

Building Essential Professional Skills for Workplace Success

Developing Communication, Leadership, Critical Thinking, and Teamwork to
Enhance Employability and Career Growth



Learning Outcomes

1. Identify professional behaviours in face-to-face and digital workplace situations.
2. Communicate professionally and explain how effective communication contributes to workplace success.
3. Apply critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to workplace challenges, using relevant evidence to support decisions.
4. Explain how leadership, teamwork, roles and stakeholder perspectives influence workplace decisions and outcomes.



Learning Outcomes

4. Respond constructively to workplace disagreement using appropriate feedback and communication techniques.
5. Reflect on your own professional skills and identify one practical action for further development.



Would This Come Across as Professional?

Imagine you are working with someone who...

- 1 arrives late, but completes all their work
- 2 disagrees with an idea during a team discussion
- 3 makes a mistake and tells the team straight away
- 4 does not reply to a work message until the next day
- 5 asks for help when they are unsure what to do



Professional or unprofessional?

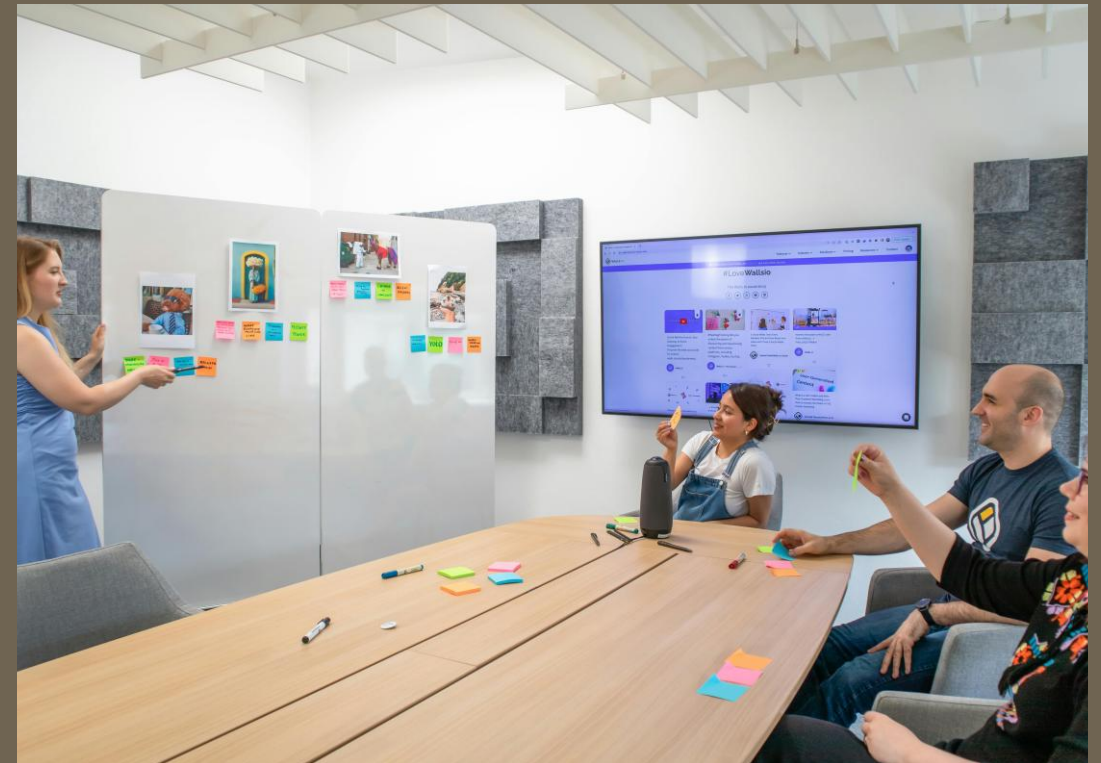


Behaviours That Signal Professionalism

Think about the behaviours that make someone come across as professional.

Consider how they communicate, respond to others, manage responsibilities and conduct themselves in different situations.

Starter Activity: What Makes Someone Highly Professional?



Professional Skills (Why Employers Value Them)



Communication in the workplace

Share information clearly, understand tasks and work effectively with others.



Accountability and taking responsibility

Take ownership of your actions, decisions and the quality of your work.

Professional Skills (Why Employers Value Them)



Reliability and trust

Do what you say you will do, consistently and on time.



Professional conduct, adaptability, and resilience

Respond professionally and positively to change, challenges and setbacks.

Does professionalism only matter when you're face-to-face with someone, or does it apply to how you communicate and behave online too?

Think about emails, messages, online meetings and social media.

Which Email Creates the Better Impression?

Read both messages.
What creates the difference?

A EMAIL A

hi,

just wondering if u
could send me that
thing we spoke
about? need it asap
thanks

B EMAIL B

Hello,

I am just following up
regarding the
information we
discussed. Would you
be able to send this
when convenient?

Many thanks.

What do you notice about the greeting, tone, language and overall impression?

Professional Email Etiquette



Appropriate Greetings and Sign-offs

Start and end emails appropriately to create a polite, professional impression.



Professional Language and Tone

Use clear, respectful language suited to the person and situation.

Professional Email Etiquette



Structure, Clarity, Grammar, and Spelling

Structure emails clearly and check spelling and grammar before sending.



Responding Professionally and Digital Confidentiality

Respond appropriately and protect sensitive information to maintain trust.

Email Examples: Effective vs Poorly Written

Effective email

- Clear structure
- Professional tone
- Correct grammar
- Appropriate subject line

Poorly written email

- Unclear purpose
- Unprofessional tone
- Weak structure
- Avoidable language errors

Email Detective (Group Activity)



Analyse Example Emails

Analyse example emails in small groups



Identify Key Elements

Identify positive features, mistakes, and improvements



Rewrite a Poorly Written Email

Rewrite one poorly written email into a professional version



Discuss Email Impressions

Discuss which email creates a better impression and why

Good Communication Starts Before You Respond

What do you need to think about before deciding what to say or do?

- 1 What do I know?
- 2 What might I be missing?
- 3 Who else might see this differently?

The quality of your response depends on the quality of your thinking.



PAUSE • THINK • RESPOND

Good judgement sits between receiving information and communicating a response.

Put It Into Perspective

WORKPLACE SCENARIO

A customer complains that a colleague was rude to them. Your manager asks what you think should happen.

Are you ready to respond, or do you need to know more?

Discuss briefly with the person next to you.



Before deciding, ask:

- What do I know?
- What might I be missing?
- Who else might see this differently?

Why Communication Matters at Work



Employers Prioritise Communication Skills

Communication skills are consistently identified by employers as key workplace competencies



Email Etiquette and Professionalism

Email etiquette supports professionalism in modern organisations



Impact of Strong Communication

Strong communication improves employability and day-to-day effectiveness

Thinking Critically Before You Act



Evaluate information Before Responding

Strong workplace communication starts with understanding the information available, checking its reliability and identifying what matters.



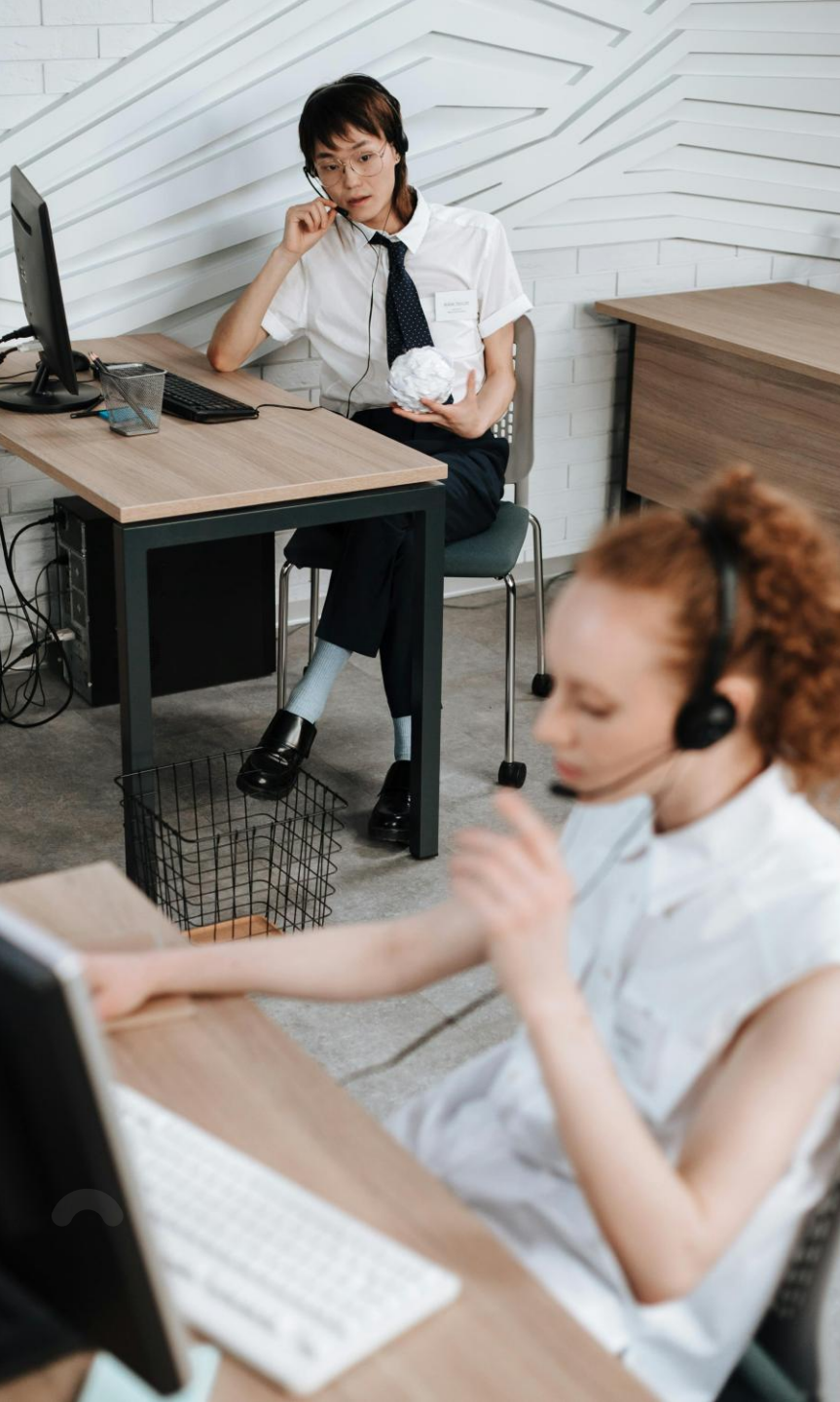
Consider Different Perspectives

Before reaching a conclusion, consider different viewpoints and how they might influence the situation or decision.



Make Informed Decisions

Use the evidence available to reach a reasoned decision and communicate that decision clearly to others.



Using Critical Thinking at Work



Staff Shortages and Missed Deadlines

Assess priorities, consider available resources and decide how to keep work on track.



Customer Complaints and Budget Constraints

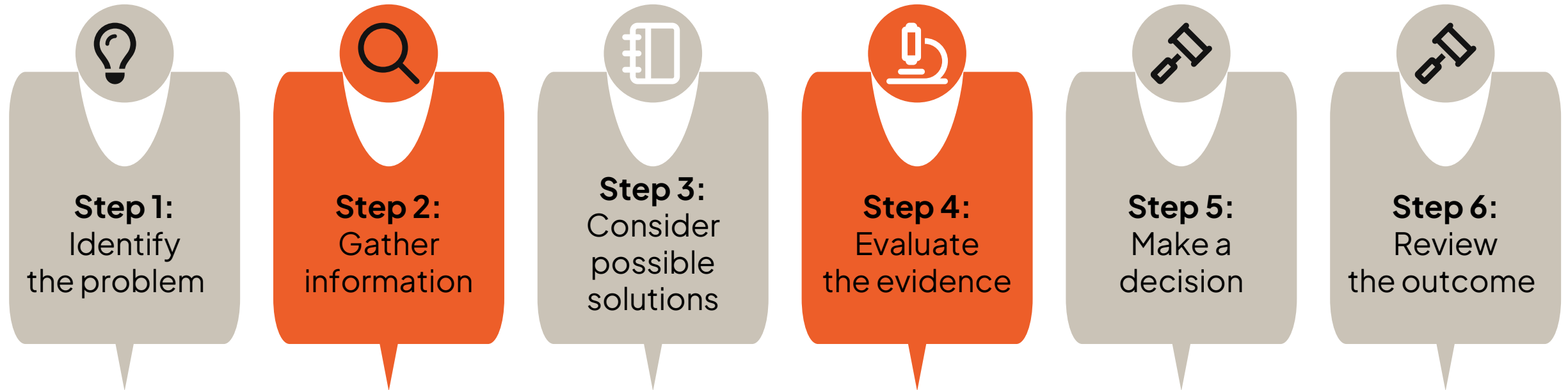
Consider different perspectives, balance competing needs and identify realistic solutions.



Team Disagreements and Workplace Conflicts

Listen to different viewpoints, communicate clearly and find a fair way forward.

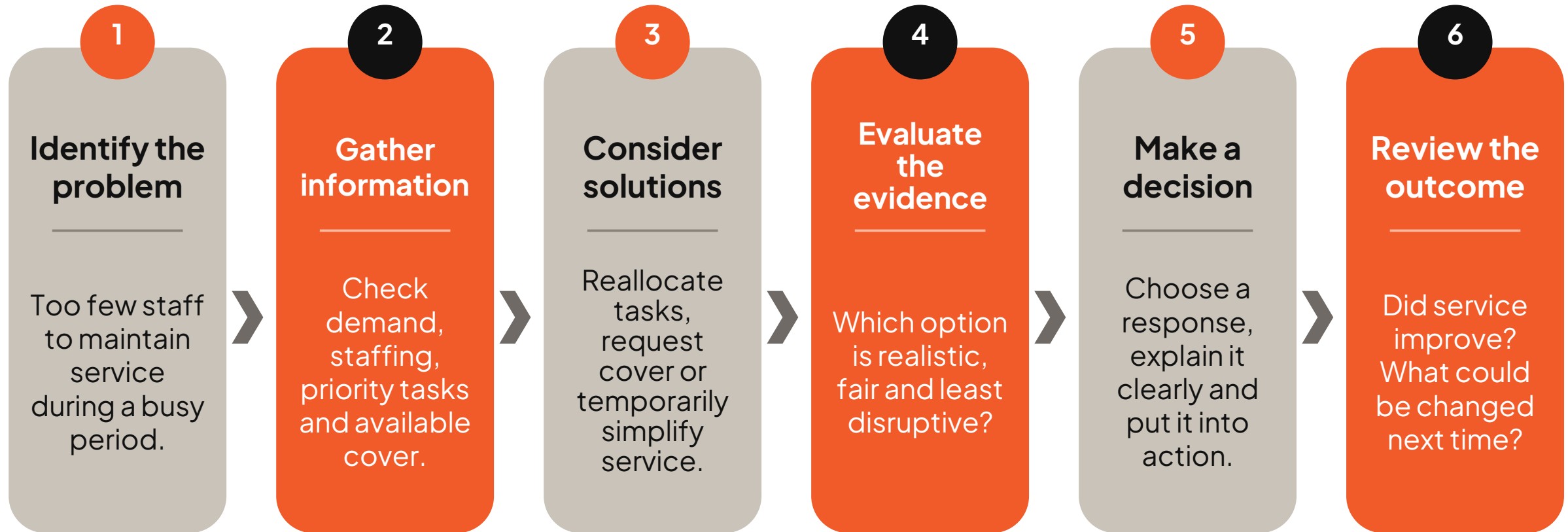
A Framework for Solving Workplace Problems



Putting the Framework into Practice

WORKPLACE EXAMPLE | STAFF SHORTAGE IN A CAFÉ

Two staff members call in sick before a busy lunchtime. Customers are already waiting and the team is falling behind.



The important point: don't jump straight from the problem to a solution. Use information and evidence to decide what is most appropriate.

Using Evidence to Make Better Decisions

Good decisions depend on the quality of the information you use.

GATHER INFORMATION → EVALUATE IT
→ DECIDE

Does having more information
always lead to a better decision?

01

Use Relevant Evidence

Use appropriate information to understand the situation and support your decision.

02

Consider Different Sources and Perspectives

Compare information from different sources to build a clearer picture.

03

Avoid Relying on Assumptions

Use evidence to test assumptions and support fair, logical decisions.

Case Study: Falling Customer Numbers



1. Identify the Problem

What is happening, and what decision needs to be made?



2. Gather Information and Evidence

What does the evidence suggest? What information is missing or uncertain?



3. Consider Solutions and Justify Your Decision

Decide what the café should do first and support your recommendation with evidence.



Leadership and teamwork

- Leadership helps people work towards a shared goal.
- Effective teamwork means communicating clearly, contributing and supporting others to achieve the goal.



Leadership and management

- **Leadership:** guiding, influencing and motivating people towards a goal.
- **Management:** planning, organising and coordinating people and resources.

From Making Decisions to Leading Others





Roles, responsibilities, and teamwork

Clear roles help everyone understand what they are responsible for, how they contribute and who they need to work with.



Understanding stakeholders

Stakeholders are people or groups affected by, or able to influence a decision.

Understanding their different needs and perspectives can help you make an implement better decisions.

Turning Decisions into Action



When Workplace Perspective Differ



Why conflict happens

Different roles, priorities and viewpoints can create disagreement, particularly when communication or responsibilities are unclear.



Respond Constructively

Address issues early using clear, specific and respectful feedback focused on improvement.



Focus on behaviour, not the person

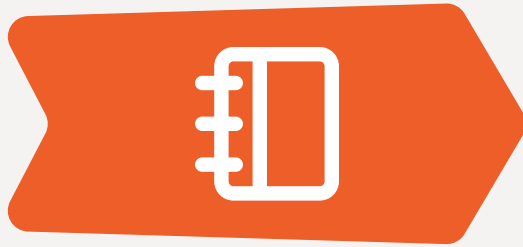
Describe what happened, explain its impact and agree what could be done differently next time.

A Simple Structure for Constructive Feedback



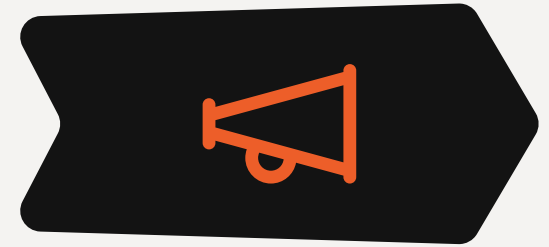
1. Recognise what went well

Identify something specific that was done well.



2. Identify what could improve

Focus on the behaviour or action and explain what could be done differently



3. Agree the way forward

Agree what happens next and offer appropriate support.

What Will You Take Forward?

Choose ONE professional skill from today that you would most like to strengthen.

01 What is the skill?

Identify one area you want to strengthen.

02 Why does it matter?

Think about how it could affect you at work.

03 What will you do next?

Choose one realistic action you can take to improve.

Professional development starts with one purposeful next step.

Take 60 seconds to note your action before you leave.

Reference List

1. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2025) *Evidence-based practice for effective decision-making*. Available at: [CIPD – Evidence-Based Practice](#) (Accessed 22nd August 2026).
2. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2025) *Leadership in the workplace*. Available at: [CIPD – Leadership in the Workplace](#) (Accessed 22nd August 2026).
3. Cottrell, S. (2023) *Critical Thinking Skills: Effective Analysis, Argument and Reflection*. 4th edn. Bloomsbury Academic.
4. De Dreu, C.K.W. and Weingart, L.R. (2003) 'Task versus relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(4), pp. 741–749. DOI: [10.1037/0021-9010.88.4.741](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.4.741)
5. Edmondson, A. (1999) 'Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), pp. 350–383. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999>
6. Kluger, A.N. and DeNisi, A. (1996) 'The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory', *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), pp. 254–284. DOI: [10.1037/0033-2909.119.2.254](https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.119.2.254)
7. Northouse, P.G. (2025) *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 10th edn. Sage.
8. Robbins, S.P. and Judge, T.A. (2024) *Organizational Behavior*. 19th edn. Pearson.

**End of
Lesson Quiz!**

Join at:
vevox.app

ID:
164-793-430



Next Week (Week 6)

Recruitment Documentation and Career Applications



Thank You

**If you have any questions,
please do not hesitate to
get in touch.**

scott.james@uwtsd.ac.uk