

## What are associated non-technical skills?

Associated non-technical skills are mental, social and personal skills that support technical and management skills. They help staff do their work safely and efficiently.

These skills include:

- Situation Awareness (Factsheet 5)
- Decision Making (Factsheet 6)
- Leadership (Factsheet 7)
- Communication (Factsheet 8)
- Teamwork (Factsheet 9)

## What is leadership?

Leadership involves influencing other people to bring them to understand and accept what needs to be done. It is a process of assisting individual and collective efforts to achieve a shared objective.

Leadership is both a specialised role and a process of exerting social influence. Leadership of a team may involve planning, organising, assigning and co-ordinating the team's activities, tasks and resources, maintaining standards, encouraging team work and a positive team environment, monitoring performance, and improving the knowledge, skills and abilities of the team.

Leadership arises from a person's characteristics, behaviour, style, strategies, charisma, skills, knowledge and abilities, all used to influence how team objectives are framed and whether they are achieved.

**For example:** There are formal leaders whose role in the organisation is to lead and there are informal leaders. Informal leaders, through long experience, have earned the respect of their colleagues and provide leadership on a daily basis. Informal leadership is important when emergencies or unexpected events happen and a person with wide experience and skills needs to take charge.

There are four generic elements to leadership:

### 1. Using authority and assertiveness

Leaders should be assertive and use their authority decisively when the situation requires it. They should be assertive about maintaining standards, particularly where safety is concerned, and to make sure work is completed according to plan.

An assertive leader should encourage team members to participate in a challenging and responsive work environment.

### 2. Provide and maintain standards

Leaders should monitor performance and intervene as required to ensure team members comply with essential work standards.

### 3. Plan and prioritise

Leaders should co-ordinate team efforts by communicating plans and goals, while prioritising and delegating tasks to achieve the best results.

#### 4. Manage workloads and resources

Leaders should understand their own, and the team's, workloads and be able to allocate appropriate resources. They should try to control the factors that cause fluctuations in team performance in order to achieve consistent outcomes. High work loads are often the result of unrealistic expectations and under resourcing.

#### Leadership theories

In emergencies, leaders may take on a 'commander' role and must adapt their leadership style to match the rapidly changing situation. This may involve a more directive leadership style, as opposed to the consultative leadership style used for day-to-day work.

**For example:** A leader's style will change when dealing with a fire on site.

Other factors may influence leadership style and performance. These include:

- Organisational culture
- The leader's personality
- Team expertise and expectations
- Operational management structure

Good leadership skills are important for maintaining safety performance. There is a direct relationship between good safety leadership and a positive safety climate and safety compliance in the workplace.

#### Contingency or situational theory

Contingency or situational theory suggests that leadership is not a 'one size fits all' deal. To be effective a leader must adapt their leadership style to suit the situation they find themselves in.

**For example:** A leader must recognise a change in the work environment and change their management style to suit.

#### Style theory

Style theory relates to the styles leaders adopt to achieve their objectives, including authoritarian, democratic or laissez-faire. Authoritarian style involves the leader making all the decisions while democratic style is more participative and involves a shared approach. Laissez-faire involves a more hands-off approach.

**For example:** Where a manager is implementing a procedure or a system, they may take an authoritarian style. Where a manager is trying to solve a problem, they are more likely to take a democratic style. When a manager has a team that is trustworthy and experienced, they may take a laissez-faire style.

A leader focused on production will be concerned about output, cost-effectiveness and profits.

A leader focused on people will promote friendships, help subordinates and give attention to important employee issues.

While no one leadership style guarantees team effectiveness, participative and people-centred leadership is more likely to increase team effectiveness.

#### Transactional theory

Transactional leadership is based on rewards and punishments. The leader states their demands and rewards or punishes people depending on how well they meet the demands. This method of leadership may gain the compliance of team members, but it is unlikely to earn their enthusiasm or commitment.

## Transformational theory

Transformational leadership inspires trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader. Team members are motivated to do more than is expected and required of them.

A transformational leader emphasises the importance of team outcomes and encourages team members to put team and organisational goals ahead of their own interests. This leader promotes responsibility, challenge and personal growth.

**For example:** *The more a manager interact with team members on a personal level, in an informal way, the more respect they earn than if interactions were kept on a formal level.*

## Leadership styles

Leaders can adapt their style when directing individual team members to tasks, based on their willingness and ability. There are four leadership styles:

		Relationship	
		Low	High
Task (direction)	High	Tell	Sell
	Low	Delegate	Participate

### 1. Telling

Is a high task, low relationship behaviour where the leader directs team members and defines roles and goals. This is often used with new staff who are untrained and are unmotivated or unsure of their task. It can also be used with tasks that are repetitive, menial, time-pressured or have short time frames.

### 2. Selling

Is a high task, high relationship behaviour, where the leader may provide some explanation and coaching as workers show more competence and commitment. The leader encourages team members' ownership of their tasks.

### 3. Participating

Is a high relationship, low task behaviour where leaders aim to facilitate and communicate with team members and share team decision making. This leadership behaviour may be used when team members are trained but are unmotivated.

### 4. Delegating

Is a low relationship, low task behaviour where the leader identifies the problems and team members are responsible for responding to them. This is used where team members are trained and very motivated to perform their task.

## Functional leadership

Leadership is considered as social problem-solving that promotes coordinated team performance and helps to define and achieve the team's goals. It involves identifying problems as well as finding and implementing solutions in a constantly changing work environment.

Functional leadership requires a leader to adapt to circumstances and teach team members to depend on each other. A functional leader also promotes team processes that are structured and regulated.

## Leadership training

Leadership training is important both for leaders and the people they lead. The training should improve a person's skills and knowledge and their ability to adapt to circumstances.

Leadership training should include developing knowledge of other team members' roles to coordinate communication and team performance, critical thinking skills and continuous learning. Critical thinking promotes a leader's ability to self assess their performance and examine their own actions.

When learning new leadership skills, people need the chance to observe, learn, practise and receive feedback about their performance.

## Leadership development

Good ideas for leadership development include:

- Successful leadership development needs an influential champion
- Leaders can be found everywhere; leadership development should be encouraged throughout an organisation
- Effective leadership development is tied to specific business goals
- Leadership development can be used to promote the organisation's values and build a strong and consistent culture
- Leadership development is a process not a 'one-off'
- Success in leadership development is more likely with consistent implementation rather than through innovative practices
- Leaders should breed leaders. High performance leaders should help design and deliver the leadership program
- Leadership development is about creating 'entrepreneurial change agents' who provide creative solutions in complex situations
- Leadership development is an investment, and like most investments it may be years before the dividends begin to flow.

## References

- Yukl, G. (2002). *Leadership in organisations* (5th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall International.
- Flin, R., O'Connor, P., & Crichton, M. (2008). *Safety at the sharp end: A guide to non-technical skills*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Mearns, K., Hope, L., Ford, M. & Tetrick, L. (2010). Investment in workforce health: Exploring the implications for workforce safety climate and commitment. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 42, 1445-54
- Salas, E., Burke, C. S., & Stagl, K. C. (2004). Developing teams and team leaders: Strategies and principles. In D. Day, S. Zaccaro & S. M. Halpin (Eds.), *Leader development for transforming organisations. Growing leaders for tomorrow*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing in March 2010. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Industry & Investment NSW or the user's independent adviser.

07/11 OUT11/850

