

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Module No:	BMSK4016
Module Title:	Developing Professional Practice

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DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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1. Introduction

This case study explores the experience of a highly skilled female engineer working in a male-dominated environment. Despite her expertise and dedication, she faced constant bias, exclusion, and skepticism from colleagues. Although she sought mentorship and made significant efforts to prove her capabilities, the persistent challenges created an unwelcoming atmosphere. Ultimately, the lack of inclusivity and recognition led her to leave the company, underscoring the impact of workplace bias on talented professionals. This case highlights the critical need for fostering diversity and inclusion in traditionally male-dominated industries like engineering.

1.1. Case Study Summary

This case study is based on a female engineer called Dr. Parker. She works in a male-dominated environment, she faced significant challenges, including bias and exclusion. Despite being highly skilled, her abilities were often questioned by colleagues, and she struggled to gain the same recognition and respect as her male peers.

She worked hard to prove herself, excelling in her technical expertise and building strong relationships with some team members. She also sought mentors to help her navigate the workplace, but even with their support, the environment remained difficult. The culture often sidelined her contributions, and she faced subtle but persistent bias that made it hard to advance.

After years of working through these challenges, she eventually decided to leave the company. The constant barriers, lack of inclusion, and ongoing bias took a toll on her, and she realized that despite her efforts, the culture was not changing. Her decision to leave reflected the emotional and professional toll that bias can have, even on highly capable individuals, highlighting the need for workplaces to actively promote diversity and inclusion.

2. Self Management

Relevance in the workplace

Evidence suggests that self-management is important in the workplace because it helps you be more responsible and reliable. When you can manage yourself, you don't need someone constantly telling you what to do—you can stay on track with your tasks, meet deadlines, and handle stress or challenges on your own. Employers look for people who can work independently, solve problems, and stay motivated, even when things get tough. Good self-management makes you more productive, helps you build trust with your team, and shows that you can be counted on to get the job done. It also helps you balance your work and personal life better.

Definition

Self-management is your ability to regulate your behaviour's, thoughts, and emotions in a productive way. This means excelling in both personal and professional responsibilities for the benefit of yourself and your team. (Raeburn, A. 2023)

Paraphrase

Self-management is about being in control of your own actions, emotions, and behaviour. It means being able to handle stress, stay focused on your goals, and make responsible choices

without needing someone else to guide you all the time. It's knowing how to stay calm in tough situations, manage your time well, and keep yourself motivated to get things done, even when it's hard.

Case Study

Dr. Parker mentioned that it appeared the completion deadline would be missed. While you are capable of managing yourself effectively, managing others can be more challenging.

She should have kept a record of the promises made, including dates, details, and any communications related to them. This documentation can be helpful in discussions with management. Evaluate how the broken promises affected her work, team morale, and overall productivity. Understanding the implications and articulated her concerns effectively.

Approaching senior management or her direct supervisor to discuss the broken promises and asked for clarification on the situation and any reasons behind the unmet commitments.

3. Accountability

Relevance in the workplace

Accountability in the workplace is crucial because it builds trust, ensures reliability, and helps create a positive work environment. When you're accountable, your team and managers know they can depend on you to complete tasks and follow through on commitments. This strengthens teamwork and makes sure projects run smoothly.

Being accountable also shows maturity and professionalism. It means you take ownership of both your successes and your mistakes. In the workplace, mistakes happen, but when you admit them and actively work to correct them, you build a reputation for being responsible and trustworthy. This can lead to more opportunities, respect from colleagues, and career growth.

Additionally, accountability fosters better communication and problem-solving. When everyone takes responsibility for their role, it's easier to identify what's working, what's not, and how to improve. Overall, it helps create a culture where people feel respected and supported, leading to greater success for both individuals and the organization.

Definition

Accountability is all about being responsible and being present.

We are accountable in so many areas, not only to each other, but to ourselves. Even if no one is watching over your shoulders or your executive travels 90 percent of the time, you must answer to yourself. When you don't follow through – doing your job – the department or group you support could literally fall apart (J. Burge, 2020)

Paraphrase

Accountability means taking responsibility for your actions, decisions, and their outcomes. It's about being reliable and owning up to what you say you'll do. For example, if you agree to work on a group project and say you'll complete a specific part, being accountable means following through with that commitment. If something prevents you from finishing, it's your responsibility to let the group know and either fix the situation or make it right.

It's also about being honest when things don't go as planned and learning from mistakes rather than blaming others. This helps build trust and integrity in both personal and professional relationships.

Case Study

Being accountable for missing a deadline is essential in maintaining professionalism and trust within a team. Dr. Parker should be honest and admit that she missed the deadline without making excuses. Acknowledging the situation demonstrates integrity and responsibility.

Prompt communications to inform your manager or team as soon as you realize the deadline will not be met. Timely communication shows respect for their time and planning. As a team assess the reasons and reflect on contributing factors. She should take time to analyse what led to the missed deadline. This could include workload, time management, unforeseen circumstances, or lack of resources.

Accepting responsibility for your part in the situation, whether it was poor planning, miscommunication. Suggesting preventative measures if appropriate, offer suggestions on how to prevent similar situations in the future, such as adjusting timelines, improving communication, or redistributing workloads.

4. Authenticity

Relevance in the workplace

Authenticity in the workplace is essential as it helps build trust, improves relationships, and creates a more positive environment. When you're authentic, you're being true to yourself—showing who you really are, instead of pretending to be someone else to fit in or impress others. This honesty allows colleagues and managers to trust you because they know what to expect from you.

Being authentic also helps you feel more comfortable at work, leading to better communication and collaboration. When everyone is authentic, the workplace becomes a more inclusive space where people can express their ideas freely, which encourages innovation and teamwork and job satisfaction.

Definition

Authenticity is the quality of being genuine or real. You might question the authenticity of your eccentric uncle's photo of a UFO. The word authenticity is the state of something being authentic, or legitimate and true.

Paraphrase

Authenticity means being true to yourself and showing your real thoughts, feelings, and personality, rather than pretending to be someone you're not. It's about being honest with yourself and others, not hiding your beliefs or values just to fit in or please others. For a young adult, authenticity can mean standing up for what you believe in, expressing your opinions genuinely, and not feeling pressured to conform to others' expectations.

Case Study

Dr. Parker says that she felt invisible to the team. By embracing authenticity in meetings, she could have enhanced her visibility and influence. This shift not only helps you feel more engaged and confident but also fosters a culture where all voices are heard and appreciated.

5. Professional Integrity

Relevance in the workplace

Your ability to maintain professional integrity in the workplace has a powerful impact on your productivity, performance and reputation. Behaving with professional integrity takes practice, strength of character and self-awareness. In this article, we will evaluate why professional integrity is so important in the workplace and share some tips to help you maintain your own integrity and even create a culture of integrity throughout an entire organization. (Indeed, 2020)

Definition

Ability to carry out professional activities in an honest, professional and ethical manner. To engender a climate of trust and fairness in all dealings with students and colleagues within and outside the institution.

Paraphrase

Professional integrity means upholding honesty, strong moral principles, and ethical behavior in the workplace, even when no one is watching. It's about doing the right thing, consistently, and being accountable for your actions. For a young adult, having professional integrity means being reliable, keeping your word, and treating others with respect. This includes being honest about your work, giving credit where it's due, and not cutting corners to achieve personal gains.

Case Study

"I feel like I have a lot to offer if they would just listen" Dr. Parker's statement illustrates a desire for recognition and engagement in the workplace. Professional integrity plays a vital role in addressing this issue by promoting respect, transparency, inclusivity, and open communication. By fostering these principles, organizations can create an environment where all team members feel valued and empowered to contribute their insights and expertise.

6. Personal Unconscious Bias

Relevance in the workplace

Unconscious bias in the workplace is highly relevant because it can impact hiring, promotions, team dynamics, and overall workplace culture. These hidden biases, like affinity bias and gender bias, can lead to unfair treatment or missed opportunities for talented individuals who don't fit certain stereotypes or don't share common backgrounds with decision-makers.

For example, **affinity bias** can result in leaders favouring employees who are similar to them, whether it's in terms of background, interests, or experiences. This limits diversity and innovation because teams end up being less varied in their perspectives. Companies benefit from diverse teams, as they are more creative and better at problem-solving, but unconscious bias can prevent this from happening by unintentionally excluding different voices.

Gender bias is also relevant because it can affect how men and women are treated in the workplace. For instance, assumptions about women being less suited for leadership roles can result in fewer women being promoted, while men might face bias in industries traditionally dominated by women, like nursing or teaching. This not only limits individual growth but also deprives the organization of diverse leadership and skills.

Addressing unconscious bias in the workplace is important because it promotes fairness and equality. When businesses work to recognize and reduce these biases, they create a more inclusive environment where everyone has equal opportunities to succeed, regardless of their gender, background, or other factors. This leads to stronger teamwork, higher employee satisfaction, and better business results

Definition

Unconscious bias is a positive or negative mental attitude towards a person, thing, or group that a person is unaware of having (K. Atkins, 2023)

Paraphrase

Unconscious bias is when we make quick judgments or decisions about people without realizing it. These biases come from stereotypes or experiences that are stored in our brains, often without us even knowing. It's like having hidden thoughts or preferences that influence how we treat others, even if we think we're being fair.

Affinity bias is when we unconsciously prefer people who are similar to us—whether it's because of their background, interests, or personality. For example, if you feel more comfortable working with someone who went to the same school as you or likes the same hobbies, that's affinity bias at work. It makes us more likely to hire, promote, or favour people we feel connected to, even if others are just as qualified.

Gender bias is another type of unconscious bias where we make assumptions about someone based on their gender. For example, assuming that men are better at technical jobs or women are better at caring roles is a form of gender bias. This can lead to unfair treatment, such as women being passed over for leadership roles or men not being considered for certain types of work.

7. Personal Cognitive Bias

Relevance in the workplace

Personal cognitive bias refers to the mental shortcuts or tendencies that influence how we perceive and make decisions. In the workplace, these biases are highly relevant because they affect decision-making, interactions with colleagues, and how we approach problems. Cognitive biases can lead to skewed judgments, which may unintentionally harm both individuals and the organization.

For example, **confirmation bias** happens when we look for information that supports our existing beliefs while ignoring data that contradicts them. In the workplace, this can prevent people from considering new ideas or learning from mistakes because they only seek evidence that confirms what they already think. This can hinder innovation and problem-solving, as new or diverse perspectives are overlooked.

Halo effect (K. Cherry, 24) is another cognitive bias where we let a person's positive trait (like being charismatic) influence our judgment of their entire character or performance. In the workplace, this can lead to favouring someone for promotions or projects based on one good quality while ignoring other, perhaps less favourable, aspects of their work performance. It can prevent managers from making fair and balanced decisions.

Biases like **anchoring** (relying too heavily on the first piece of information received) can also affect decisions, such as salary negotiations, project evaluations, or even hiring. For example, if a manager bases their opinion solely on an initial salary proposal, they may miss the chance to negotiate more fairly later on.

Understanding personal cognitive biases in the workplace is crucial because it helps professionals make more rational and equitable decisions. When organizations take steps to address these biases, they promote fairer treatment, better communication, and more effective problem-solving. This also creates a more inclusive and balanced environment where different perspectives are valued, leading to better overall outcomes for the team or company.

Definition

Cognitive bias is the tendency to act in an irrational way due to our limited ability to process information objectively. It is not always negative, but it can cloud our judgment and affect how clearly we perceive situations, people, or potential risks. (K. Nikolopoulou, 2022)

Paraphrase

Cognitive biases are mental shortcuts that can cloud our thinking and affect how we see the world and interact with others. Understanding these biases can help us make more informed decisions and improve our relationships.

8. Interpersonal Relationships

Relevance in the workplace

Interpersonal relationships (D. Ho, 1998) are highly relevant in the workplace because they affect communication, collaboration, and overall job satisfaction. Strong relationships among colleagues foster a supportive environment, enhance teamwork, and improve problem-solving, leading to increased productivity and morale.

Additionally, positive interpersonal relationships can help in conflict resolution, as individuals who trust each other are more likely to address issues constructively. Overall, healthy workplace relationships contribute significantly to an organization's success and employee retention.

Case Study

Dr. Parker stated in the case study that during October and November team conflict became the norm and the absence of trust stifled communication and relationships within the team.

Within a working environment to ensure good interpersonal relationships require Enhanced Communication, strong interpersonal relationships foster open and honest communication. Team members feel comfortable sharing ideas, giving feedback, and voicing concerns, leading to better collaboration and problem-solving. During any Conflict Resolution working on Healthy interpersonal relationships make it easier to navigate conflicts. When team members

respect each other, they can address disagreements constructively, leading to quick resolutions and stronger relationships.

Definition

Interpersonal relationships refer to the social connections and interactions that occur between individuals. These relationships can take various forms, including friendships, family ties, romantic partnerships, and professional associations. The depth and emotional significance of these connections can differ greatly, influencing not only individual behaviour but also broader social dynamics.

Paraphrase

Interpersonal relationships are the connections between individuals, such as friendships, family ties, and professional interactions, which significantly influence emotional well-being and social behaviour. These relationships are characterized by trust, communication, and mutual respect, playing a vital role in personal happiness and mental health.

9. Conclusion

This case study illustrates the significant challenges faced by a female engineer in a male-dominated environment, highlighting the pervasive issues of bias and exclusion that can undermine the potential of skilled individuals. Despite her dedication and technical expertise, the constant struggle for recognition and respect ultimately led her to make the difficult decision to leave the organization. Her experience serves as a powerful reminder of the emotional and professional toll that an unwelcoming workplace culture can take.

To prevent such scenarios and foster a more inclusive environment, organizations must actively promote diversity and implement strategies that encourage equal opportunities for all employees. By addressing biases, valuing contributions from diverse perspectives, and creating a supportive culture, companies can not only retain top talent but also enhance innovation and collaboration. Ultimately, prioritizing diversity and inclusion is essential for building a thriving workplace where every individual can succeed and feel valued.

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Personal Development Plan

	S	M	A	R	T
	SPECIFIC	MEASUREABLE	ACHIEVEABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-BOUND
Area	Specific Areas to Improve	Specific Actions to make the improvement	Specific Resources needed	How will I know when this is complete?	How long will this take to complete?
Self Management	Meeting deadlines	Set goals to track progress	Consider workloads	Assess progress regularly	Set deadlines based on time and job
	Distractions	Put on DND on Teams and close door	Time alone	Set alarms for 1 hr per day	Until routine set
Personal, Cognitive & Unconscious Bias	Diversity – Picking a friend/known person	Be more aware and make a point of choosing unknown person	New people entering the department	Can measure when onboarding new employees	Ongoing
	Overlooking someone based on past mistakes	Recognize this and ensure feedback from all team members at daily meeting	Request beforehand and explain that feedback from all will be reviewed at meeting	Review after meeting	Daily
Authenticity	Express my opinions	Express during meetings/emails	Minutes/emails	Ongoing	Give a start date and keep diary
	Transparency	Sharing useful information to new members of staff	Can shares links to training & offer advice	Can issue during onboarding	ongoing
Accountability	Accountable for my performance	Set daily goals	Give time restraints	Review during appraisal	Appraisals every 6 months
	Completing commitments	Updating the PDCA with weekly activities	Weekly	Next meeting	Each week
Professional Integrity	Speaking up when witnessing unethical behaviour	Speak to the person involved to see if they are comfortable with me speaking up	Being tactful	Speak to the people involved	Instantly

	Complete professionalism	Training plans	Workshops	Training complete	When training can be set up
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