



# **A MANAGER'S GUIDE: STRATEGIES FOR LEADING EFFECTIVE TEAMS**

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Participant's Workbook





# UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

## Participant's Workbook

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**Key Areas:** 3 (Administration) & 4 (Communications and Marketing)

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3400 (Human Resources and Staff Training)

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## Functional Areas and Competencies

### Functional Area 1: Personnel Management

**Competency 1.4:** Adheres to professional codes of conduct for all staff and interpersonal relationships among teachers, principals, other school staff, and students.

**Knowledge Statements:**

- Understands the impact of workplace dynamics and the importance of working effectively in a multi-skilled environment.
- Knows district policies on student relations/interpersonal relationships.

**Competency 1.6:** Provides leadership to school nutrition staff that promotes team effectiveness and productivity.

**Knowledge Statements:**

- Understands the importance of good leadership skills in managing the school nutrition program.
- Knows techniques of time management.

**Competency 1.7:** Communicates with employees in a manner that promotes cooperation and reduces conflicts.

**Knowledge Statement:** Knows techniques for dealing with difficult employees.

**Source:** Institute of Child Nutrition. (2018). *Competencies, knowledge, and skills for school nutrition managers*. University, MS: Author.

## Professional Standards

### Human Resources and Staff Training – 3400

**Key Area Code: Administration (3000)**

Employee will be able to implement human resources management practices through maintenance and familiarity with current personnel policies and procedures and support employees through training and retention strategies.

### Communications and Marketing – 4100

**Key Area Code: Communication and Marketing (4000)**

Employee will be able to develop plans that include involvement with school and community members, empower school nutrition leaders, and address excellent customer service.



## Training Outcomes

The training outcomes are to:

1. Explore how individual personalities and perspectives shape the workplace and contribute to a multi-skilled environment.
2. Develop strategies to minimize the impact of implicit and explicit biases on workplace interactions.
3. Utilize effective communication and conflict management skills to address and resolve workplace challenges constructively.
4. Adopt positive behaviors based on structured frameworks to manage conflicts effectively, fostering collaboration and win-win resolutions.
5. Assess team dynamics using team roles theory to leverage shared goals and unique strengths to enhance team productivity.
6. Cultivate practical strategies for promoting positive workplace dynamics, mutual respect, and team productivity.



## Key Terms

Key Terms	Definition
Active listening	Communication technique that requires fully concentrating, understanding, and remembering what is being said rather than just passively hearing the message.
Attitude	The overall way a person thinks or feels about someone or something and relates to the outside world.
Belbin's Team Roles Theory	Outlines nine different roles individuals may adopt within a team and offers a structured way to evaluate team members' contributions.
Bias	A tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone.
Big Five Personality Traits	Known also as the Five-Factor Model, which describes human behavior in terms of five key dimensions of individual differences, including openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.
Explicit bias	The attitudes and beliefs we knowingly have about a person or group and make decisions and judgments based on them.
Groupthink	Individuals suppress their unique ideas to conform to the group. It limits innovation and optimal decision-making.
Implicit bias	The attitudes and beliefs we are unaware of or unclear of their origins can negatively affect us and our interactions with other people.
Positive and supportive workplace	An environment that values and celebrates the individual strengths and skills of all employees.
Individual differences	Characteristics that distinguish one person from another and help to define each person's individuality, such as physical, mental, social, and cultural differences.
Mutually satisfactory solution	Also known as a win-win solution, it is a negotiation strategy in conflict resolution that includes all parties involved in the conflict to solve an issue collaboratively that benefits everyone.
Open communication	Involves creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable and encouraged to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of judgment or retaliation.
Stereotypes	Fixed, over-generalized beliefs about a particular group or class of people.
Team collaboration	Involves individuals working together as a cohesive unit within a formal team structure to achieve specific goals or tasks.

Key Terms	Definition
Team role	A tendency to behave, contribute, and interrelate with others in a particular way.
Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)	Developed by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph J. Kilmann in the 1970s, this widely used assessment tool is designed to identify conflict-handling modes based on assertiveness and cooperativeness, including collaborative, competitive, compromise, avoidance, and accommodative.

## Introduction

Time	Topic	Activity	Materials
25 minutes	Introduction to training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Icebreaker</li><li>• Pre-Assessment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sticky notes</li><li>• Smartphone</li></ul>
25 minutes			





## Introduction

Welcome to the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN), and thank you for participating in today's training, *A Manager's Guide: Strategies for Leading Effective Teams*. This 4-hour course is intended for school nutrition managers and staff pursuing management positions. Today's training is designed to help you identify effective strategies for understanding and managing individual strengths and skills of all employees, resolution techniques for handling conflict, and a plan to enhance team productivity. Self-reflection is a critical component of this training to help you identify characteristics of your own personality, attitudes, and any existing biases and stereotypes. During this course, you will be encouraged to participate in interactive group activities and discussions to help you apply the skills and knowledge learned.

At the end of today's training, you will be able to do the following:

1. Explore how individual personalities and perspectives shape the workplace and contribute to a multi-skilled environment.
2. Develop strategies to minimize the impact of implicit and explicit biases on workplace interactions.
3. Utilize effective communication and conflict management skills to address and resolve workplace challenges constructively.
4. Adopt positive behaviors based on structured frameworks to manage conflicts effectively, fostering collaboration and win-win resolutions.
5. Assess team dynamics using team roles theory to leverage shared goals and unique strengths to enhance team productivity.
6. Cultivate practical strategies for promoting positive and supportive workplace dynamics, mutual respect, and workplace productivity.

### Activity: Icebreaker – Drawing Toast

**Materials:** Sticky notes, pen or pencil

**Time:** 5 minutes, 10 minutes for introductions

#### **Instructions:**

1. The Drawing Toast icebreaker is a fun and engaging way to emphasize the importance of communication and collaboration while also recognizing how individual creativity and skill aid in problem-solving.
2. Draw a step-by-step diagram illustrating how to make toast for this activity. You have 3 minutes to draw your diagrams.
3. Be as detailed and specific as possible with your drawings. Once the time is up, find a partner nearby and take a minute to present your demonstration to one another.
4. Discuss similarities and differences in how you achieved the same goal to “draw toast.”
5. During introductions, share your name, how many years you have been in your management role, and what you and your partner learned from the activity.



# Lesson 1: Understanding Differences in the Workplace

Time	Topic	Activity	Materials
2 minutes	Introduction to lesson		
<b>Objective: Identify the importance of personality differences within personal identity and their influence on workplace behavior and interactions.</b>			
25 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Components of Individual Differences</li> <li>The Big Five Personality traits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My Personality Rating worksheet</li> <li>Personality Rating Chart</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Explore how common biases and stereotypes impact interactions in the workplace.</b>			
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bias and Stereotypes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bias and Stereotype Reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Explain the difference between explicit and implicit bias.</b>			
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explicit and Implicit Bias</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where is the Bias? handouts</li> <li>Ways to Counter Unconscious Bias as an Individual handout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Identify at least three strategies for fostering a positive and supportive workplace for all staff.</b>			
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of a Positive and Supportive Workplace for Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fostering a Positive and Supportive Workplace handout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> </ul>
<b>72 minutes (1 hour, 12 minutes)</b>			



# Lesson 1: Understanding Differences in the Workplace

In today's workforce, understanding individual differences is not just beneficial—it's essential for effective management. Every employee has unique individuality based on values, attitudes, personality, physical and cognitive abilities, skills, habits, and life experiences, which are often influenced by broader identity factors like upbringing, inherited traditions, age, economic and social experiences, demographic factors, and personal classification. As a leader, recognizing and utilizing these differences as strengths in complex work environments like a school kitchen can significantly enhance communication and foster a positive and supportive work environment.

## Components of Individual Differences

The components that make up individual differences can be described as:

- Personality traits – influence how individuals approach their work, interact with colleagues, and handle stress.
- Cognitive Abilities – impact how individuals learn, process information, and make decisions.
- Values and Beliefs – influence motivation, job satisfaction, and how roles and responsibilities are perceived.
- Cultural Background – shapes communication styles, work habits, and attitudes toward authority and teamwork.
- Work Experience and Skills – determine proficiency, confidence, and the ability to handle specific tasks.
- Learning Styles – preferences for how individuals acquire and process information.

## Personalities

Our personal identities manifest in professional settings, shaping our communication style and behavior tendencies. Being aware of this helps you to understand and manage your staff as individuals. Let's take a deeper dive into personality and how it is an accessible attribute to explore among yourself and your staff.

Discussing personality is generally viewed as neutral and relatable, making it an accessible way to understand and support your team. Understanding your staff's personalities offers valuable insight into their natural tendencies, how they interact with coworkers, and how they respond to your guidance as their supervisor. By recognizing the variety of personalities among your staff, you can better guide your team in their interactions and personal and professional growth, ultimately enhancing the overall workplace dynamics.

### Objective 1

Explain the importance of personality differences within personal identity and their influence on workplace behavior and interactions.

## The Big Five Personality Traits

According to the American Psychological Association, researchers study personality traits to better understand individual differences and behaviors across various situations.

A widely accepted framework for studying personality is the Big Five personality traits, also known as the Five-Factor Model, which describes human behavior in terms of five key dimensions of individual differences:

1. **Openness to experience** – captures a person's willingness to engage in new aesthetic, cultural, or intellectual experiences

2. **Conscientiousness** – describes how organized, efficient, responsible, and hardworking someone can be.
3. **Extroversion** – reflects how relatively outgoing, gregarious, sociable, and openly expressive an individual is.
4. **Agreeableness** – highlights a person's tendency to be cooperative, friendly, and compassionate.
5. **Neuroticism** – indicates one's emotional stability or how prone an individual is to experience emotional fluctuations.

As a leader, self-awareness of your behavioral tendencies enables you to recognize how you may influence workplace dynamics. We are now going to complete the My Personality Assessment worksheet. This activity is only a snapshot of your rating on the five key dimensions and may provide insight into your behavioral tendencies and management style.

### Activity: *My Personality Rating* worksheet

**Materials:** *My Personality Rating* worksheet, *Personality Rating Chart* handout, pencil or pen for each participant

**Time:** 15 minutes, 5 minutes for group discussion

#### **Instructions:**

1. In this activity, work individually to complete the *My Personality Rating* worksheet.
2. For each statement in the table below, mark how much you agree or disagree on a scale of 1–5 in the box next to the statement.
3. When you have completed the worksheet, you may share any thoughts about your results with the participants around you. Sharing results is completely optional, as the activity is self-reflective.





## Rating My Personality Characteristics

**Instructions:** For each statement in the table below, mark how much you agree or disagree on a scale of 1–5 in the box next to the statement.

1=disagree, 2=slightly disagree, 3=neutral, 4=slightly agree, 5=agree

Rating	I...	Rating	I...
	1. Am the life of the party.		26. Know how to captivate people.
	2. Am on good terms with nearly everyone.		27. Have a soft heart.
	3. Am always prepared.		28. Continue until everything is perfect.
	4. Am not easily bothered by things.		29. Seldom get mad.
	5. Have a rich vocabulary.		30. Am good at many things.
	6. Make friends easily.		31. Talk to a lot of different people.
	7. Am interested in people.		32. Think of others first.
	8. Like to tidy up.		33. Like order and regularity.
	9. Am relaxed most of the time.		34. Rarely overwhelmed by emotions.
	10. Can handle a lot of information.		35. Am quick to understand things.
	11. Feel comfortable around people.		36. Feel at ease with people.
	12. Have a good word for everyone.		37. Take time out for others.
	13. Pay attention to details.		38. Make plans and stick to them.
	14. Rarely worry about things.		39. Have frequent mood swings.
	15. Have a vivid imagination.		40. Love to read challenging materials.
	16. Take charge.		41. Don't mind being the center of attention.
	17. Sympathize with others' feelings.		42. Know how to comfort others.
	18. Rarely make a mess of things.		43. Follow a schedule.
	19. Seldom feel blue.		44. Rarely get irritated.
	20. Love to think up new ways to do things.		45. Spend time reflecting on things.
	21. Start conversations.		46. Am skilled in handling social situations.
	22. Love to help others.		47. Make people feel at ease.
	23. Get chores done right away.		48. Am exacting in my work.
	24. Am not easily disturbed.		49. Am not offended easily.
	25. Have excellent ideas.		50. Am full of ideas.

Adapted from: <https://ipip.ori.org/>; Big Five Personality Test ([openpsychometrics.org](https://openpsychometrics.org))



Write your scores from 1–50 in each corresponding blank space indicated by the number in parentheses. There are 10 specific questions for each personality trait. The scores you calculate should be between 10–50. Interpret your scores using the following score scale:

40–50 = Very High

30–39 = High

20–29 = Moderate

10–19 = Low

Extroversion =

(1) \_\_\_\_ + (6) \_\_\_\_ + (11) \_\_\_\_ + (16) \_\_\_\_ + (21) \_\_\_\_ + (26) \_\_\_\_ + (31) \_\_\_\_ + (36) \_\_\_\_ + (41) \_\_\_\_ + (46) \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_

Agreeableness =

(2) \_\_\_\_ + (7) \_\_\_\_ + (12) \_\_\_\_ + (17) \_\_\_\_ + (22) \_\_\_\_ + (27) \_\_\_\_ + (32) \_\_\_\_ + (37) \_\_\_\_ + (42) \_\_\_\_ + (47) \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_

Conscientiousness =

(3) \_\_\_\_ + (8) \_\_\_\_ + (13) \_\_\_\_ + (18) \_\_\_\_ + (23) \_\_\_\_ + (28) \_\_\_\_ + (33) \_\_\_\_ + (38) \_\_\_\_ + (43) \_\_\_\_ + (48) \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_

Neuroticism =

(4) \_\_\_\_ + (9) \_\_\_\_ + (14) \_\_\_\_ + (19) \_\_\_\_ + (24) \_\_\_\_ + (29) \_\_\_\_ + (34) \_\_\_\_ + (39) \_\_\_\_ + (44) \_\_\_\_ + (49) \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_

Openness =

(5) \_\_\_\_ + (10) \_\_\_\_ + (15) \_\_\_\_ + (20) \_\_\_\_ + (25) \_\_\_\_ + (30) \_\_\_\_ + (35) \_\_\_\_ + (40) \_\_\_\_ + (45) \_\_\_\_ + (50) \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_

## Personality Rating Chart

Big Five	Low to Moderate Rating	High Rating
Extraversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefers solitude</li> <li>• Feels exhausted after socializing</li> <li>• Dislikes making small talk</li> <li>• Dislikes being the center of attention</li> <li>• Carefully thinks things through before speaking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoys being center of attention</li> <li>• Likes to start conversations</li> <li>• Feels energized when around people</li> <li>• Say things before thinking</li> </ul>
Agreeableness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't empathize or have a concern for other people's problems</li> <li>• Manipulate others to get what they want</li> <li>• Insults and belittles others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a great deal of interest</li> <li>• Feels empathy and concern for others</li> <li>• Enjoys helping and contributing to others' happiness</li> </ul>
Conscientiousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dislikes structure and schedules</li> <li>• Makes messes, not organized</li> <li>• Fails to put things back where they belong</li> <li>• Procrastinates important tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spends time preparing</li> <li>• Finishes important tasks</li> <li>• Pays attention to detail</li> <li>• Enjoys having a set schedule</li> </ul>
Neuroticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotionally stable</li> <li>• Deals well with stress</li> <li>• Rarely feels sad or depressed</li> <li>• Is mostly relaxed and doesn't worry much</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences a lot of stress</li> <li>• Gets upset easily</li> <li>• Feels anxious</li> <li>• Experience dramatic shifts in mood</li> <li>• Struggles to bounce back after stressful events</li> </ul>
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dislikes change</li> <li>• Does not enjoy new things</li> <li>• Resists new ideas</li> <li>• Not very imaginative</li> <li>• Dislikes abstract or theoretical concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very creative</li> <li>• Open to trying new things</li> <li>• Focused on completing new challenges</li> <li>• Happy to think about abstract concepts</li> </ul>

Adapted from: <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-big-five-personality-dimensions-2795422>

It's important to know that the Big Five personality traits exist on a continuum and are not fixed. This means that your personality can shift and evolve over time as you age, mature, or intentionally work on specific behaviors.

**Objective  
2**

Explore how common biases and stereotypes impact interactions in the workplace.

## Bias and Stereotypes

Now that you have a foundational understanding of personal attributes, such as personality and how they can vary from person to person, we can now explore how these differences intersect with common biases and stereotypes.

Bias is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone. We consciously and unconsciously categorize people all the time based on social, behavioral, or other characteristics. Our brains continuously absorb information and make decisions, which we filter through our personal lens. These categories influence how we treat people and can lead to stereotypes, prejudice, and even discrimination.

Stereotypes are fixed, over-generalized beliefs about a particular group or class of people who share specific characteristics. They often develop over a lifetime due to personal experiences, skewed information, or the influence of others' perceptions. The way we interact with others is frequently shaped by our personalities and biases, which often manifest as stereotyping. This leads to widely held beliefs—usually untrue or unfair—about groups of people sharing specific characteristics.

Biases and stereotypes can manifest in various ways, from subtle assumptions about someone's capabilities based on their age or gender to more overt behaviors that can create tension and hinder team collaboration. Bias and stereotypes can impact the composition and dynamics of the workplace. They may influence hiring practices, promotion decisions, and interactions among employees from different backgrounds. For example, a coworker may be unfairly judged as less competent due to their quiet demeanor (a personality trait linked to lower extroversion), or assumptions may be made about a team member's reliability based on cultural background. Challenging bias and stereotypes in the workplace can foster better understanding and collaboration among staff, cultivating an environment where staff feel valued and respected.

Our biases and stereotypes cannot be changed unless we first acknowledge that they exist. This reflection activity is designed to help you understand how these biases impact your interactions and relationships and avoid demonstrating potential prejudice and discrimination. Consider the different personalities within your team and reflect on how you can improve your perspectives and interactions in the workplace.

### Activity: *Bias and Stereotype Reflection*

**Materials:** *Bias and Stereotype Reflection* worksheet, pencil or pen for each participant

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Instructions:**

1. This reflection is designed to help start the process of confronting and eliminating any biases you may hold. Work individually to complete the *Bias and Stereotype Reflection* worksheet in your Participant's Workbook.
2. Read the reflection questions and write out your answer for each.

## Bias and Stereotype Reflection

**Directions:** Reflect and then respond to each of the following questions.

1. **Where might I hold a bias or stereotype?** *Reflect on areas where you may be making assumptions about others based on their appearance, behavior, or background.*
2. **Why am I holding onto this bias or stereotype?** *Consider the origins of these biases. Are they rooted in personal experiences, societal norms, or misconceptions?*
3. **Have I made decisions based on this bias or stereotype?** *Think about past decisions or judgments you've made. Were they influenced by preconceived notions or stereotypes?*
4. **How have these biases impacted my interaction with others?** *Reflect on specific instances where bias may have affected your communication or relationship with a staff member.*
5. **What steps can I take to challenge and overcome these biases?** *Identify actionable strategies to recognize and counteract these biases in your daily interactions.*



**Objective**  
3

Explain the difference between explicit and implicit bias.

## Explicit and Implicit Bias

Biases exist in at least two forms: explicit and implicit. When we are consciously aware of our beliefs, it is explicit bias. They are deliberately formed and easy to express. When we are unaware that bias exists, it is implicit bias. These are formed involuntarily.

Explicit bias refers to the attitudes and beliefs we knowingly have about a person or group and use to make decisions and judgments. In the next activity, we will determine the explicit bias in each scenario.

### Activity: *Where is the Bias?*

**Materials:** *Where is the Bias?* handouts

**Time:** 10-minute group discussion

**Instructions:**

1. Each scenario will be read aloud.
2. After each scenario is read, think about the cause of the bias.
3. Be prepared to share your thoughts with the group.

## Where is the Bias?

### Scenario 1

For the past five years, Jack, a school nutrition director, has used XYZ software for accounting and approving all the district's free and reduced applications. He has had great experiences with the ease of use and the accuracy of compiling the data. Recently several other software companies have requested appointments to demonstrate their products. The manager would not consider any of the other companies.

**Scenario 1 Bias:** Jack favors information or experiences that confirm his pre-existing beliefs or preferences. He assumes that no other product could be as effective or better.

*Impact: This bias can lead to missed opportunities for improvement or innovation within the school nutrition program. Jack may be missing out on more advanced, cost-effective, or efficient tools that could enhance the district's operations. Additionally, this approach can create a work environment that is resistant to change, stifling growth and adaptability.*

## Where is the Bias?

### Scenario 2

Maria, a veteran employee in the school kitchen, is often assigned to lighter tasks by her manager, who assumes she might not be able to handle the physical demands of more labor-intensive work due to her age. Despite Maria expressing that she is fully capable and even eager to take on more challenging tasks, her manager continues to assign her to less strenuous duties.

**Scenario 2 Bias:** The manager is consciously biased based on age, assuming that Maria's seniority automatically equates to reduced physical capability.

*Impact: This bias may lead to Maria feeling undervalued and underutilized, affecting her job satisfaction and potentially the team's morale. It also denies Maria the opportunity to contribute fully and demonstrate her abilities.*

## Where is the Bias?

### Scenario 3

For the last 20 years, a manager has supervised a hardworking line worker who, as a meat cook, has continually prepared high-quality, appealing lunch meals. The manager believes that no one else can consistently do the job as well. When another employee asked to prepare meals, the manager declined.

**Scenario 3 Bias:** The manager is biased towards maintaining the current performance, believing that only the long-term employee can perform to the required standard. This bias leads to the assumption that no other employee can match the quality and consistency of the meals prepared by the experienced worker, despite no evidence that others are incapable.

*Impact: The manager's bias can lead to frustration and decreased job satisfaction for employees who are eager to learn and take on new responsibilities but are denied the opportunity. Additionally, other employees may feel undervalued or underutilized, leading to a decline in team morale and potentially causing resentment towards the manager or the favored employee.*



Implicit biases are attitudes and beliefs we are unaware of or unclear of their origins, but they can negatively affect us and our interactions with other people. Implicit or unconscious biases are harder to address. Everyone has these biases, so it is important to recognize any you may have and how they could negatively impact others or could likely be civil rights/legal concerns. Here are some examples:

- Recent studies show that tall men are more likely to be hired to top positions than shorter men with the same qualifications.
- A supervisor is more likely to give a woman time off for child care than a man who also requires time off.
- Some managers will not consider hiring overweight people because they may assume they are “lazy, sloppy, and will not work hard.”
- As a child, my neighbor Bob constantly picked on me. Now that I am a manager, I do not hire anyone named Bob.
- A school nutrition manager has a staff of mostly new employees except for two experienced employees. When experienced employees offer suggestions, the manager is always inclined to listen. However, when a new employee gives suggestions, the manager ignores them.

### Activity: *Ways to Counter Unconscious Bias as an Individual* handout

**Materials:** *Ways to Counter Unconscious Bias as an Individual* handout, pencil or pen for each participant

**Time:** 5-minute group discussion

**Instructions:**

1. This handout identifies ways to counter unconscious bias as an individual.
2. Circle two tips you find most useful or have had success using in interactions with others.

## Ways to Counter Unconscious Bias as an Individual

1. **Acknowledge the Bias:** it's important to become aware of your unconscious biases and work towards change. Awareness is the first step in recognizing and addressing bias.
2. **Educate Yourself:** To become aware of your unconscious biases, learn about different types of unconscious biases and how they can influence decisions and behavior.
3. **Practice Mindful Decision-Making:** Biases often influence decisions made under pressure. Regular mindfulness practice can help you become more aware of your thought patterns and emotional responses.
4. **Let Others Challenge Your Assumptions:** Our view of ourselves is made up of our life experiences and the lessons we learn along the way. When someone challenges these long-held beliefs and values, listen with the intent of learning something new.
5. **Seek Various Perspectives:** reach out to various groups of peers to understand how they perceive you and what you can do better. The experience can broaden your mindset and encourage you to become more aware of different perspectives.
6. **Be Open to Feedback:** Remind yourself that honest feedback will help you grow and develop self-awareness. Pay attention to your immediate reaction and approach the situation from a place of curiosity and positive intent.
7. **Be Supportive by Speaking Out:** Hold yourself and others accountable against bias and advocate for fairness.
8. **Commit to Ongoing Learning:** Attend workshops, read books, or participate in training sessions focused on adopting positive and supportive perspectives when working with others.

Adapted from: <https://hbr.org/are-you-aware-of-your-biases>



**Objective**  
4

Identify at least three strategies for fostering a positive and supportive workplace for all staff.

A positive and supportive workplace is one that values and celebrates the individual strengths and skills of all employees. By creating a strong commitment to inclusion, you're promoting an environment that encourages staff to uphold shared standards while being appreciated for their unique contributions.

Why do you think promoting a positive and supportive workplace is important?

**Activity: *Fostering a Positive and Supportive Workplace for Staff***

**Material:** *Fostering a Positive and Supportive Workplace for Staff* handout

**Time:** 5–7 minute discussion

**Instructions:**

1. Think about how you can contribute to promoting a more positive and supportive environment at work.
2. As a group, discuss strategies for fostering an inclusive work culture that values and respects individual differences.
3. Think about how you can contribute to promoting a more inclusive work culture among your team.
4. Stand if you have already implemented some of the strategies in your program and share any successes or lessons learned.

By applying these strategies, you can help create a more open, respectful, and unified work environment where individual strengths and skills are accepted and valued. As you work to implement these practices, consider the unique needs of your staff and how these strategies can be tailored to best support them.

# Fostering a Positive and Supportive Workplace

## 1. Engage in Ongoing Learning Opportunities.

- Take advantage of training sessions or workshops offered to broaden your understanding of different perspectives.
- Establish a committee, such as an employee resource group, which highlights and celebrates staff individual differences.

## 2. Ensure Voices Are Heard Across All Levels.

As a manager, create safe spaces for employees to express their thoughts, whether through anonymous feedback systems or facilitated group discussions. Actively listen to the concerns and suggestions of all staff and respond with genuine consideration.

## 3. Support New Hires.

Providing guidance and support to new hires is a critical role as a leader. Answering questions and helping them connect with their coworkers can make them feel welcomed and confident in their new position.

## 4. Allow Your Staff to Share Ideas for Broader Perspectives.

- Consider how your staff input can enhance accessibility and fairness for all employees. There is always room for improving existing practices and policies.
- Seek your staff's insight by implementing a suggestion box to gather their feedback for innovative ideas.

## 5. Acknowledge and Celebrate Staff's Strengths.

Recognize the unique skills and experiences of every staff member. Acknowledging their strengths and successes by expressing your appreciation for their contributions in meetings or on the program website.

Adapted from: <https://hbr.org/are-you-aware-of-your-biases>





## Lesson 2: Managing Conflict Effectively

Time	Topic	Activity	Materials
3 minutes	Introduction to lesson		
<b>Objective: Explain at least three reasons conflict can arise in the workplace.</b>			
5 minutes	Common Reasons for Conflict	Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Recognize the impact attitude has on conflict management styles using an established conflict resolution framework.</b>			
30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive vs. Negative Attitude</li> <li>Influence on Conflict Management Style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Five Conflict Modes handout</li> <li>Conflict Management Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Recall conflict management strategies to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions.</b>			
20 minutes	Achieving Mutually Satisfactory Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive Conflict Management Strategies handout</li> <li>Win-Win Results Scenarios handout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Demonstrate effective communication techniques to address conflicts among team members.</b>			
20 minutes	Effective Communication Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responding to Conflict Role Play</li> <li>Conflict Response Checklist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>78 minutes (1 hour 18 minutes)</b>			



## Lesson 2: Managing Conflict Effectively

In this lesson, we'll focus on strategies that are essential for managing and preventing conflict to establish a respectful work environment. Conflict stems from disagreements, misunderstandings, and tension caused by differing opinions, preferences, and needs in the workplace. Conflict occurs when unique personalities, experiences, knowledge, and skills are represented. As a leader, it is crucial to effectively minimize disagreements and conflicts by modeling positive attitudes and behaviors, along with valuing individual differences, challenging biases and stereotypes, and communicating effectively with staff.

Resolving conflict involves understanding the root causes of those disagreements. By applying conflict management strategies, like tips for de-escalating tense situations, and effective communication techniques, like actively listening to different perspectives, you can reach mutually satisfactory resolutions that lead to positive outcomes. Mastering these skills benefits the entire team and prevents the same conflict from happening again.

### Objective 1

Explain at least three reasons conflict can arise in the workplace.

### Common Reasons for Conflict

It's essential to proactively address underlying causes of conflict to prevent escalation and foster a positive work environment that promotes respect, collaboration, and mutual understanding.

Some common reasons conflicts can arise are:

- **Communication Issues**—misunderstandings, poor communication, or lack of clarity in instructions can lead to conflicts among team members.
- **Differences in Personalities or Work Style**—varied personalities, working preferences, or approaches to tasks may clash, causing tension and conflict within the team.
- **Interpersonal Conflicts**—personal differences or unresolved issues between coworkers can escalate into workplace conflicts.
- **Competition for Resources**—involves disputes or competition over limited resources, equipment, or workspaces.
- **Varied Individual Differences**—inherited backgrounds and experiences, values, or perspectives may lead to misunderstandings or conflicts in workplace dynamics.
- **Leadership or Management Issues**—poor leadership, lack of direction, or ineffective management practices can contribute to conflicts among team members.
- **External Factors**—personal responsibilities and pressures, industry changes, and other external issues may impact job performance or increase stress levels, leading to conflicts.

Despite how conflict has been managed in the past, identifying and addressing potential sources of conflict before they escalate involves maintaining positive behavior and attitudes constructively in the workplace.

### Objective 2

Recognize the impact attitude has on conflict management styles using an established conflict resolution framework.

### Positive vs. Negative Attitude

Attitude is the overall way a person thinks or feels about someone or something and relates to the outside world. Our attitude greatly impacts how we manage emotions during a conflict, affecting how we interpret and respond to challenges.



We can always choose how we respond. Attitude affects how we communicate during conflict and how it is handled. A positive attitude fosters openness, collaboration, and empathy, while a negative attitude can lead to defensiveness or avoidance. When you experience situations that shift your attitude toward the negative, be willing to acknowledge the problem as an opportunity to regain a positive outlook. A leader's positive attitude can set a constructive tone by encouraging the team to approach conflicts calmly.

## **Influence on Conflict Management Style**

Different approaches to handling conflict have been studied in the literature. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), developed by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph J. Kilmann in the 1970s, is a widely used assessment tool designed to identify conflict-handling modes. The Five Conflict-Handling Modes represent a different approach to managing conflict based on assertiveness, the attempt to satisfy one's own concerns; and cooperativeness, the attempt to satisfy others' concerns.

### **Activity: *The Five Conflict Modes***

**Materials:** *The Five Conflict Modes* handout

**Time:** 5-7-minute discussion

**Instructions:**

1. Review the five Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes, representing a different approach to managing conflict.
2. Read aloud and discuss each mode with the group.
3. Encourage participants to share any thoughts on the conflict management modes and which one resonates with them the most.

# The Five Conflict Modes

## **Collaborative (High Assertiveness, High Cooperativeness)**

In this conflict management style, all parties are brought together to find a win-win solution that satisfies everyone's needs. This mode requires both assertiveness and cooperativeness and is accepted as the best outcome as it aims to integrate solutions for all parties involved.

## **Competitive (High Assertiveness, Low Cooperativeness)**

In this conflict management style, the conflict is resolved, but the solution is typically one-sided. This mode is utilized by someone who prioritizes their own needs and desires over those of others. It is an assertive approach and does not promote unity and team building.

## **Compromise (Moderate Assertiveness, Moderate Cooperativeness)**

In this conflict management style, a moderate level of both assertiveness and cooperativeness is reflected, which results in each party giving up something to reach an agreement. This mode involves finding a middle ground where neither party will be fully satisfied with the outcome.

## **Avoidance (Low Assertiveness, Low Cooperativeness)**

In this conflict management style, the conflict is ignored and is not addressed directly or postponed. This mode involves retreating from the situation temporarily to de-escalate tension, but a resolution should eventually be found before the conflict festers into a losing situation for all parties.

## **Accommodative (Low Assertiveness, High Cooperativeness)**

In this conflict management style, the needs of others are prioritized over another, where the solution is made to satisfy one over all parties. This mode is utilized when an individual is being cooperative but unassertive, often yielding to others to maintain harmony.

Source: [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470432/#\\_article-19840\\_s3](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470432/#_article-19840_s3)



## Conflict Management Assessment

Understanding your default conflict mode allows you to recognize when different approaches might be more effective, encouraging the development of a more flexible and adaptive conflict management style. This awareness can help tailor management approaches to bring together a wide range of experiences, perspectives, and communication strategies for problem-solving. However, if these differences are not recognized or respected, they can lead to misunderstandings, communication barriers, and escalated conflict. This is where leadership and effective management become crucial.

### Activity: *Conflict Management Assessment* worksheet

**Materials:** *Conflict Management Assessment* worksheet, *Conflict Management Assessment Scoring* worksheet, pencil or pen for each participant

**Time:** 15 minutes, 5-minute discussion

#### **Instructions:**

1. Work individually to complete the *Conflict Management Assessment* in your Participant's Workbook. This assessment is designed to help you think about the way you approach conflict.
2. Answer the statements based on your initial instinct. There are no right or wrong answers.
3. After answering all the statements, total your scores for each column. The highest score represents your most preferred conflict style. There may be more than one column that receives an equally high score; this is not unusual

## Conflict Management Assessment

**Directions:** Answer the statements based on your initial instinct. There are no right or wrong answers.

Section 1: Rate your response as 5 (always), 3 (sometimes), or 1 (never).	A	B	C	D	E
<b>When I become aware of a conflict, I...</b>					
Figure out how to accomplish what others want.					
Take care of the feelings of others by keeping unpleasant thoughts to myself.					
Focus on understanding everyone's needs in full and honest detail.					
Plan how to use my knowledge to get the group the best outcome.					
See a middle ground for resolution.					
<b>When my staff is involved in a conflict, I...</b>					
Prioritize the others' points of view.					
Do not bring up the conflict.					
Share my honest perspective and listen to others' honest perspectives.					
Pursue my own perspective.					
Use "give and take" to reach an agreement.					
<b>Section 2: Rate your response as 5 (agree), 3 (neutral), or 1 (disagree).</b>					
<b>When conflict comes up, I am most comfortable when I can...</b>					
Satisfy the wishes and expectations of others.					
Keep the conflict to myself.					
Take as much time that is needed to find a good solution for everyone.					
Focus on strategy so others see how my idea helps solve the problem.					
Find a middle course to manage a situation without a win-win solution.					
<b>From my past conflicts, I was most satisfied when I was able to...</b>					
Focus on what I could give up so others' needs were met.					
Avoid unpleasant exchanges with others.					
Exchange information so the group could develop a joint solution.					
Use my expertise to move forward with the best solution.					
Propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.					
<b>I am most comfortable in a conflict when I can...</b>					
Prioritize the suggestions of others.					
Wait to confront others about the conflict until the time is right.					
Integrate my and others' preferences for a joint solution.					
Feel my perspective is valued and leads the decision making.					
Negotiate with others to reach a compromise.					

Adopted from: [https://students.gwu.edu/cesa/Conflict\\_Style\\_Reflection\\_Sanction](https://students.gwu.edu/cesa/Conflict_Style_Reflection_Sanction)

## Conflict Management Assessment Scoring Key

**Instructions:** After rating all the statements, total your scores for each column. Your highest score represents your most preferred conflict style. You may have more than one column that received an equally high score; this is not unusual. Refer to the

Total =					
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>

The columns correspond with the following conflict styles. Refer to the Five Conflict Modes handout for a summary of each conflict-handling style.

A = Accommodation  
B = Avoidance  
C = Collaboration  
D = Competition  
E = Compromise

## Conflict Management Assessment Discussion

- What are your thoughts about your results?
- Do your results reflect the way you handle conflict?
- Do you have any equal scores indicating your use of multiple conflict-managing styles equally?
- How will your results influence how you handle conflict in the future?
- How might your personality traits affect the conflict mode you naturally lean toward?

A positive attitude can benefit each step of the conflict resolution process. When you approach conflict proactively and positively, you are more likely to recognize the conflict, preventing escalation. Instead of avoiding or denying the existence of a conflict, act by intervening early to prevent misunderstandings from growing into larger disputes.

### Objective 3

Recall conflict management strategies to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions.

## Achieving Mutually Satisfactory Solutions

A positive attitude can benefit each step of the conflict resolution process. When you approach conflict proactively and positively, you are more likely to recognize the conflict, preventing escalation. Instead of avoiding or denying the existence of a conflict, act by intervening early to prevent misunderstandings from growing into larger disputes. The goal of conflict management is to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions. The steps to managing conflict can be simplified using these actions:

- Set rules for respectful conversations before discussing conflict.
- Ask all involved to acknowledge that they have set aside preconceived opinions about each other.
- Ensure all involved engage in active listening without interruption.
- If necessary, ask all involved to write out the main problem, then say the problem out loud to ensure everyone understands the main misunderstandings.
- Have everyone write a solution, then share it with all involved.
- Discuss the positive and negative aspects of each proposed solution, and decide which solution mutually satisfies all involved.

**Activity: *Positive Conflict Management Strategies* handout**

**Purpose:** Review the *Positive Conflict Management Strategies* and the impact of positive attitudes on reaching mutually satisfactory solutions.

**Materials:** *Positive Conflict Management Strategies* handout

**Time:** 5 minute discussion

**Instructions:**

1. Review the *Positive Conflict Management Strategies* in your Participant's Workbook.
2. Discuss the impact of positive attitudes on reaching mutually satisfactory solutions.
3. Share your thoughts on the positive conflict management strategies discussed.

## Positive Conflict Management Strategies

Action	Strategy
Acknowledge the Conflict	A proactive attitude helps in acknowledging the conflict early, preventing escalation. This early acknowledgment allows for a more controlled and thoughtful approach to conflict resolution, where emotions are managed, and the focus is on finding a solution rather than letting the conflict fester.
Discuss with an Open Mind	A positive, non-judgmental attitude fosters open discussions where all parties feel heard and valued. When a conflict approach is open and positive, it creates an environment where everyone can actively listen to each other's perspectives and where honest communication can thrive. This non-judgmental stance helps build trust, as everyone feels respected and valued.
Focus on Interests, Not Positions	A solution-oriented attitude helps to move away from rigid positions and towards understanding underlying interests. Conflict often arises when people become entrenched in their positions. Concentrating on what each individual needs or values, rather than what they initially demand, facilitates a more flexible and creative problem-solving process that satisfies everyone's core interests.
Generate and Evaluate Solutions	Creativity and optimism in attitude lead to more innovative and effective solutions. Optimism helps maintain the belief that a mutually satisfactory solution is achievable, even when the conflict seems complex or challenging. When approaching problem-solving with a can-do mindset, a wider range of possibilities are considered for resolutions.
Agree on a Way Forward	A cooperative attitude ensures that all parties involved accept and implement the agreed solution. When individuals are committed to working together with goodwill, the agreements are more likely upheld to maintain the shared goal. This cooperative approach makes it easier to address future issues as the foundation of trust has already been established.



As we have discussed throughout the lesson, mutually satisfactory solutions foster commitment among staff to maintain shared goals and productivity in the workplace. Recall the *Positive Conflict Management Strategies* handout discussed earlier in the lesson to complete the Achieving Win-Win Results Scenarios activity.

Activity: *Win-Win Results Scenarios* handout

**Materials:** *Win-Win Results Scenarios* handout, *Positive Conflict Management Strategies* handout

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Instructions:**

1. In your small group, read each scenario to determine how to resolve the conflict.
2. Reference the *Positive Conflict Management Strategies* handout for this activity. Divide participants into four groups and assign a scenario to each group.
3. Volunteers will be asked to describe their responses once they have worked through the scenarios.

## Win-Win Results Scenarios

**Directions:** Read each scenario and list at least two effective responses for the situations. You may reference the *Positive Conflict Management Strategies* handout.

### Scenario #1

Sandra is an experienced manager who has been in her position for 24 years. She has been known to be disrespectful and sarcastic to her supervisor and district director. During a recent manager's meeting, the district director instructed all managers to submit a weekly food cost report to the child nutrition office. When Sandra hears this, she angrily responds to the director, "I don't have enough time now to do what is required. What makes you think I have extra time to do one more thing?" The director responded politely, saying, "Sandra, calm down." Sandra stood up abruptly and stormed out of the room. On her way out, she looked toward the director and loudly said, "She doesn't know anything."

### Scenario #2

Larry is a new child nutrition worker. He has extensive experience as an Army cook. Larry believes this experience makes him better than the other kitchen staff members, including the manager, Melody. Recently, Melody asked Larry to prepare the meat/meat alternates for lunch. Larry rudely interrupted her, stating that the USDA recipe for roast beef was unacceptable because it was not the way he prepared it. Melody tells him that he must use the approved recipe. Larry responds in an outspoken manner, "No. I refuse to use that recipe."

### Scenario #3

Harold, a cafeteria line worker, is a natural leader in the kitchen. The other staff members, including the manager, go to him for advice and guidance regarding kitchen matters. During lunch service, Harold told one of the line workers, Stephanie, that he found her very attractive and asked her out on a date. Stephanie told him no and to knock it off; she did not the conversation. Harold then walked by and purposefully brushed his arm against her. She abruptly told him to never do that again. Later, Stephanie reported the incident to the manager.

### Scenario #4

Megan is the manager of a large elementary school cafeteria. One of her best line workers got into a verbal altercation with a newly hired worker over the use of the vertical cutting machine. Both workers were arguing and used profane language where students could hear them. The principal heard about the incident and asked Megan to investigate the incident.

## Win-Win Results Discussion

**Instructions:** After reading your group's scenario, answer the questions below and discuss ideas for resolving the conflict.

1. What was the primary conflict?
2. If you were a part of this team, which conflict mode do you think would be most effective in this situation, and why?
3. Which positive conflict management strategies did you apply, and why?
4. In what ways did your proposed resolution address the needs and interests of all parties involved?

Overall, the goal of conflict management is not just to resolve disputes but to turn potential challenges into opportunities for growth, learning, and stronger team dynamics.

### Objective 4

Demonstrate effective communication techniques to address conflicts among team members.

## Response to Conflict

As a manager, you'll often need to utilize a variety of resolution strategies tailored to the specific nature of the conflict at hand. Each situation may demand a unique approach, but two fundamental communication techniques should consistently be part of your response strategy: open communication and active listening.

**Open communication**—involves creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable and encouraged to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of judgment or retaliation. This means being transparent as a leader and ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

**Active listening**—requires fully concentrating, understanding, and remembering what is being said rather than just passively hearing the message. This technique is crucial in de-escalating conflicts because it helps you understand the underlying issues and respond appropriately.

In addition to adopting these techniques, it's essential to cultivate these habits within your team. Encourage staff to speak openly and listen attentively to one another. By fostering open communication and active listening, you empower your staff to handle conflicts more effectively, creating a respectful and collaborative work environment.

**Activity: Responding to Conflict Role Play****Materials:** *Responding to Conflict Role Play* scripts**Time:** 15 minutes**Instructions:**

1. Volunteers will be asked to role-play each scenario.
2. Think back to the information learned throughout the lesson so far to complete the scenario discussion questions.
3. After each scenario is acted out, work in groups to answer the discussion questions to determine the best response to the conflict.



## Role Play Scenario #1

**Background:** This exchange occurs first thing Monday morning in the kitchen. Jackie, the cafeteria manager, was recently promoted from within.

**Team Member 1:** This employee has been with the organization for many years and is closely associated with another team member. They have a history of forming strong alliances at work.

**Team Member 2:** This employee, also with considerable tenure, believes they should have been promoted to the manager position instead of Jackie.

**Team Member 3:** A newer team member transferred from another location. They often feel targeted by Team Members 1 and 2.

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### Scene:

**Team member 1:** Good morning! Did you have a good weekend?

**Team Member 2:** It was okay, but I'm still upset about not getting the manager position.

**Team Member 1:** I don't understand why Jackie got it either, especially considering how long you've been here.

**Team Member 2:** I suspect someone's been spreading negative things about me. I wouldn't be surprised if it was [Team Member 3] trying to undermine me.

**Team Member 1:** Maybe I should talk to [Team Member 3] and clear this up. We need to make sure they understand and do not spread misinformation.

[Team Member 1 approaches Team Member 3]

**Team Member 1:** I heard you've been saying some things about [Team Member 2]. Is that true?

**Team Member 3:** I haven't said anything about anyone! I'm tired of these accusations and false rumors. I'm going to speak to Jackie about this situation.

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the source of this conflict?
2. If Team Member 3 goes to Jackie with the complaint against Team Members 1 and 2, how should Jackie proceed? Explain.
3. What strategies should be used to resolve the conflict?

## Role Play Scenario #2

**Background:** Toni is the cafeteria manager. There has been ongoing tension between Team Member 1, an experienced line worker, and Team Member 2, a newer employee. Other workers have noticed that Team Member 1 tends to assert herself in a way that makes others uncomfortable.

**Team Member 1:** Often insists on doing things their way and tends to dominate shared workspaces.

**Team Member 2:** Struggles to find their place in the kitchen, particularly when working near Team Member 1.

### Scene:

**Team Member 1:** You're in the spot I always use. I need you to move over so I can get started on my tasks.

**Team Member 2:** The kitchen doesn't have assigned spots. I'm already working on cutting up vegetables for the salads, and I need to finish this before I can move.

**Team Member 1:** I don't have time to wait around. Toni knows I work faster in this area, so you'll have to find another spot.

**Team Member 2:** I'm not moving. We all need to share the space, and I've got work to do here, too. If this continues to be a problem, I think we should talk to Toni about it.

**Team Member 1:** Fine, go ahead and talk to Toni. It won't change anything. He knows how things work around here.

*Team Member 2 walks over to the walk-in refrigerator to get more supplies. Team Member 1, feeling frustrated, moved her cart to where Team Member 2 was working, blocking her space.*

**Team Member 1:** (muttering) If you don't move, I'll just take over the space anyway.

**Team Member 2:** I need this space to finish my task. Blocking me won't solve anything; we must work together. I am going to talk to Toni about all of this.

### Discussion Questions

1. When Toni is told about the Team Members' behavior in the kitchen, how should Toni proceed?
2. Should the same disciplinary action be given equally to both Team Members? Why or why not?
3. How do you believe this incident affected the other team members?

**Activity: *Conflict Response Checklist* worksheet**

**Materials:** *Conflict Response Techniques* worksheet, pencil or pen

**Time:** 3 minutes, 2-minute discussion

**Instructions:**

1. Think about everything that was discussed in the lesson.
2. Read the prompts on the worksheet as a group.
3. Place a checkmark in the corresponding box next to the statements that you feel are the most effective ways to respond to conflict.





## Conflict Response Checklist

**Directions:** The list below are various ways to respond to conflict. Place a checkmark in the corresponding box to indicate whether the response is effective.

Technique	Yes	No
Avoid the person or issue		
Try to understand another point of view		
Try to understand another point of view		
Give in		
Apologize		
Whine/complain to get your way		
Pretend to agree		
Discuss until you come to an agreement		
Work toward a mutual solution		



## Lesson 3: Building and Strengthening Team Productivity

Time	Topic	Activity	Materials
2 minutes	Introduction to lesson		
<b>Objective: Explain how individual differences and perspectives contribute to the team dynamics of the work environment.</b>			
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dynamics of Individual Differences in the Workplace</li> <li>Unproductive Workplace Dynamics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits of Individual Differences in the Workplace handout</li> <li>Individual Differences in the Workplace Reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Identify a team roles theory to assess team contributions in the workplace.</b>			
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team Roles Theories</li> <li>Belbin Nine Team Roles</li> </ul>	Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Identify at least four strategies that can be put into practice to maximize productivity in the workplace.</b>			
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing Clear Objectives</li> <li>Leveraging Strengths</li> <li>Creating Accountability</li> <li>Encouraging Continuous Learning</li> </ul>	Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>Objective: Demonstrate how leveraging shared goals and individual strengths and skills can increase team collaboration and productivity.</b>			
15 minutes	Team Collaboration Shared Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leveraging Shared Goals, Strengths, and Skills Collaborative Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's Workbook</li> <li>Pencil or pen</li> </ul>
<b>57 minutes</b>			



## Lesson 3: Building and Strengthening Team Productivity

Throughout the training, we have gained knowledge on the strategies necessary to recognize and understand individual differences, the value of unique personalities, and how differences can impact the workplace. We discussed how common stereotypes and biases associated with individual differences can impact workplace dynamics. You learned strategies for effectively managing individual differences when conflict arises and how to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions to foster a positive team environment. Now, we will explore how these strategies come together to ultimately enhance team effectiveness and productivity, utilizing the knowledge and skills learned in Lessons 1 and 2.

### Objective 1

Explain how individual differences and perspectives contribute to the team dynamics of the work environment.

### Dynamics of Individual Differences in the Workplace

It's essential to consider how individual differences shape the overall dynamics within the workplace. As you have learned through this course, everyone brings unique traits, values, communication styles, and work experiences to the team. These individual characteristics significantly shape workplace dynamics, which consist of how well your staff collaborate, communicate, and make decisions together, achieving common goals for program success.

When managed effectively, the perspectives and interactions between staff can strengthen teamwork and decision-making processes, leading to a more innovative and productive work environment. As a leader, it is crucial to promote a collaborative atmosphere where your staff's unique contributions to the team are recognized, respected, and valued by their coworkers.

According to a study published in *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, teams that embrace individual differences and foster openness in work environments are 33% more likely to outperform their peers in productivity (Homan et al., 2019). A team characterized by individual differences typically performs better because they benefit from a broader range of ideas and approaches. They offer fresh viewpoints that can lead to creative problem-solving. In contrast, teams that lack individual differences and varied perspectives may rely on similar thought processes and struggle to innovate. This is why cultivating a team environment where individual differences are respected and leveraged is crucial for success. Let's review more benefits of this type of work environment.

#### Activity: *Benefits of Individual Differences in the Workplace* handout

**Materials:** *Benefits of Individual Differences in the Workplace* handout, pencil or pen

**Time:** 5-minute discussion

#### **Instructions:**

1. Review the *Benefits of Individual Differences in the Workplace* handout.
2. As the statements are reviewed, circle the ones that stand out to you.
3. Share your thoughts on the ones you circled.



## Benefits of Individual Differences in the Workplace

1. **Increased Productivity.** Differences in perspectives can inspire and enhance creativity and innovation, which drives productivity.
2. **Greater Outlook and Decision-making Approaches.** Having staff with varied strengths and perspectives means greater exposure to new skills and approaches to decision-making, strengthening retention of experience and know-how.
3. **Effective Teams.** Having clearly defined common goals, roles, and responsibilities ensures a smooth functioning working environment. Prioritizing time to assess each team member's strengths can aid in dividing tasks appropriately. Acknowledge everyone's unique differences, ideas, and feedback regularly.
4. **Increase in Staff Engagement.** Build connections and bridge gaps between staff with varied experiences and complementary strengths, leading to greater team engagement and productivity.
5. **Stronger Talent Pipeline.** Drawing from a broad talent pool allows your program to attract and retain the best talent.
6. **Improved Adaptability.** Individuals find their jobs more meaningful when they feel like they are being heard and seen, increasing their willingness to resolve issues, adapt to changing conditions, and be more

## Unproductive Workplace Dynamics

While individual differences bring many benefits to a workplace, there may be times when certain challenges or unproductive patterns limit the positive impact. This is where leadership and effective management become crucial. It's important to be aware of these unproductive patterns that may arise among staff.

**Unconscious bias:** Assumptions and judgments made about others based on preconceived notions, often without realizing it. Unconscious bias can lead to unfair treatment and prevent team members from fully contributing their ideas and talents. This is an unproductive pattern that can hinder collaboration and challenge productivity.

**Communication barriers:** Communication can sometimes become a challenge due to differences in communication styles. Misunderstandings or lack of communication can arise, potentially leading to conflict and slowed engagement and productivity.

**Groupthink:** When individuals suppress their unique ideas to conform to the group, it limits innovation and optimal decision-making. This can lead to prioritizing a consensus among a particular opinion or decision rather than exploring various perspectives.

**Resistance to Change:** Some team members may struggle to adapt to new ideas or different perspectives. This can lead to a lack of openness and a less flexible team dynamic.

**Inequitable Work Distribution:** Differing work styles may lead to uneven task distribution and some team members being perceived as less competent or reliable, resulting in competitive behaviors and resentment.

### Activity: Individual Differences in the Workplace Reflection

**Materials:** *Benefits of Individual Differences in the Workplace* handout, pencil or pen

**Time:** 5-minute small group discussion

#### **Instructions:**

1. Work with the individuals at your table or assigned group members to review the *Benefits of Individual Differences in the Workplace* handout and share why you circled the ones that stood out to you.
2. Share examples of how individual differences have positively contributed to your workplace dynamics and identify any challenges that have emerged.



## Individual Differences in the Workplace Reflection

**Instructions:** Work in small groups to share your thoughts on the benefits you circled on the *Benefits of Individual Differences* handout. Also, reflect on how individual differences positively contribute to your workplace and any challenges that have emerged. Share your examples and thoughts with the small group.

1. How have individual differences positively impacted your workplace?
2. What challenges have emerged because of individual differences?
3. What strategies can you implement to embrace individual differences better and overcome challenges in your team?

**Objective  
2**

Identify a team roles theory to assess team contributions in the workplace.

## Team Role Theories

To achieve team effectiveness, every leader must know each team member's contributions in the workplace. One of the most effective ways to understand your unique team dynamics is by applying a team roles theory to determine the strengths and weaknesses in how each employee approaches their work. Belbin's Team Roles Theory, a tool that is utilized to support team building, outlines nine different roles that should be fulfilled for developing a high-performing team. It also offers a structured way to evaluate team members' contributions by utilizing their strengths and managing their weaknesses.

The importance of team roles lies in ensuring that all person's strengths are utilized to their full potential while also identifying areas where the team may be lacking certain skills or perspectives. Each of Belbin's roles brings a unique contribution and understanding of how these roles interact, which is key to maintaining balanced, productive team dynamics.

A team does not require nine people to fit each role. Most people prefer to fulfill two or three roles at work, can manage to behave in a few other roles, and prefer not to behave in others. By identifying the preferred roles present within each team member, you can assess potential gaps that could hinder performance and adapt tasks and responsibilities to work efficiently towards shared goals.

## Belbin's Nine Team Roles

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In Belbin's Nine Team Roles, there are three thinking-oriented roles, three people-oriented (social) roles, and three action-oriented roles.

### Thinking-oriented roles

Thinking-oriented roles focus on providing technical expertise and analysis.

- Plants – members who prefer or behave in this role tend to be highly creative and innovative. They often generate new ideas and approaches to solving problems.

*Tip: They may sometimes be so focused on innovation that they overlook practical considerations; ensure their ideas are grounded in feasibility.*

- Monitor Evaluators – members who prefer or behave in this role tend to be logical and objective. They critically assess options and provide impartial judgments.

*Tip: They can be crucial in key decision-making. Utilize their analytical thinking to weigh the pros and cons.*

- Specialists – members who prefer or behave in this role bring in-depth knowledge in a particular area. They are experts in technical or specialized insight.

*Tip: Their narrow focus may limit their involvement in broader team discussions, but they should be encouraged to contribute to team-wide discussions.*

## Social-Oriented Roles

Social-oriented roles bring ideas and people together.

- Resource Investigators – members who prefer or behave in this role excel at exploring new opportunities and building connections. They bring enthusiasm and are great at networking.

*Tip: They may lose interest once the initial excitement wears off, but ensure follow-through by involving a group effort with other roles like completers and implementers.*

- Team Workers – members who prefer or behave in this role are great at promoting cohesion and resolving conflict. They ensure that the team collaborates well and that relationships are maintained.

*Tip: They may avoid confronting tough issues, but they should be encouraged to engage in difficult conversations when necessary.*

- Coordinators – members who prefer or behave in this role are skilled at clarifying team goals and promoting decision-making. They bring people together and guide the team toward a common objective.

*Tip: Ensure they do not dominate discussions and allow all voices to be heard.*

## Action-Oriented Roles

Action-oriented roles focus on areas of improvement, putting ideas into action, and completing tasks.

- Shapers – members who prefer or behave in this role thrive on challenges and are driven to push the team toward improvement. They are dynamic and enjoy overcoming obstacles.

*Tip: Their assertive nature may come off as aggressive or overly demanding at times, but ensure they remain respectful of others' contributions and perspectives.*

- Implementers – members who prefer or behave in this role are practical and excel at turning ideas into actionable tasks. They are reliable and organized, ensuring that plans are executed efficiently.

*Tip: They can sometimes resist untested or unconventional ideas; encourage them to translate creative ideas into workable plans while encouraging them to be open to new approaches.*

- Completer Finishers – members who prefer or behave in this role pay attention to detail and ensure that tasks are completed thoroughly and on time. They often see mistakes that others might overlook.

*Tip: They may become overly focused on perfection, but remind them to balance thoroughness with efficiency.*

Now that you understand the different roles, it's important to see how they come together to create a balanced team. Assessing team roles helps identify any improvement areas and ensures that all necessary perspectives are represented. To better understand how these roles apply to your team, print and complete the Team Roles Observation Evaluation worksheet for each team member when you return to work. The Team Roles Observation Evaluation worksheet can be found in the Appendix section of the Participants Workbook.

**Objective**  
3

Identify at least four strategies that can be put into practice to maximize productivity in the workplace.

## Establishing Clear Objectives

As a manager, it's critical to communicate clear, well-defined goals to staff and highlight a unified purpose that creates alignment across all operational duties, responsibilities, and tasks. For example, the school nutrition team's shared goal might be to streamline meal service or increase student satisfaction. Having this goal allows the team to understand their role in achieving it.

## Leveraging Strengths

Maximizing the use of Belbin's Team Roles Theory can help identify and assign tasks based on the unique strengths of each team member. Once you complete the Team Roles Observation Evaluation worksheet for each team member, refer to their strengths and update team roles as staff develop new knowledge and skills.

## Creating Accountability

Creating a standard for taking accountability encourages each member to remain focused on the shared goals. Regularly observe collaborative efforts and address any misunderstandings early on. When team members have a shared goal, everyone becomes accountable for their individual contributions and the team's success. This establishes a supportive environment where team members help each other succeed and maintain a sense of collective accountability.

## Encouraging Continuous Learning

Be sure to encourage and support professional growth and improvement in areas of weakness among the staff. Offer opportunities for team members to improve their skills and broaden their knowledge, which can increase their productivity and adaptability. It's important to understand that every team member's strengths and weaknesses may change and mature with experience and conscious attention to behavior and skill development, therefore shifting their team roles.

**Objective**  
4

Demonstrate how leveraging shared goals and individual strengths and skills can increase team collaboration and productivity.

## Team Collaboration

Collaboration is essential for productivity in today's fast-paced, team-based work environments. Team collaboration often entails regular communication, coordination of efforts, and shared accountability for outcomes. Collaboration doesn't just happen on its own. Your team needs to be aligned around shared goals and understand how individual strengths contribute to the bigger picture. You have learned throughout the training that your staff has the potential to perform at a high level because of the range of skills, ideas, and experiences they bring to the team. Without a common purpose and shared goals, individual differences can result in competitive behaviors and create unproductive patterns.

Shared goals act as the glue that holds a team together. When everyone is working toward a common mission, it minimizes potential conflicts stemming from different approaches or personal priorities. Teams with shared goals are better able to navigate challenges, make decisions faster, and work more effectively because they are aligned in purpose. To effectively align teams and maximize their potential, implement strategies that build collaboration around shared goals and leverage individual strengths.

## Developing Shared Goals That Are SMART

Develop shared goals that are “SMART” (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound).

- **Specific** – Goals should be simplistically written and clearly define what you are going to do.
- **Measurable** – Goals can be quantified to a determined amount of a specified unit, an indicator of progress.
- **Achievable** – Goals state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources, but may stretch the team.
- **Relevant** – Goals must be ones that you are willing and able to work on and must be based on current or forecasted needs.
- **Time-bound** – Goals should be linked to a time frame that creates a practical sense of urgency.

## Creating a Plan of Action

Consider the following steps when creating an action plan:

- Outline the actions that need to occur to meet the outcomes.
- Identify the team members who will be involved in implementing the actions.
- List indicators of progress.
- Set a date for completing the shared goals.

### Activity: *Leveraging Shared Goals, Strengths, and Skills Collaborative Plan*

**Purpose:** This activity is designed to help managers practice brainstorming goals and assigning roles based on individual strengths and opportunities for collaboration.

**Materials:** *Leveraging Shared Goals, Strengths, and Skills Collaborative Plan* Sample, *Leveraging Shared Goals, Strengths, and Skills Collaborative Plan Template*, pencil or pen

**Time:** 10 minutes

#### **Instructions:**

1. Using the information you have learned, create a collaborative plan using the *Leveraging Shared Goals, Strengths, and Skills Collaborative Plan Template*. A collaborative plan sample is provided to help you create a unique plan for your team.
2. Write out existing shared goals or common goals, including the key topic area and expected outcomes, which are known amongst the team, determine the action steps to meet the goals, identify team members responsible for completing action steps, and identify at least two strategies you can implement to improve collaboration and maximize productivity among the team.
3. When you are back with your team, clarify and discuss the goals together as a team to ensure everyone is on the same page regarding the team's responsibilities and expectations.

As a leader, you can create a more collaborative and dynamic work environment by applying team role theories to leverage the team's unique strengths, create and accomplish shared goals, and implement collaboration strategies to maximize productivity.



## Leveraging Shared Goals, Strengths, and Skills Collaborative Plan Sample

### Topic: Streamline Meal Service

#### Team Roles Observation Evaluation Details:

Each staff member's Team Roles Evaluation details were utilized to align tasks with team strengths and preferred conflict styles. For example, Maria avoids conflict, so she was not placed in a lead role for process change discussions.

- Maria (Coordinator/Conscientious): Scored high on conscientiousness and prefers planning logistics.
- Harry (Shaper/Extrovert): Scored high in extraversion and enjoys driving change and innovation.
- Amanda (Plant/Openness): High in openness and generated ideas for layout improvement.

<b>Expected Outcomes:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Successful implementation of "Grab-and-Go" Meals</li> <li>2. Reduce Wait Times</li> </ol>
<b>Shared Goals (SMART) (Identified by the team as a whole)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve meal service efficiency during lunch by successfully implementing grab-and-go meals.</li> <li>2. Reorganize food prep stations to increase speed without compromising quality.</li> <li>3. Reduced average wait times in the lunch line by 20% in the next 4 weeks.</li> </ol>
<b>Action Steps Required to Meet Goals (team member assignments)</b>	<p>Action 1: Conduct an analysis of current wait times by having staff observe and record waiting times at lunch stations.</p> <p><i>Responsible Team Members: Maria: Data Collection; James: Analysis</i></p> <p>Action 2: Reorganize workstations and test new meal prep workflow to reduce bottlenecks.</p> <p><i>Responsible Team Members: Amanda: lead on workflow design; Debra: support in set up and testing</i></p> <p>Action 3: Implement a Grab-and-Go meal option to decrease the number of students waiting for hot meals.</p> <p><i>Responsible Team Members: Harry: Packaging; Lisa: Logistics</i></p> <p>Action 4: Provide students the opportunity to submit feedback after two weeks of implementing new processes. Have staff encourage students to submit feedback based on the new procedures to monitor effectiveness</p> <p><i>Responsible Team Members: Toni: Encouraging student feedback submissions; Kelsey: Collecting and gathering feedback</i></p>
<b>Indicators of Progress</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduction in average wait time by 5% after the first week of changes.</li> <li>2. Improved satisfaction based on student feedback surveys conducted after the first two weeks.</li> <li>3. Staff efficiency, measured by how quickly they can adjust to the new workflow during peak hours.</li> </ol>
<b>Strategies to Implement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Leverage Individual Strengths/Skills:</b> Assign tasks that match the strengths and skills of individual team members.</li> <li>2. <b>Promote Open Communication:</b> Schedule weekly check-ins to ensure all team members are aware of progress, potential challenges, and opportunities to offer support.</li> </ol>





## Leveraging Shared Goals, Strengths, and Skills Collaborative Plan

### Topic:

<b>Expected Outcomes:</b>	1.  2.
<b>Shared Goals (SMART) (Identified by the team as a whole)</b>	1.  2.  3.
<b>Action Steps Required to Meet Goals (team member assignments)</b>	<b>Action 1:</b> Responsible Team Members:  <b>Action 2:</b> Responsible Team Members:  <b>Action 3:</b> Responsible Team Members:  <b>Action 4:</b> Responsible Team Members:
<b>Indicators of Progress</b>	1.  2.  3.
<b>Strategies to Implement</b>	1.  2.



## Summary and Wrap Up

Time	Topic	Activity	Materials
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training Summary</li><li>• Post-Assessment</li></ul>	Think – Pair – Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participant's Workbook</li><li>• Pencil or pen</li><li>• Smartphone</li></ul>
20 minutes			

## Team Roles Observation Evaluation Instructions

**Instructions:** Place a checkmark in the box next to the statement that indicates the role characteristics of the employee. This tool can be utilized when cross-training staff by pairing staff based on their different strengths to implement, enhance, or improve skills and performance levels.

Here are some examples of how team roles may show up in staff:

- **Shaper:** Suggests streamlining the tray line process to cut 3 minutes of wait time.
- **Team Worker:** Notices when coworkers are overwhelmed and jumps in without being asked.
- **Implementer:** Reorganizes the dry storage area for easier restocking.
- **Plant:** Brainstorms how to market themed lunch days to increase participation.

Encourage managers to observe staff over a week and match behaviors to roles.

## Summary and Wrap Up

Lesson 1 laid the foundation by helping you recognize and appreciate staff personalities, backgrounds, and behavioral tendencies. Staff may come into the workplace with preconceived thoughts about others; challenging and mitigating these biases and stereotypes is crucial. Understanding individual differences is crucial for fostering a positive and supportive workplace.

In Lesson 2, we explored strategies for building on the understanding of individual personalities, by focusing on managing conflicts in the workplace. You learned strategies for addressing conflicts based on various conflict-handling styles and utilizing positive conflict management strategies and communication techniques to help prevent and manage conflicts. This lesson explored various approaches to resolving conflicts constructively and emphasized the importance of maintaining positive behaviors and attitudes during conflict resolution processes. You also were able to role-play and enhance your decision-making skills by deciding the best strategy for resolving conflicts.

In the final lesson, we focused on applying the knowledge and skills gained from the previous lessons to effectively manage team dynamics and enhance productivity. You learned how individual differences and perspectives contribute to team dynamics, promote collaboration as a team, and leverage individual strengths to achieve common goals, creating a cohesive, high-performing team and program success.

This last activity brings our training to a close.

### Activity: Think – Pair – Share

**Purpose:** Reflect on the main learning points gained throughout the training.

**Materials:** Blank sheet in Participant's Workbook, pencil or pen

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Instructions:**

1. For this closing activity, consider three to five points you learned or relearned about understanding and managing individual differences.
2. Pair with another person and share a main point with them and vice versa.
3. Share any main points with the group to elaborate on your discussion.

Thank you for your active participation and attention in the training. Please stay up to date with new training and resources available to download for free by accessing the ICN website ([www.theicn.org](http://www.theicn.org))



## Appendix

### Team Roles Observation Evaluation

**Instructions:** Place a checkmark in the box next to the statement that indicates the role characteristics of the employee.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Top 3 Team Roles

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#### Thinking-Oriented Roles

Plant

	Does this staff critically evaluate the team's plans and point out potential weaknesses?
	How well do they assess new opportunities or ideas brought by others?

Monitor Evaluator

	Are they good at weighing the pros and cons of various solutions?
	How well does this staff assess the long-term implications of decisions and strategies?

Specialist

	Does this staff seek out opportunities to expand their knowledge in areas of specialization?
	Are they relied upon for technical or specialized advice in certain areas?

#### Social-Oriented Roles

Coordinator

	Does this person communicate ideas clearly and effectively to the team?
	Do they contribute creative ideas and solutions?

Team Worker

	Do this staff actively help other team members and facilitate cooperation?
	Do they recognize and support the strengths of others to improve overall team performance?

Resource Investigator

	Does this staff excel at finding new opportunities, contacts, or resources that benefit the team?
	How well do they follow up on leads or ideas to ensure they are fully explored?

**Action-Oriented Roles**Shaper

	Does this staff challenge the team to push beyond their comfort zone and strive for better results?
	How well do they manage pressure or stress during critical project phases?

Implementer

	Do they show attention to detail and persistence when finishing projects?
	How well does this person ensure that tasks are completed to the highest standard?

Completer Finisher

	Does this staff consistently check for errors and ensure tasks are completed to a high standard?
	Is this staff particularly focused on meeting deadlines and ensuring work is completed on time?



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