



Chapter 2: Teamwork



2.1 Introduction



2.1 What is a team?



2.3 Your role in a team



2.4 Management of team workload



2.5 Developing as a team member



2.6 Summary

2.1 Introduction



If you did a search online for key skills required by lawyers, you would find that teamwork appears in every list, and is often the first skill on the list.

Law firms are made up by groups of people, working as a team to achieve the required results (and, as you will find out later in the module, will include people from a wide range of functions within the firm, and not just lawyers). Therefore, you need to know how to be an effective team member.



Complete the content above before moving on.

2.1 What is a team?

We are going to start by thinking about the **difference between groups and teams**. While in our everyday lives we might use these terms interchangeably when talking to others, they do have specific meanings.

A running group

Put simply, a group consists of people who have something in common, but are working individually and are only accountable to themselves.

For example, you might be part of a running group who want to run 5km in under 30 minutes. While the runners might encourage and support one another, each is focussed on their own technique and timings, and if not all runners meet the goal, it doesn't affect anyone else.

Teams share a common goal and work together to achieve that goal. The team as a whole is responsible for success or failure, meaning they have 'collective accountability'.

You might think of your team as being the people you work with on a day-to-day basis within your department. This is known as a 'functional team', but there are many other different types of teams that you might work with. You might get asked to work with people across different departments

(‘interworking’ or ‘cross-functional team’) or be part of a team working on a specific project (project team). In emergency situations, where something needs to be solved and done rapidly, you might get pulled onto a ‘task force team’.

A team at a law firm



Reflect

- What types of teams have you been involved in?
- Have you been involved in any type of group. How was that different to a team?



Complete the content above before moving on.

2.3 Your role in a team

It's quite likely that you will have different roles in different types of team. The role you have might be influenced by your experience, your specific skills and your place in the hierarchy within your organisation.



Reflect

- What teamworking skills do you already have?
- Are there any areas that you would like to develop? Why not set yourself a SMART objective on developing those skills?

Because teams are collectively responsible for the outcome, this can lead to fears about 'letting the team down'. While it is important that each team member contributes, do not be afraid of asking for help when needed. Teams should work together and support each other in completing the shared goal.

Select each card to learn about dos and don'ts of teamwork.



Dos

- Communicate with your team.
- Explore the options yourself first, and try to identify solutions that you can take to other team members.



Don'ts

- Ignore the problem and hope it will go away.
- Try to solve the problem yourself by working lots of extra hours looking for a solution – this is not productive.



Complete the content above before moving on.

2.4 Management of team workload



We know that teams are collectively responsible for the outcome, so it is important to define who is accountable for individual actions or activities to achieve this outcome.

Having a clear understanding of team priorities will enable effective time planning and transparency of work scheduling. Ask questions to clarify understanding; it is far better to do this as and when they arise, rather than completing the task based on your guesswork.

Regularly update the team on progress and any blockers to completion. It is best to be upfront and deal with these challenges as a team rather than on your own. This may be in the form of regular progress meetings or a shared document you can update with actions.



Complete the content above before moving on.

2.5 Developing as a team member

Becoming an effective team member is a skill you will develop over time. While, like all skills, this will largely come through practice, **you may consider finding a mentor.**

A mentor is a person who supports someone else (the “mentee”) by giving advice and guidance and helping that person grow. Mentors can arise informally, as a result of interaction with someone, or through a formal mentoring programme.



Reflect

- Have you ever acted as a mentor to anyone? What were the benefits of the relationship?

- Is there anyone at work or in your personal life who might be willing to mentor you or who you might like to mentor you. How could you build that relationship?
- In what ways could a mentor be beneficial to you?



Complete the content above before moving on.

2.6 Summary

(1) Groups have something in common, but are working individually and are only accountable to themselves. Teams share a common goal and work together to achieve that goal and have collective accountability.

(2) Teams should work together and support each other in completing the shared goal.

(3) Having a clear understanding of team priorities will enable effective time planning and transparency of work scheduling.

(4) Consider finding a mentor to help you develop your skills.

You have completed Chapter 2.

EXIT