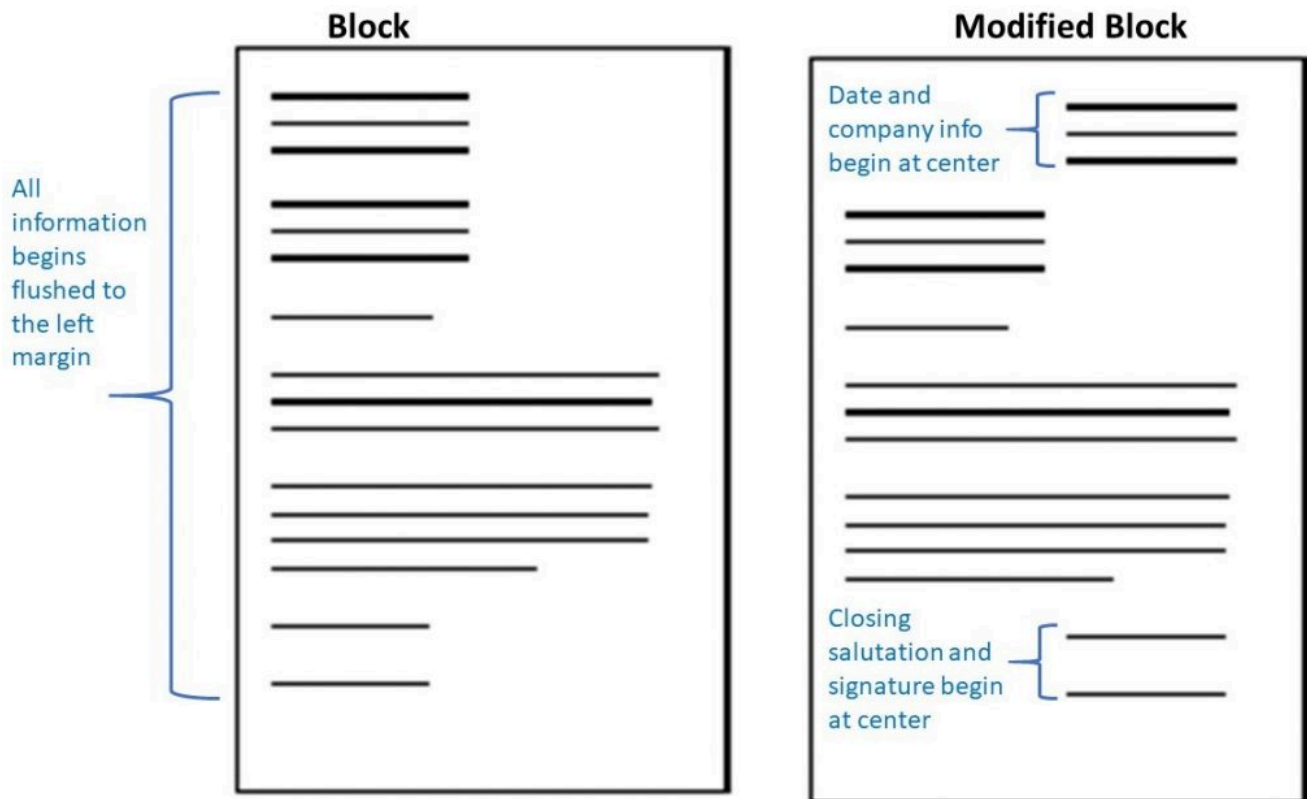
As one of the most formal documents you can send, a letter conveys a high degree of respect to its recipient. Sending a letter is your way of saying that the recipient matters. Letters are usually one- to two-page documents sent to people or organizations outside of the organization from which they're sent, whereas memos are equivalent documents for communications within an organization. Though we use e-mail for many of the occasions that we used to send letters for before the twenty-first century, letters are still sent rather than e-mails for several purposes:

- Cover letters to employers in job applications
- Thank-you letters and other goodwill expressions
- Letters of recommendation (a.k.a. reference letters)
- Letters of transmittal to introduce reports or proposals
- Campaign initiatives, such as for fundraising or political advocacy
- Official announcements of products, services, and promotions to customers
- Claims and other complaints sent to companies to lay down a formal paper-trail record as evidence in case matters escalate into the court system
- Formal rejection notices to job or program applicants
- Collection notices to people with overdue payments

In these cases, letters offer the advantage of formality, confidentiality (it's illegal to open someone else's mail), and a record of evidence.

## Types of Letter Formats

There are two main types of letters: **block-style** letters and **modified-block** style. Block-style organizations use a company letterhead at the top, whereas modified block letters are typically written independently by individuals. Though you may see minor format variations from company to company, letters have 10-12 major parts, each of which we'll examine for the conventions that, if followed, show that you can write to a high standard of formality should the occasion call for it.



"Two Letter Formats" by Jordan Smith, CC BY 4.0

## Letter Parts

Letters have 10 – 12 parts, including Return Address or Company Letterhead, Date Line, Recipient Address, Subject Reference, Opening Salutation, Message Opening, Message Body, Message Closing, Closing Salutation, Signature, Signature Block, Enclosure Notice.

# Constructing a Professional Letter

## Return Address or Company Letterhead

The first piece of information in a letter is usually the sender's address. In block-style letters, the address appears as part of the company letterhead in the header under or beside the prominently displayed and brand-stylized company name and logo. Use a company letterhead template whenever writing on behalf of the company you work for; never use it for personal messages (e.g., reference letters for a relative) not authorized by the company. The company letterhead address usually appears in the one-line style following the format given below: [Street number] [Street name] [Street type], [City or town], [Provincial abbreviation] [two spaces] [Postal code with a single space in the middle]

### Example

1385 Woodroffe Avenue, Ottawa, ON K2G 1V8

The letterhead also includes other contact information, such as phone numbers and the company web address. Some company letterhead templates move some or all of these parts, besides the company name and logo, to the footer so that the whole page is framed with company branding. For dozens of letter template examples, go to open a blank new document in MS Word and type "letter" into the document type or go to Letters.<sup>1</sup>

Because **modified-block-style letters** are sent by individuals unaffiliated with a company, they typically include only the sender's two-line address at the top, which divides the above address style in half so that the street number, name, and type go on the first line (with no comma at the end), and the city/town, provincial abbreviation, and postal code go on the second, as shown below:

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1. Microsoft. (n.d.). *Letters*. Microsoft Office. <https://templates.office.com/en-us/Letters>

## Example

1385 Woodroffe Avenue  
Ottawa, ON K2G 1V8

In both styles of address, strike a formal tone by fully spelling out the street type rather than abbreviating it (e.g., *Street*, not *St.*; *Avenue*, not *Ave.*; *Road*, not *Rd.*; *Crescent*, not *Cres.*; *Boulevard*, not *Blvd.*; *Court*, not *Crt.*; etc.). Using abbreviations is fine in informal, personal letters, however.

A distinguishing feature of the modified-block style is that the sender address is justified (flush) to the vertical middle of the page (i.e., the left edge of its text lines up with it) rather than the left margin. Do this by highlighting the two address lines, then clicking and dragging the base of the left-margin tab in your word processor's ruler right to the vertical midpoint of the page. If your page has 2.5 cm margins, that would be at around the 8.25 cm mark. Note that modified-block-style letters place the sender's address on the first line below the header (i.e., about an inch or 2.5 cm from the top edge of the page) and don't include the sender's name at the top of this address block. The reader can find the sender's name by darting their eyes down to the signature block at the bottom.

## Date Line

In a formal letter, the date must follow the unambiguous style that fully spells out the month, gives the calendar date, a comma, and the full year (e.g., April 25, 2020). In block-style letters, this appears left-justified (its left edge lines up with the left margin) often with 2-3 lines of space between it and the company letterhead above it and, for symmetry, as much between it and the recipient address below.

In modified-block-style letters, however, the date often appears as the third line of the sender address block. Its left edge, therefore, lines up with the vertical middle of the page. Only one line of space should separate the date line from the recipient address below. After this, block-style and modified-block letters are formatted in the same way until you get to the signature block at the bottom.

## Recipient Address (receiver's block)

No matter what style of letter you use, the recipient's address is left-justified, begins with the recipient's full

name on the top line, and follows with their mailing address on the lines below in the format options given in Table below.

### Standard Letter Address Format for Company and Personal Recipients

Address Format	Examples
Title Full Name, Professional Role Company Name # Street Type Town/City, PA A1B 2C3	Dr. Michelle Masterton, Geriatrician Tidal Healthcare Clinic 6519 Maynard Street Halifax, NS B4L 6C9
Title Full Name, Credentials Professional Role (if long) # Street Type Town/City, PA A1B 2C3	Mr. Jonathan Carruthers, MBA Freelance Marketing Consultant 3489 Cook Street Victoria, BC V9G 4B2

Notice that commas follow only (1) the recipient's name if followed by a professional role (capitalized) or credentials abbreviation and (2) the city or town. Two spaces separate the provincial abbreviation (PA) from the postal code, with a single space in the middle dividing the six alpha-numeric characters into two groups of three for readability. Though you sometimes see addresses that fully spell out the province, rather than abbreviate it, and have only one space between the province and postal code, the style given above is dominant and has the advantage of being more concise and clearly distinguishing the province from the postal code without crowding the line with commas. Keep the end of each line free of any punctuation.

## Subject Reference

Like a subject line in an e-mail, letters can have subject lines that indicate the topic or purpose. The same titling principles as e-mail apply only the letter's subject reference begins with **"Re:"** or **"RE:"** or **"Subject:"** and is entirely in either bold typeface or all-caps, but not both. You might also see it positioned above or below the opening salutation, but usually above. Like all the text blocks beside the date line, a blank line of space separates this from the other parts above and below.

## Opening Salutation

The most common opening salutation for a letter is given in Table 8.8 below:

### Opening Salutation

Opening Salutation Form	Examples
Dear [Title] [Full or Last Name]:	Dear Ms. Françoise Hardy: Dear Mr. Serge Gainsbourg: Dear Mrs. Pattie Boyd: Dear Dr. Landy: Dear Ms. Vartan: Dear Dana Dortmund:

The Dear, title, full name, and colon all signal formality. Variations in formal letters include omitting the title or the first name, but not both at once. Omit the title if you're at all concerned about its accuracy. For instance, if the recipient's first name is a unisex name and you're not sure if they're male or female, skip the gender title to avoid offending the recipient by mixing up their gender. Unless you're sure that the recipient prefers *Mrs.* (indicating that she's married) over *Ms.* because she's used it herself, *Ms.* might be the safer option. Avoid the title *Miss* because it's no longer commonly used and appears outdated. If you're addressing someone who identifies as non-binary, then *Mx.* might be best if you must use a title, or just no title at all. Other considerations in the opening salutation include the following:

- Using the recipient's first name only is appropriate only if you know them well on a friendly, first-name basis.
- Using a comma instead of a colon is appropriate only for very informal letters.
- *To whom it may concern:* is an appropriate opening salutation only if you really intend for the letter to be read by whomever it is given to, as in the case of a reference letter that an applicant gives copies of to potential employers. Otherwise, every effort should be made to direct the letter to a particular person, especially cover letters. If an employer has deliberately omitted any mention of who is responsible for hiring an applied-for position, addressing the person by professional role (e.g., *Dear Hiring Manager:*) is acceptable.

## Message Opening

Letters are ideal for both direct- and indirect-approach messages depending on the occasion for writing them. Direct-approach letters get right to the point by stating their main point or request in a paragraph of no more than a sentence or two. Letters organized with openings like this lend themselves to positive or neutral messages. Ideal for formally delivering bad-news or persuasive messages, indirect-approach letters begin with a buffer paragraph—again, this may only be a sentence or two—just to say some nice things before getting to the bad news or difficult request in the body of the message.

## Message Body

Whether the opening takes the direct or indirect approach, the body supports this with explanatory detail. Ensure that your message body abides by the 6 Cs of, especially conciseness because a letter should only be a page or two. If appropriate for the content, use effective document design features such as numbered or bulleted lists to improve readability. For instance, if your letter contains a series of questions, use a numbered list so that the reader can respond to each with a corresponding numbered list of their own.

Message body paragraphs should be proper three-part paragraphs. Like all other text blocks throughout (except for the return address above and signature block below in a modified-block letter), every line in the message body must be flush to the left margin, including the first. In other words, rather than indent a paragraph's first line as novels do to mark where one paragraph ends and another begins, separate them with a blank line. Brevity in formal letters limits the number of paragraphs to what you can fit in a page or two.

## Message Closing

The closing mirrors the opening with a sentence or two that wraps up the letter with something relevant to the topic at hand. Because of their formality, letters almost always end with a goodwill statement, such as an expression of gratitude thanking the reader for their attention or consideration. For instance, a cover letter thanks the reader for their consideration, invites them to read the enclosed résumé, and expresses interest in meeting to discuss the applicant's fit with the company in person since getting an interview is the entire point of an application. A thank-you letter will thank the recipient again, and a recommendation letter will emphatically endorse the applicant. Even letters delivering bad news or addressing contentious situations should end with pleasantries rather than hostile or passive-aggressive jabs. If an action is required, be sure to indicate when you would expect to follow through.

## Closing Salutation

A simple *Sincerely* or *Cordially* are standard business letter closing salutations that signal the formal end of the message much like the opening salutation did before the beginning of the message proper. A more personal letter sent to someone you know well may end with *Yours truly* (with the second word all lowercase), but don't use this with someone you've never met or with anyone you want to maintain a strictly professional relationship with. Always place a "hanging comma" at the end of the line.

## Signature

Your signature is a guarantee of authorship that carries legal weight. In a printed letter, leave enough

space—usually about three single-spaced lines—to autograph your signature by hand. In an electronically written and submitted letter, you will need to create an image of your written signature.

## Signature Block

The signature block clarifies the sender's name in full since handwritten signatures are rarely legible enough to do so themselves. The sender's professional role follows their name either on the same line (with a comma in between) if both the name and role are short enough, and on the second line if they are too long together. On the line below the sender's name and role can appear the name of the company they work for and their work e-mail address on the third line; all three lines are single-spaced.

## Enclosure Notice

Just as e-mails can include attachments, letters are often sent along with other documents. Cover letters introduce résumés, for instance, and letters of transmittal introduce reports to their intended recipients. In such cases, an enclosure notice on the very last line of the page (above the footer margin) tells the reader that another document or other documents are included with the letter.

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- Business Letter Format With Examples
- Writing the Basic Business Letter
- How to Write a Business Letter



## Memos

A memo (or memorandum, meaning “reminder”) communicates policies, procedures, short reports, or related official business within an organization. It assumes a one-to-all perspective, broadcasting a message to a group audience rather than to an individual. Memos are objective in tone and avoid all personal bias or subjective



preference, especially because they may have legal standing when reflecting policies or procedures. Accuracy is therefore paramount in memos lest ambiguities result in mistakes that then become legal matters.<sup>2</sup>

## Memo Purpose

A memo's purpose is often to inform, but it occasionally includes an element of persuasion or call to action. Memos are most appropriately used for internal organizational messages that may be too detailed or too long to be communicated via an e-mail. Memos allow organizations to clearly spell-out for all employees what is going on with a particular issue. If budget cuts are a concern, then it may be wise to send a memo explaining the imminent changes. If a company wants employees to take action, it may also issue a memorandum about that action. In this way, memos often represent the business or organization's interests. They may also include statements that align business and employee interest, and underscore common ground and benefit.<sup>3</sup> Memos usually carry nonsensitive and routine information; therefore, most e-mails will be written using the direct approach.

## Memo Format

A memo has four sections: **header, purpose statement, body, and call-to-action.** Memos often have letterheads with the word "MEMO" written clearly with the company name and logo at the top of the page. Below are the header fields identifying the recipient, author, date, and subject, as seen in an e-mail. E-mail header fields are based on those traditionally found in memos, so the same principles for what to include here, such as how to title the document in the subject line, are true of e-mails.

Unlike e-mails, memos omit the opening salutation but, from there, are similar in their three-part message organization with an opening, body, and closing. Always use a direct approach; the opening of the memo message states the main point, the body supports this with details, and the closing gives action information or a summary. Let's examine each section of a memo in more detail. The image below provides a sample memo for review and includes some tips. The tips include:

- The heading words, such as date, to, from and subject, are aligned.
- Initials are included after the printed name and title.
- The side margins are 3.2 cm, and the right alignment is unjustified.
- Headings, columns, and bold and white spaces highlight information.

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2. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. (2015). Memorandums and Letters. In *Business Communication for Success*. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/9-2-memorandums-and-letters/>

3. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. (2015). Memorandums and Letters. In *Business Communication for Success*. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/9-2-memorandums-and-letters/>

- A closing and signature are omitted.

↓ 3.8 cm

## MEMORANDUM

↓ 2 blank lines

Aligns all heading words with those following SUBJECT

DATE: November 11, 2016

↓ 1 blank line

TO: Stephanie Sato, President, Hollywood Audience Services

↓ 1 blank line

FROM: Sundance Richardson, Special Events Manager *SR*

↓ 1 blank line

SUBJECT: Improving Website Information

↓ 1 or 2 blank lines

In response to your request for ideas to improve our website, I am submitting the following suggestions. Because interest in our audience member, seat-filler, and usher services is growing constantly, we must use our website more strategically. Here are three suggestions.

Provides ragged line endings—not justified

First, our website should explain our purpose. We specialize in providing customized and responsive audiences for studio productions and award shows. The website should distinguish between audience members and seat-fillers. Audience members have a seat for the entire taping of a TV show. Seat-fillers sit in the empty seats of celebrity presenters or performers so that the front section does not look empty to the home audience.

Leaves side margins of 3.2 cm

Second, I suggest that our Web designer include a listing such as the following so that readers recognize the events and services we provide:

Event	Audience Members Provided Last Year	Seat-Fillers and Ushers Provided Last Year
Stratford	26	8
Shaw Festival	14	8
Juno Awards	15	11
Gemini Awards	16	8
Canadian Country Music Awards	29	10
Selected TV shows	285	28

Uses headings, columns, bold, and white space to highlight information

Third, our website should provide answers to commonly asked questions, such as the following:

- Do audience members or seat-fillers have to pay to attend the event?
- How often do seat-fillers have to move around?
- Will seat-fillers be on television?

Our website can be more informative and boost our business if we implement some of these ideas. Are you free to talk about these suggestions at 10 a.m. on Monday, November 19?

Omits a closing and signature

“Four Components of a Memo” by Jordan Smith, CC BY 4.0

## Types of Memos

### Request Memos

A request memo does exactly what its name suggests requesting the receiver’s action. An effectively composed request memo will clearly state the requested action within the opening paragraph of the memo. The

explanation or justification for the request is included in the body of the memo, while being polite and using the “you” view will ensure the reader understands the benefits of completing the requested action. Requests that require a great deal of effort, time, or resources should follow the indirect approach to have the best chance of persuading the reader.

## Reply

Similar to the request memo, the name of this memo also suggests its purpose: replying to a previous correspondence. When constructing the reply memo, respond to each request in the order made. Use the direct approach as the receiver will want your immediate response to each request without searching. If necessary, provide additional information that may be useful to the original request. Responding immediately to a request memo, especially if you’ve received a request from senior officials within the organization, shows efficiency and professionalism.

## Follow-up Memos

A follow-up memo provides a written record of an oral conversation. For example, a memo that records a discussion of a recent meeting that confirms the time, place, date, participants, meeting purpose and decisions. Committing the basic facts, decisions, and issues discussed in a meeting ensures that memory does not become the basis for moving forward. Writing follow-up messages protects you and the receivers by ensuring a shared and common understanding of the important details and facts. The more important the oral conversation, the more important it is to ensure a written confirmation of the discussion is created.

### Operations Manager Toolkit

- Purdue OWL’s four Memos modules, starting with Audience and Purpose<sup>4</sup>
- How to Write a Memo<sup>5</sup>



## Proposals

A proposal is a business document that makes a case for your product or service to a hiring company or funding organization. Knowing how to write a proposal is a vital skill in business because organizations seeking services from business-to-business contractors will often put out a request for proposals, or RFP, to select the right contractor to perform the work. A proposal formally bids on that contract and is therefore essential to gaining work.

## Purpose

Effective business proposals are built around a great idea or solution. While you may be able to present your normal product, service, or solution in an interesting way, you want your document and its solution to stand out against the background of competing proposals. What makes your idea different or unique? How can you better meet the needs of the company than other vendors? What makes your idea so special? If the purchase decision is made solely on price, it may leave you little room to underscore the value of service, but the sale follow-through has value. For example, don't consider just the upfront sticker cost of the unit but also its long-term maintenance costs. How can maintenance be a part of your solution? In addition, your proposal may focus on a common product where you can anticipate several vendors at similar prices. How can you differentiate yourself from the rest by underscoring long-term relationships, demonstrated ability to deliver, or the ability to anticipate the company's needs? Business proposals need to have an attractive idea or solution to be effective.<sup>6</sup>

## Professionalism

A professional document is a base requirement. If it is less than professional, you can count on its prompt

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4. Perkins, C., & Brizee, A. (2018, March 23). *Memos: Audience and Purpose*. Purdue OWL. [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject\\_specific\\_writing/professional\\_technical\\_writing/memos/audience\\_and\\_purpose.html#:~:text=Welcome%20to%20the%20Purdue%20OWL&text=Regardless%20of%20the%20specific%20goal,need%20to%20read%20the%20memo](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/memos/audience_and_purpose.html#:~:text=Welcome%20to%20the%20Purdue%20OWL&text=Regardless%20of%20the%20specific%20goal,need%20to%20read%20the%20memo).

5. Erickson, M. (2020, September 30). *How to write a memo*. wikiHow. <https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Memo>

6. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. (2015). Business Proposal. In *Business Communication for Success*. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/9-3-business-proposal/>

dismissal. There should be no errors in spelling or grammar, and all information should be concise, accurate, and clearly referenced when appropriate. Information that pertains to credibility should be easy to find and clearly relevant, including contact information. If the document exists in a hard-copy form, it should be printed on company letterhead. If the document is submitted in an electronic form, it should be in a file format that presents your document as you intended. Word processing files may have their formatting changed or adjusted based on factors you cannot control, such as screen size, and information can shift out of place, making it difficult to understand. In this case, a portable document format (PDF)—a format for electronic documents—may be used to preserve the content location and avoid any inadvertent format changes when it is displayed.

Effective, persuasive proposals are often brief, even limited to one page. “The one-page proposal has been one of the keys to my business success, and it can be invaluable to you too. Few decision-makers can ever afford to read more than one page when deciding if they are interested in a deal or not. This is even more true for people of a different culture or language,” said Adnan Khashoggi, a successful multibillionaire.<sup>7</sup> Clear and concise proposals serve the audience well and limit the range of information to prevent confusion.<sup>8</sup>

## Operations Manager Toolkit

- Reports, Proposals, and Technical Papers<sup>9</sup>
- Planning and Organizing Proposals and Technical Reports<sup>10</sup>



7. Riley, P. G. (2002). *The one-page proposal: How to get your business pitch onto one persuasive page*. HarperCollins.

8. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. (2015). Business proposal. In *Business Communication for Success*. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/9-3-business-proposal/>

9. Purdue OWL. (2010, April 29). *Reports, proposals, and technical papers* [PowerPoint File]. [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject\\_specific\\_writing/professional\\_technical\\_writing/technical\\_reports\\_and\\_report\\_abstracts/reports\\_proposals\\_and\\_technical\\_papers.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/technical_reports_and_report_abstracts/reports_proposals_and_technical_papers.html)

10. Johnson-Sheehan, R. (2008, June 28). *Planning and organizing proposals and technical reports* [PDF File]. Purdue OWL. [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject\\_specific\\_writing/writing\\_in\\_engineering/indot\\_workshop\\_resources\\_for\\_engineers/documents/20080628094326\\_727.pdf](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_engineering/indot_workshop_resources_for_engineers/documents/20080628094326_727.pdf)

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## 14.5 DELIVERING DIFFICULT MESSAGES

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Just as in life, the workplace isn't always sunny. Sometimes things don't go according to plan, and it's your job to communicate about them in a way that doesn't ruin your relationships with customers, coworkers, managers, the public, and other stakeholders. When doing damage control, bad-news messages require care and skillful language because your main point will meet resistance. Rarely are people okay being told that they're laid off, their application has been rejected, their shipment got lost en route, prices or rates are increasing, their appointment has to be moved back several months, or they're losing their benefits. Though some people prefer that the messenger be blunt about it, in most cases you can assume that the receiver will appreciate or even benefit from a more tactful, indirect approach.

### The Seven Goals of Bad-news Messages

Your ability to manage, clarify, and guide understanding is key to addressing challenging situations while maintaining trust and integrity with customers, coworkers, managers, the public, and other stakeholders. The list below provides a few more goals when delivering bad news in person or in writing:

1. Be clear and concise to avoid being asked for additional clarification.
2. Help the receiver understand and accept the news.
3. Reduce the anxiety associated with the bad news as much as possible by expressing sympathy or empathy.
4. Maintain trust and respect between you and your audience to ensure the possibility of good future relations.
5. Deliver the bad news in a timely fashion in the appropriate channel(s).
6. Avoid the legal liability that comes with admitting negligence or guilt.
7. Achieve the designated business outcome.

Let's look at how we can achieve these goals in examples of the tricky situations in which we might find ourselves in the workplace.

Let's say you are a supervisor and your manager has tasked you with getting Chris, an employee who is usually late for work and has been arriving even later recently, to start arriving on time. Chris's tardiness is impairing not only his performance but also that of the entire team that depends on his work. You figure there are four ways you can handle this:

1. Stop by Chris's cubicle and simply say, "Get to work on time or you're out"
2. Invite Chris out to a nice lunch and let him have it
3. Write Chris a stern e-mail
4. Ask Chris to come to your office and discuss the behaviour with him in private

Let's see how each of these alternatives meets our seven goals in delivering bad news.

First, if you approach Chris with a blunt ultimatum at his desk, you can get right to the point there but risk straining the supervisor-employee relationship by putting him in his place in front of everyone. The aggressive approach might prompt Chris to demand clarification, make defensive excuses, or throw hostile counter-offensives right back—none of which are desired outcomes. For that matter, the disrespectful approach doesn't formally confirm that the tardiness will end. The lack of tact in the approach may reflect poorly on you as the supervisor, not only with Chris but with your manager as well.

When you need to speak to an employee about a personnel concern, it is always best to do so in private. Give thought and concern to the conversation before it occurs and make a list of points to cover with specific information, including grievances. Like any other speech, you may need to rehearse, particularly if this type of meeting is new to you. When it comes time to have the discussion, issue the warning, back it up in writing with documentation, and don't give the impression that you might change your decision. Whether the issue at hand is a simple caution about tardiness or a more serious conversation, you need to be fair and respectful, even if the other person has been less than professional. Let's examine the next alternative.

Let's say you invite Chris to lunch at a nice restaurant. He sees the fine linen on the table, silverware for more than the main course, and water glasses with stems. The luxurious environment says "good job," but your serious talk will contradict this nonverbal signage, which will probably be an obstacle to Chris's ability to listen. If Chris doesn't understand and accept the message, requiring him to seek clarification, your approach has failed. Furthermore, the ambush fails to build trust, so you don't know whether Chris is going to make the extra effort to arrive early or just put in his time there doing the bare minimum while looking for another job.

Let's say instead that you've written Chris a stern e-mail. You've included a list of all the recent dates when he was late and made several statements about the quality of his work. You clearly say he needs to improve and stop being late, or else. But was your e-mail harassment? Could it be considered beyond the scope of supervision and interpreted as mean or cruel? And do you even know if Chris has received it? If there was no reply, do you know whether it achieved its desired business outcome? A written message may certainly be part of the desired approach, but how it is presented and delivered is as important as what it says. Let's examine our fourth approach to this scenario.

You ask Chris to join you in a private conversation. You start by expressing concern and asking an open-ended question: "Chris, I've been concerned about your work lately. Is everything all right?" As Chris answers, you may demonstrate that you are listening by nodding your head and possibly taking notes. You may learn that Chris has been having problems sleeping or that his living situation has changed. Or Chris may decline to



share any issues, deny that anything is wrong, and ask why you are concerned. You may then state that you've observed the chronic tardiness and name one or more specific mistakes you have found in Chris's work, ending by repeating your concern. Because showing your concern makes Chris feel valued, he opens up about his situation so that you understand. It may turn out that he has to drop his kids off for school at 8 a.m. and then contend with Queensway traffic for the next hour to get to the office, consistently making him a half-hour late. You can then both agree that he'll stay a little later or put in the missing hours at home, then write up that agreement in an e-mail with your manager Cc'd.

Regardless of how well or poorly the conversation goes, if Chris tells other employees about it, they will take note of how you handled the situation, and it will contribute to their perception of you. It guides their expectations of how you operate and how to communicate with you as this interaction is not only about you and Chris. You represent the company and its reputation, and your professional display of concern as you try to learn more sends a positive message. While the private, respectful meeting may not be the perfect solution, it is preferable to the other approaches considered above.

One additional point to consider as you document this interaction is the need to present the warning in writing. You may elect to prepare a memo that outlines the information concerning Chris's performance and tardiness and have it ready should you want to present it. If the session goes well, and you have the discretion to make a judgment call, you may elect to give him another week to resolve the issue. Even if it goes well, you may want to present the memo, as it documents the interaction and serves as evidence of due process should Chris's behaviour fail to change, eventually resulting in the need for termination. This combined approach of a verbal and written message is increasingly the norm in business communication.<sup>1</sup>

## Organizing an Indirect Bad-news Message

Key to achieving Goal #2 of delivering bad news—i.e., helping the receiver understand and accept information they don't want to hear or read—is organizing the message using the indirect approach. If you tactlessly provide your audience with really bad news, you run the risk of them rejecting or misunderstanding it because they may be reeling from the blow and be too distracted with anger or sadness to rationally process the explanation or instructions for what to do about the bad news. A doctor never delivers a really serious diagnosis by coming right out and saying "You have cancer!" first thing. Instead, they try to put a positive spin on the results ("It could be worse"), discuss test results in detail, talk about treatment options, and only then come around to telling the patient the bad news. At that point, being clear about the bad news ensures that the receiver understands the gravity of the situation and is therefore motivated to follow through on the

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1. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. (2015). Delivering a Negative News Message. In *Business Communication for Success*. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/17-1-delivering-a-negative-news-message/>

therapeutic recommendations given earlier. Key to avoiding misunderstandings when delivering bad news, then, is the following four-part organization:

1. Buffer
2. Justification
3. Bad news + redirection
4. Positive action closing

This is much like the three-part structure we've seen before, only the body is now divided into two distinct parts where the order really matters. An explanation of each part of an indirect negative newsletter follows.

## Bad-news Message Buffer

Begin with neutral or positive statements that set a goodwill tone and serve as a **buffer** for the information to come. A buffer softens the blow of bad news. The following are some possible buffer strategies:

- **Good news:** If there's good news and bad news, start with the good news.
- **Compliment:** If you're rejecting someone's application, for instance, start by complimenting them on their efforts and other specific accomplishments you were impressed by in their application.
- **Gratitude:** Say thanks for whatever positive things the recipient has done in your dealings with them. If they've submitted a claim that doesn't qualify for an adjustment, for instance, thank them for choosing your company.
- **Agreement:** Before delivering bad news that you're sure the recipient is going to disagree with and oppose, start with something you're sure you both agree on. Start on common ground by saying, "We can all agree that . . ."
- **Facts:** If positives are hard to come by in a situation, getting started on the next section's explanation, starting with cold, hard facts, is the next best thing.
- **Understanding:** Again, if there are no silver linings to point to, showing you care by expressing sympathy and understanding is a possible alternative<sup>2</sup>
- **Apology:** If you're at fault for any aspect of a bad news message, an apology is appropriate as long as it won't leave you at a disadvantage in legal proceedings that may follow as a result of admitting wrongdoing.

The idea here is not to fool the audience into thinking that only good news is coming but to put them in

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2. Guffey, M. E., Loewy, D., Almonte, R. (2016). Essentials of business communication (8th Can. ed., p. 194). Nelson.

a receptive frame of mind for understanding the explanation that follows. If you raise the expectation that they're going to hear the good news that they're getting what they want only, to let them down near the end, they're going to be even more disappointed for being led on. If you give them the bad news right away, however, they may be more distracted with emotion to rationally process the explanation or instructions for what to do about the bad news.

## Bad-news Justification

The **justification** explains the background or context for the bad news before delivering the bad news itself. Let's say that you must reject an application, claim for a refund, or request for information. In such cases, the explanation could describe the strict acceptance criteria and high quality of applications received in the competition, the company policy on refunds, or its policy on allowable disclosures, and the legalities of contractually obligated confidentiality, respectively. Your goal with the explanation is to be convincing so that the reader says, "That sounds reasonable" and similarly accepts the bad news as inevitable given the situation you describe. On the other hand, if you make the bad news seem like mysterious and arbitrary decision-making, your audience will probably feel like they've been treated unfairly and might even escalate further with legal action or "yelptribution"—avenging the wrong in social media. While an explanation is ethically necessary, never admit or imply responsibility without written authorization from your company cleared by legal counsel if there's any way that the justification might be seen as actionable (i.e., the offended party can sue for damages).

Use additional strategies to make the justification more agreeable such as focusing on benefits. If you're informing employees that they will have to pay double for parking passes next year in an attempt to reduce the number of cars filling up the parking lot, you could sell them on the health benefits of cycling to work or the environmental benefit of fewer cars polluting the atmosphere. If you're informing a customer asking why a product or service can't include additional features, you could say that adding those features would drive the cost up and you would rather respect your customer's pocketbooks by keeping the product or service more affordable. In any case, try to pitch an agreeable, pro-social, or progressive benefit rather than saying that you're merely trying to maximize company or shareholder profits.

## The Bad News Itself and Redirection

Burying the bad news itself in the message is a defining characteristic of the indirect approach. It's akin to the "hamburger" organization of constructive criticism sandwiched between statements of praise. Far from intending to hide the bad news, the indirect approach frames the bad news so that it can be properly understood and its negative (depressing or anger-arousing) impact minimized.

The goal is also to be clear in expressing the bad news so that it isn't misunderstood while also being sensitive to your reader's feelings. If you're rejecting a job applicant, for instance, you can be clear that they didn't get the

job without bluntly saying “You failed to meet our criteria” or “You won’t be working for us anytime soon.” Instead, you can clearly imply it by putting the bad news in a subordinate clause in the passive voice:

*Though another candidate was hired for the position, . . .*

The passive voice enables you to draw attention away from your own role in rejecting the applicant, as well as away from the rejected applicant in the context of the competition itself. Instead, you focus on the positive news of someone getting hired. While the rejected applicant probably won’t be pleased for the winning candidate, the subordinate clause here allows for speedy redirection to a consolation prize.

Redirection is key to this type of bad news’ effectiveness because it quickly shifts the reader’s attention to an alternative to what they were seeking in the first place. Some kind of consolation prize (e.g., a coupon or store credit) helps soothe the pain and will be appreciated as being better than nothing, at least. Even if you’re not able to offer the reader anything of value, you could at least say something nice. In that case, completing the sentence in the previous paragraph with an active-voice main clause could go as follows:

*. . . we wish you success in your continued search for employment.*

This way, you avoid saying anything negative while still clearly rejecting the applicant.

## Positive Action Closing

As we’ve seen in previous explorations of message organization, the closing here involves action information. If your redirection involves some alternative, such as a recommendation to apply elsewhere, some follow-up details here would help the reader focus on the future elsewhere rather than getting hung up on you and your company’s decision. Your goals here are the following

- Ensure that the reader understands the bad news without rehashing it
- Remain courteous, positive, and forward-looking
- End the conversation in such a way that you don’t invite further correspondence

The first and last goals are important because you don’t want the reader to respond asking you to clarify anything. The second goal is important because you ultimately want to appear respectable and avoid giving the reader a reason to smear your reputation in social media or proceed with legal action against you. See the table below for an example.

## Bad News Message Outline and Example Message

Part	Example Message
1. Buffer	Thank you for your order. We appreciate your interest in our product and are confident you will love it.
2. Explanation	We are writing to let you know that this product has been unexpectedly popular with over 10,000 orders submitted on the day you placed yours.
3. Bad news + redirect	This unexpected increase in demand has resulted in a temporary out-of-stock/backorder situation. Despite a delay of 2-3 weeks, we will definitely fulfill your order as it was received at 11:57 p.m. on October 9, 2018, as well as gift you a \$5 coupon towards your next purchase.
4. Positive action closing	While you wait for your product to ship, we encourage you to use the enclosed \$5 coupon toward the purchase of any product in our online catalog. We appreciate your continued business and want you to know that our highest priority is your satisfaction.

## Avoiding Disaster in Bad-news Messages

Delivering bad news can be dangerous if it angers the reader so much that they are motivated to fight back. If you're not careful with what you say, that message can be used as evidence in a court case that, when read by a judge or jury, could compromise your position. You can lower the risk of being litigated by following the general principles given below when delivering bad news.

## Avoid Negative or Abusive Language

Sarcasm, profanity, harsh accusations, and abusive or insulting language may feel good to write in a fit of anger but, in the end, make everyone's lives more difficult. When someone sends an inflammatory message and it's interpreted by the reader as harmful to their reputation, it could legally qualify as libel that is legitimately actionable. Even if you write critically about a rival company's product or service by stating (as if factually) that it's dangerous, whereas your version of the product or service is safer and better, this can be considered defamation or libel. If said aloud and recorded, perhaps on a smart phone's voice recorder, it is slander and can likewise be litigated. It's much better to always write courteously and maturely, even under difficult circumstances, to avoid fallout that involves expensive court proceedings.

## Avoid Oversharing but Tell the Truth

When your job is to provide a convincing rationale that might make the recipient of bad news accept it as reasonable, be careful with what details you disclose. When rejecting a job applicant, for instance, you must be especially careful not to share the scoring sheets of the winning and rejected candidates, nor even summarize them. Though that would give them full picture, it would open you up to a flood of complaints and legal or human-rights challenges picking apart every little note. Instead, you would simply wish the rejected candidate luck in their ongoing job search. When you must provide detail, avoid saying anything bad about anyone so that you can't be accused of libel and taken to court for it. Provide only as much information as is necessary to provide a convincing rationale.

At the same, it's important that you tell the truth so that you can't be challenged on the details. If you are inconsistent or contradictory in your explanation, it may invite scrutiny and accusations of lying. Even making false claims by exaggerating may give the reader the wrong impression, which can lead to serious consequences if acted upon. Though some might say that omitting the truth is a form of lying, telling the truth selectively is the necessary compromise of a professional constrained by competing obligations to both the organization they represent and the reader who they don't want to anger or severely disappoint.

## Respect the Recipient's Privacy

Criticizing an employee in a group e-mail or memo—even if the criticism is fair—is mean, unprofessional, and an excellent way of opening yourself to a world of trouble. People who call out others in front of a group create a chilly climate in the workplace, one that leads to fear, loathing, and a loss of productivity among employees, not to mention legal challenges for possible libel. Called-out employees may even resort to sabotaging the office with misbehaviour such as vandalism, cyberattacks, or theft to get even. Always maintain respect and privacy when communicating bad news as a matter of proper professionalism.<sup>3</sup>

## Direct-approach Bad-news Messages

We've so far looked at expressing bad news using the indirect approach, but is it ever right to deliver bad news using the direct approach? Are there occasions where you can or should be upfront about the bad news? In the following situations, yes, it's certainly appropriate to deliver bad news by getting right to the point:

- **When the bad news does not have a high emotional impact:**

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3. University of Minnesota University Publishing. (2015). Delivering a Negative News Message. In *Business Communication for Success*. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/17-1-delivering-a-negative-news-message/>

- In the case of small price or rate increases, customers won't be devastated by having to pay more. Indeed, inflation makes such increases an expected fact of life.
- If your job involves routinely delivering criticism because you're a Quality Assurance specialist, the people who are used to receiving recommendations to improve their work will appreciate the direct approach. Some organizations even require direct-approach communications for bad news as a policy because it is more time-efficient.
- **When you know that the recipient prefers or requires the direct approach:** Though the indirect approach is intended as a nice way to deliver bad news, some people would rather you be blunt. "Give it to me straight, doc. I'm a grown-up. I can take it," they might say. Since a message must always be tailored to the audience, getting permission for taking the direct approach is your cue to follow through with exactly that. Not doing so will arouse the angry response you would have expected otherwise.
- **When you're short on time or space:** One of the hallmarks of the indirect approach is that it takes more words than a direct-approach message. If time is limited or you're constrained in how much space you have to write, taking the direct approach is justifiable.
- **When the indirect approach hasn't worked:** If this is the third time you've had to tell a client to pay their invoice and the first two were nicely-worded indirect messages that the recipient ignored, issue a stern warning of the consequences of not paying. You may need to threaten legal action or say you'll refer the account to a collection agency, and you may need to put it in bold so that you're sure the reader won't miss it.
- **When the reader may miss the bad news:** You may determine from profiling your audience and their literacy level that they might not understand the indirect-approach bad news. If your reader doesn't have a strong command of English vocabulary and misses words here and there, they may not pick up on the buried bad news past the mid-point of a challenging message.

In the above situations, structure your message following the same three-part organization we've seen elsewhere:

1. **Opening:** State the bad news right upfront.
2. **Body:** Briefly explain why the bad news happened.
3. **Closing:** Express confidence in continued business relations with a goodwill statement and provide any action information, such as contact instructions, should the recipient require further information.

Of course, clarity and brevity in such messages is vital to maintaining friendly relations with your audiences.<sup>4</sup>

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4. Guffey, M. E., Loewy, D., Almonte, R. (2016). *Essentials of business communication* (8th Can. ed., p. 190). Nelson.

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# 14.6 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

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It's not always what you say, but how you say it makes a difference. We sometimes call this “body language” or “nonverbal communication,” a key aspect of effective business communication. Nonverbal communication is the process of conveying a message without using words. It can include gestures and facial expressions, tone of voice, timing, posture and where you stand as you communicate. It can help or hinder the clear understanding of your message, but it doesn't reveal (and can even mask) what you are thinking. Nonverbal communication is far from simple, and learning to understand non-verbal skills will increase your effectiveness as a business communicator.

## Types of Non-verbal Communication

How do you know when your boss or instructors are pleased with your progress (or not)? You might know from the smiles on their faces, from the time and attention they give you, or perhaps in other nonverbal ways, like a raise, a bonus, or a good grade. Whether the interaction occurs face-to-face or at a distance, you can still experience and interpret nonverbal responses. Eight types of non-verbal communication are discussed below.



### 1. Body language

Body language is how people situate their bodies naturally depending on the situation, the environment and how they feel. Different forms of body language include gestures, eye contact, posture and facial expressions. For example, remember when your parents told you to stand up straight. Sitting or standing communicates your comfort level, professionalism and general disposition towards a person or conversation. Numerous gestures are possible, and each gesture conveys something different. The range of possibilities is one of the reasons non-verbal communication is so complex.

## Five Types of Gestures Explained

Gesture	Meaning
Emblems	Gestures that can easily be translated into words. For example, waving to say hello or good-bye.
Illustrators	Behaviours the support the spoken word. For example, wagging your finger while saying no.
Affect Display	Gestures that display emotion, for example, a smile.
Regulators	Gestures that control interaction, such a leaning forward or backward to signal interest.
Adaptors	Gestures that indicate tension. For example, tapping your feet before the beginning of a test.



### 2. Space or Proxemics

The space between yourself and others communicates your comfort level, the importance of the conversation, your desire to support or connect with others, and the relative degree of power you hold. Space can be categorized into intimate, personal, social, and public. Review the image below for an overview of these categories.



### 3. Paralanguage:

Paralanguage includes the non-language elements of speech, such as your talking speed, pitch, intonation, volume and more. The saying “the meaning is in the person not in the words” applies here. Becoming an

effective speaker involves understanding how to maximize and manage the specific qualities of your voice to clearly articulate your words and ideas.



## 4. Time or Chronemics

For business professionals, time is a valuable resource. Over the years, time has become a commodity. The saying “time is money” is very true for many professions, businesses, and cultures. How long it takes to complete an action, how punctual a person is, how long someone will listen or wait for a reply communicates their relative importance.

## 5. Physical Characteristics



You didn’t choose your genes, your eye color, the natural color of your hair, or your height, but people spend millions every year trying to change their physical characteristics. You can get colored contacts; dye your hair; and buy shoes to raise your stature a couple of inches if you are shorter than you’d like to be. Although some may find it superficial, the way we look affects the way we feel and how others perceive us. Research shows that we tend to think more positively of people deemed attractive. The work environment is no different. Ensure that you communicate the message you desire by cultivating your professional attire and look.

## 6. Artifacts

Do you cover your tattoos when you are at work? Do you know someone who does? Expectations vary greatly, and body art or tattoos may still be controversial in the workplace. Artifacts are forms of decorative ornamentation that are chosen to represent self-concept. They can include rings and tattoos but may also

include clothes, cars, watches, briefcases, purses, and even eyeglasses. Artifacts may project gender, role or position, class or status, personality, and group membership or affiliation. Paying attention to a customer's artifacts may allow you to more accurately adapt your message to meet their needs.



## 7. Touch

Touch is the most powerful form of nonverbal communication. Research shows that intimate contact is critical to the understanding of our humanity. Over the last few years, understanding what is considered appropriate touching in the work environment is changing. Thus, although touch is paramount, if inappropriate, it also carries the potential for the most problems.

## 8. Environment

Environment involves the physical and psychological aspects of the communication context. More than the tables and chairs in an office, the environment is an important part of the dynamic communication process. The perception of one's environment influences one's reaction to it. For example, Google is famous for its work environment, with spaces created for physical activity and even in-house food service around the clock. The expense is no doubt considerable, but Google's actions speak volumes. In Google's view, the results produced in the environment, designed to facilitate creativity, interaction, and collaboration, are worth the effort.

## Developing Your Non-verbal Communication Skills

Nonverbal communication is an important aspect of business communication, from the context of interpersonal interaction to a public presentation. It is a dynamic, complex, and challenging aspect of communication. You are never done learning and adapting to your environment and context; improving your understanding of nonverbal communication comes with the territory.

To be a successful business communicator, you must continually learn about nonverbal communication and its impact on your interactions. Below are three ways to develop your nonverbal communication skills.

1. **Watch Reactions** Market research is fundamental to success in business and industry. So, too, you will need to do some field research to observe how, when, and why people communicate the way they do. If

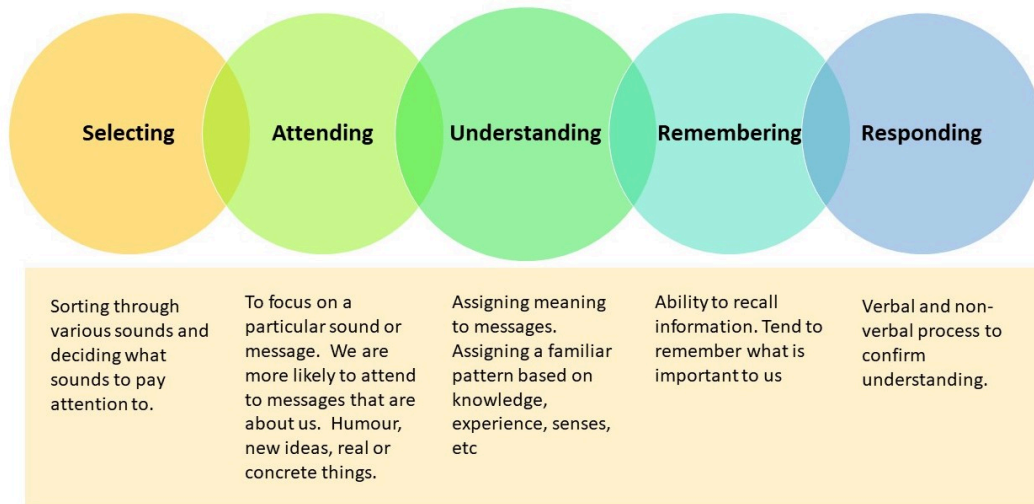
you want to be able to communicate effectively with customers, you will need to anticipate not only their needs, but also how they communicate. They are far more likely to communicate with someone whom they perceive as being like them, than with a perceived stranger. From dress to mannerisms and speech patterns, you can learn from your audience how to be a more effective business communicator.

2. **Enroll an Observer** Most communication in business and industry involves groups and teams, even if the interpersonal context is a common element. Enroll a coworker or colleague in your effort to learn more about your audience, or even yourself. They can observe you and note areas you may not have noticed that could benefit from revision. Perhaps the gestures you make while speaking tend to distract rather than enhance your communication. You can also record a video of yourself speaking with someone and play it to get a sense of how your nonverbal communication complements or detracts from the message.
3. **Focus on a Specific Type of Nonverbal Communication** What is the norm for eye contact where you work? Does this change or differ based on gender, age, ethnicity, cultural background, context, environment? Observation will help you learn more about how people communicate; looking for trends across a specific type of nonverbal communication can be an effective strategy. Focus on one behaviour you exhibit, like pacing, hand gestures, or eye contact. Use nonverbal communication to enhance your message, watch reactions and consider enrolling an observer to help you become aware of your nonverbal habits and how your others receive nonverbal messages.

## Active Listening

You may have experienced the odd sensation of driving somewhere and, having arrived, have realized you don't remember driving. Your mind may have been filled with other issues, and you drove on autopilot. It's dangerous when you drive on auto-pilot; communicating on auto-pilot is also dangerous. Choosing to listen attentively takes effort. People communicate with words, expressions, and even in silence; your attention to them will make you a better communicator. From discussions on improving customer service to retaining customers in challenging economic times, active listening frequently comes up as a success strategy.

There are five steps in the listening process: *selecting, attending, understanding, remembering, and responding*.



"The steps in the listening process'  
by Jordan Smith,  
CC BY 4.0

Here are some tips to facilitate active listening:

- Maintain eye contact with the speaker
- Don't interrupt
- Focus your attention on the message, not your internal monologue.
- Restate the message in your own words and ask if you understood correctly.
- Ask clarifying questions to communicate interest and gain insight.

Our previous tips will serve you well in daily interactions, but suppose you have an especially difficult subject to discuss. In difficult situations, make an extra effort to create an environment that will facilitate positive communication.

Here are some tips that may be helpful:

- **Set aside a special time.** To have a difficult conversation, set aside time when you will not be disturbed.
- **Don't interrupt.** Keep silent while you let the other person speak.
- **Be nonjudgmental.** Receive the message without judgment or criticism. Set aside your opinions, attitudes, and beliefs.
- **Be accepting.** Be open to the message being communicated, realizing that acceptance does not necessarily mean you agree with what is being said.
- **Take turns.** Wait until it is your turn to respond, and then measure your response in proportion to the message that was delivered to you. Reciprocal turn-taking allows each person have his say.
- **Acknowledge.** Let the other person know that you have listened to the message attentively.
- **Understand.** Be certain that you understand what the other person is saying. If you don't understand, ask for clarification. Restate the message in your own words.
- **Keep your cool.** Speak your truth without blame. A calm tone will help prevent the conflict from

escalating. Use “I” statements (e.g., “I felt concerned when I learned that my department is going to have a layoff”) rather than “you” statements (e.g., “you want to get rid of some of our best people”).

Recognize that mutual respect and understanding are built one conversation at a time. Trust is difficult to gain and easy to lose. Be patient and keep the channels of communication open, as a solution may develop slowly over the course of many small interactions. Recognize that it is more valuable to maintain the relationship over the long term than to “win” in an individual transaction.

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## 14.7 CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

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Photo by [gerald](#), Pixabay

A behavioural question job applicants often hear during a job interview is how they would handle a conflict situation with a customer or co-worker. Would you know how to answer it? It's a good question because conflict certainly happens in the workplace. The potential for conflict exists anywhere two or more motivated people interact. Most people are conflict-averse, but some have no problem aggressively defending their interests, and some even seem to seek out conflict just for the thrill of it. Even though we're well beyond playground politics, adults can still be bullies in the workplace. Even when two otherwise good people lose themselves in the heat of an argument, knowing how to deal with such situations is a vital workplace skill.

First, it's worth knowing what conflict is, why it arises, and what it is *not*. **Conflict** is the physical or



psychological struggle associated with the perception of opposing or incompatible goals, desires, demands, wants, or needs.<sup>1</sup> Conflict is universal and typically arises with opposing interests, scarce resources, or interference, but it doesn't necessarily mean the relationship between parties in conflict is fundamentally broken. All relationships progress through times of conflict and collaboration. How we manage these moments either reinforces or destroys the relationship. Rather than viewing conflict from an entirely negative frame of reference, we should view it as an opportunity for clarification, learning, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

## Conflict Resolution

Conflict arises everywhere communication occurs and can be very costly. Effective communicators can predict, anticipate, and formulate strategies to address conflict in order to successfully resolve it. How you choose to approach conflict influences its resolution. Conflict can be cognitive or affective. **Cognitive** conflict is productive and constructive. As we discussed, during the storming stage of team formation, there is often conflict. However, the conflict is focused on the tasks, responsibilities, and roles and often serves to clarify these variables and create a clearer vision for the team when the conflict is resolved. **Affective** conflict, however, is destructive. Here, disagreements are about personalities, personal choices, and feelings. This sort of conflict can lead to permanent group division and disharmony.

Five conflict resolution strategies are presented below.

**Competitive Style (Win/Lose):** Desire to advance one's own concerns at the expense of the other party and to dominate. People with this style often resort to blaming or seeking a scapegoat rather than assuming responsibility. People with this style will also resort to threats.

**Collaboration (Win/Win):** Desire to make both people happy. People who have this style are other oriented and view conflict as a set of problems to be solved. Collaboration is best used when those involved in the conflict need new, fresh ideas and perhaps a different direction.

**Compromise (½ win, ½ lose):** Parties meet somewhere in the middle. People who use this style find a solution that meets the needs of all concerned. When people compromise, they don't get exactly what they want. Each person gives up a bit of what he/she wants. Compromise can bring about quick solutions and reinforces equality.

**Accommodate (Lose/Win):** Desire to satisfy the other's concerns over one's own concerns. Therefore, people with this style will give in to the demand of others to avoid conflict, rejection, or disruption. Typically, people with this management style like to people please.

**Avoidant:** Party is indifferent to everyone's concerns including his/her own. Avoidance is a healthy or unhealthy response to conflict depending on its severity. Rising above trivial bickering is wise, whereas ignoring

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1. McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

a serious conflict that threatens to pollute the work atmosphere and hinder productivity just contributes to the toxicity.

## Conflict Management Skills

When conflict is serious enough that it causes a rift within the workplace culture, the kind that pollutes the work atmosphere and threatens irreparable damage, a methodical, collaborative approach to conflict resolution can help lead to an amicable solution.

Let's examine the conflict management options.

**Confront and Problem Solve:** The most effective manner of resolving a conflict is to address it directly. First, the true source of the conflict must be identified. The confrontation in this approach is gentle and tactful no combative and abusive. To ensure this strategy works, allow some time to pass between the conflict and problem-solving. An important advantage of this option is its focus on the issue that caused the conflict and not on the personalities involved in the conflict.

**Reframing:** Looking at a conflict from an alternative point of view helps to shed light on the causes of the conflict. **Cognitive restructuring** allows you to reframe the conflict and to gain insight into possible solutions. How you frame or choose your thoughts can determine the outcome of a conflict. Seeing the conflict from the other side allows you to also deal with the conflict in a positive way.

**Appeal to Third Party:** When there seems no path to a resolution, enlist the help of a third party with more power than you or the other parties in the conflict have. In many cases, simply suggesting that a third party will be contacted will encourage all parties to find their own resolution.

**Negotiation:** Conflicts often involve negotiations. Negotiations require that all parties are open to cooperating and to compromise. Negotiation takes place frequently in the workplace. To achieve the best negotiations: create a positive negotiating environment, practice active listening, be reasonable, focus on common ground, make a last and final offer, be tactful.

Conflicts are inevitable, but conflicts do not have to be dysfunctional. Understanding your conflict management style and possessing some conflict resolution skills will make you more effective in the work environment.

## 14.8 SUMMARY

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### Summary

Advanced communication skills, whether written or verbal, will be part of your success in Operations Management. You will be required to send e-mail on behalf of your organization, lead meetings and write policies for your department. You will also need to navigate the world of social media as it can be both a friend and a foe of your company. Finally, you will need to deliver difficult messages and resolve conflict in the workplace. Taking professional development courses to build your communication and conflict resolution skills will help you navigate the day-to-day expectations of your role in Operations Management.



## Check Your Knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/hrforoperationsmanagers/?p=1248#h5p-16>*

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# VERSIONING HISTORY

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This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the edits involve a number of changes, the version number increases to the next full number.

The files posted alongside this book always reflect the most recent version.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Page
1.0	24 August 2022	First Publication	N/A
2.0	14 December 2023	Restructuring – The book was restructured/re-ordered. All slides updated for the new structure. Some changes were made for accessibility. Attributions were added to the bottom of each page.	Chapter 1 – Introduction to HR Management (Previously Chapter 1) Chapter 2 – Occupational Health and Safety (Previously Chapter 10) Chapter 3 – WHMIS 2015 (Previously Chapter 11) Chapter 4 – Hazard Recognition (Previously Chapter 12) Chapter 5 – Incident Investigation (Previously Chapter 13) Chapter 6 – Disability Management (Previously Chapter 14) Chapter 7 – Operations Management Career Readiness (Previously Chapter 9) Chapter 8 – HRM-Related Legislation (Previously Chapter 2) Chapter 9 – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (Previously Chapter 3) Chapter 10 – Talent Acquisition (Previously Chapter 4) Chapter 11 – Training (Previously Chapter 5) Chapter 12 – Performance Management (Previously Chapter 6) Chapter 13 – Employee Development (Previously Chapter 7) Chapter 14 – Communication and Conflict Resolution (Previously Chapter 8)

# ANCILLARY RESOURCES

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## Instructor Slide Decks

Click on any chapter link below to download the respective slide deck.

- [Chapter 1 Human Resources for Operations Managers](#)
- [Chapter 2 Human Resources for Operations Managers](#)
- [Chapter 3 Human Resources for Operations Managers](#)
- [Chapter 4 Human Resources for Operations Managers](#)
- [Chapter 5 Human Resources for Operations Managers](#)
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