Module 6 - Effective Communication

In this unit, you will learn about the following topics:

- Communication Styles.
- Conflict in the workplace and management tools.
- Indigenous cultural approaches to decision making.

Module Overview

1. Communication Styles

📖 Understanding Communication Styles

❓ Which of These Statements Represents Assertive Communication Style?

❓ Which of These Statements Represents Passive Communication Style?

❓ Match the Aggressive Communication Style with its Transformative Assertive Style:

2. Conflict Management

📖 Conflict Management and Resolution

❓ Match the Type of Conflict with Its Source

3. Indigenous Consensus and Approach to Decision Making

📖 Indigenous Perspectives on Decision Making

❓ True or False?

How can you integrate self-awareness of your communication style to effectively manage conflicts? Additionally, how can you incorporate Indigenous consensus-building elements into your professional practice?

Communication Styles

Understanding Communication Styles

Communication Styles

Communication style refers to an individual's preferred way of expressing themselves and interacting with others during communication.

In the workplace, there are several common communication styles that individuals may exhibit. It is important to understand these styles to effectively communicate and collaborate with colleagues. The three main communication styles often encountered are:

Assertive

Assertive communicators express their thoughts, feelings, and needs in a direct, honest, and respectful manner. They are confident and clear in their **communication, actively listen** to others, and value win-win solutions. Assertive individuals are able to advocate for themselves and express their opinions without infringing upon the rights of others.

Passive

Passive communicators tend to avoid conflict and prioritize the needs and opinions of others over their own. They often have difficulty expressing their thoughts and emotions, leading to a lack of assertiveness. Passive individuals **may struggle to set boundaries**, voice concerns, or stand up for themselves, which can hinder their ability to effectively communicate.

Aggressive

Aggressive communicators tend to dominate conversations, disregard the opinions of others, and express their thoughts and needs in a confrontational manner. They may use intimidation tactics to control the conversation. Often prioritize their own goals and interests at the expense of others, which can lead to strained relationships and a negative work environment.

Example of Assertive Communication Style:

During a team meeting, an assertive communicator effectively presents their ideas, actively listens to others, and invites diverse perspectives. This encourages collaboration, enhances creativity, and leads to a better outcome.

Example of Passive Communication Style:

A team member with a valuable suggestion remains silent due to fear of judgment. As a result, the team misses out on a valuable insight, potentially impacting the quality of the final product or decision.

Example of Agressive Communication Style:

An aggressive communicator berates a team member for a mistake in front of others, which damages morale, creates a hostile atmosphere, and inhibits open communication and trust.

It's important to note that individuals may also exhibit a combination of these communication styles, depending on the situation or their personal traits. Understanding these styles enables individuals to recognize their own tendencies and adapt their communication approach to different situations and individuals.

Self-Awareness Is to Understand the Impact of Our Own Communication Style

Ask yourself two simple questions: What is your communication style and how it may be perceived?

• By understanding our own communication tendencies, we can take proactive steps towards **enhancing our own skills**. Reflect on your communication style to identify patterns, strengths, and areas of improvement.
• By considering how it is perceived, **we recognize the impact that our words and actions have on others**. Self-awareness fosters a greater understanding of different perspectives, leading to increased tolerance and collaboration.
• By being aware of their communication style, individuals can make deliberate **choices to adapt** their approach to different situations and personalities. For instance, someone who tends to be aggressive can consciously choose to adopt a more assertive and collaborative approach. This adaptability not only helps build better relationships but also **cultivates a positive work environment**.
• The way we communicate greatly influences the quality of our **relationships with colleagues**. Encourage individuals to consider how their communication style impacts trust, respect, and collaboration within a team. By being mindful of their approach, individuals can promote open dialogue, active listening, and constructive feedback, leading to stronger teamwork and better outcomes.

(Tips)

Active Listening Techniques

✓ Give your full attention: focus on the speaker.

✓ Use non-verbal cues: eye contact and facial expression.

✓ Avoid interrupting: practice silence.

✓ Paraphrase and summarize.

✓ Ask open-ended questions.

✓ Control your biases, judgement and assumptions.

✓ Practice patience and reflect on feelings.

Strategies for Adapting Communication Styles

Here are some strategies and techniques individuals can employ to adapt their communication style to different situations and individuals:

Assess the Situation

Evaluate the context, purpose, and desired outcomes of the communication. Consider factors such as the level of formality, urgency, sensitivity, and the cultural or organizational norms.

Adapt Tone and Language

Adjust the tone, language, and level of formality in your communication to align with the situation and the people you are interacting with. Use vocabulary and terminology that is easily understood and considerate of the background and knowledge of the audience.

Listen Actively

Practice active listening by paying full attention to the speaker, maintaining eye contact, avoiding interruptions, and asking clarifying questions. This helps you understand the speaker's perspective and respond appropriately.

Observe Non-verbal Cues

Pay attention to non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Adjust your own non-verbal communication to establish rapport and convey empathy and understanding.

Adapt Communication Channels

Different situations may call for different communication channels. Consider whether face-to-face meetings, phone calls, emails, or video conferences are most appropriate for each situation. Use the channel that best aligns with the needs and preferences of the individuals you are communicating with.

Practice Empathy

Put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to understand their perspective and emotions. Show empathy by acknowledging and validating their feelings and beliefs. This helps build trust and rapport.

Use Active and Effective Questioning

Ask open-ended questions to encourage dialogue, gather information, and uncover the other person's thoughts and needs. This can help you tailor your communication style to address their specific concerns.

Reflect and Adjust

Continuously evaluate and reflect on the effectiveness of your communication. Adjust your style as needed to ensure your message is being understood and received positively.

Seek Feedback

Ask for feedback from others on your communication style. This allows you to identify areas for improvement and adjust for future interactions.

Practice Cultural Sensitivity

Be aware of cultural differences in communication styles, norms, and expectations. Adapt your approach to respect and accommodate diversity, showing appreciation for different perspectives.

Which of These Statements Represents Assertive Communication Style?

True **False**

☐ ☐ "I appreciate your input, but I have a different approach in mind. Let's explore both ideas and find the best possible solution."

☐ ☐ "I think your ideas are okay, but honestly, if you want to impress me, you better step up your game."

☐ ☐ "I respectfully disagree with your suggestion, and I believe we should consider an alternative. Can we discuss the pros and cons of each option before making a final decision?"

☐ ☐ "I don't appreciate you doubting my leadership, your job is to do what I say."

Which of These Statements Represents Passive Communication Style?

True	False	
☐	☐	"I understand that you have a strong preference for this approach, so if it's okay with you, I'm willing to go along with it."
☐	☐	"I don't really have an opinion. I don't care."
☐	☐	"It doesn't matter what I want. I guess we can just do it your way."
☐	☐	"I don't feel strongly either way, so I'm open to your suggestions. What do you think would be the best course of action?"

Match the Aggressive Communication Style with its Transformative Assertive Style:

Match the answers with data below:

a) "I have a different perspective on this matter. I find it challenging to align with your ideas as they seem unrealistic to me."

b) "I feel frustrated when there are misunderstandings and delays. Can we work together to clarify expectations and enhance efficiency?"

c) "I noticed some mistakes in your work. Can we go through them together and find ways to improve?"

"I think you're completely wrong. Your ideas are absolutely ridiculous."	
"Why are you always so incompetent? You can never get anything right."	
"You never understand anything. You waste my time with your incompetency."	

End of Section 1

Conflict Management

Conflict Management and Resolution

Expressing Opinions Respectfully with DESC

For expressing opinions and offering feedback in a respectful manner, you will learn the **DESC technique**, which stands for "**Describe, Express, Specify, and Consequence**".

By following the DESC model, you can effectively articulate your concerns or provide constructive feedback in a respectful and solution-oriented manner. This approach encourages open communication, collaboration, and the potential for positive change.

DESC TECHNIQUE

D

DESCRIBE

Objectively describe the situation or behaviour of concern, stick to the facts and be specific.

E

EXPRESS

Share your feelings or concerns using "I" statements. Be honest and assertive. Use a respectful tone.

S

SPECIFY

Clearly state the expected outcome. Be specific and focus on achievable and actionable solutions.

C

CONSEQUENCE

Discuss the potential positive outcomes or consequences of implementing suggested changes.

EXPRESS ———————————————— RESPECTFULLY

What Is Conflict? Definition, Types and Sources

Conflict refers to a disagreement or clash between two or more parties with differing opinions, interests, or needs.

It can arise from various sources and can be categorized into the following types:

- **Interpersonal conflict**: Conflict between individuals due to differences in personality, values, or communication styles.
- **Intrapersonal conflict**: Conflict within an individual's mind, typically a result of conflicting thoughts, desires, or emotions.
- **Intergroup conflict**: Conflict that occurs between different groups or teams within an organization.
- **Intragroup conflict**: Conflict that arises within a group or team due to differences in goals, roles, or perspectives.

Sources of conflict can include:

- **Miscommunication**: Differences in communication styles, unclear expectations, or misunderstandings.
- **Competition**: When individuals or teams compete for resources, recognition, or power.
- **Difference in values or goals**: Conflicting values, goals, or priorities between individuals or groups.
- **Scarce resources**: When resources are limited or there is a perception of unequal distribution.
- **Personal differences**: Differences in personality traits, attitudes, or personal preferences.

Conflict Management

Conflict management is the process of identifying and addressing conflicts in a constructive and productive way. Steps for conflict resolution typically include:

1. Identifying the conflict: Recognizing and acknowledging that a conflict exists.
2. Understanding the conflict: Digging deeper to understand the root causes, perspectives, and interests of all parties involved.
3. Finding common ground: Identifying shared goals or interests to establish a foundation for resolving the conflict.
4. Generating options: Brainstorming potential solutions or compromises that address the needs and concerns of all parties.
5. Evaluating and selecting solutions: Assessing the feasibility and effectiveness of each option and reaching a mutually agreed-upon solution.
6. Implementing the solution: Putting the chosen solution into action and monitoring its effectiveness.
7. Evaluating outcomes: Reflecting on the resolution process and assessing if the conflict has been fully resolved or if further steps are required.
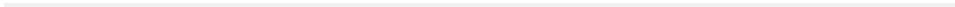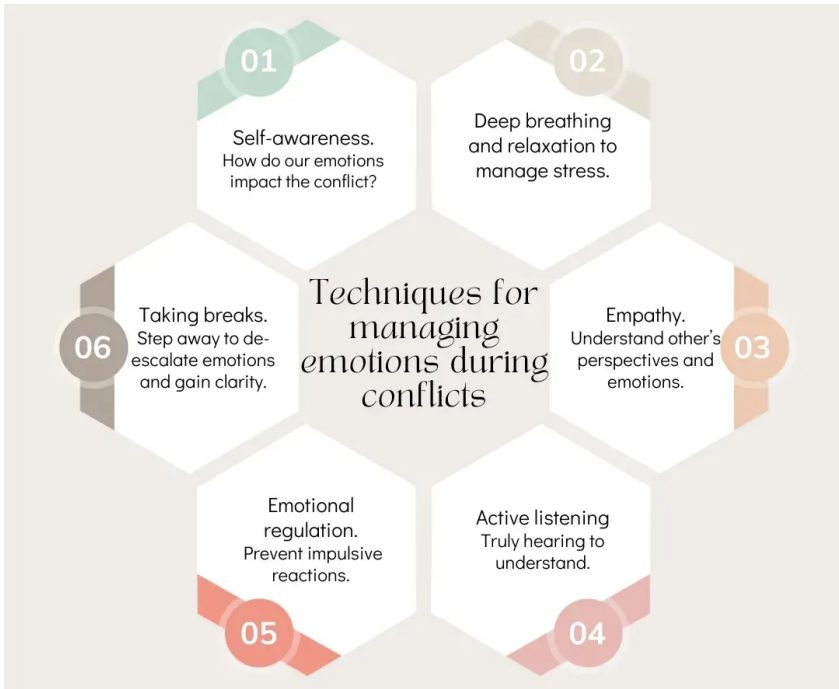
Match the Type of Conflict with Its Source

Match the answers with data below:

a) Two teams within the construction company are vying to secure a major project, and they engage in aggressive tactics to outdo each other, such as undermining or discrediting the other team's proposals. This conflict creates hostility and strain within the workplace.

b) Two colleagues involved in a construction project have different interpretations of the client's requirements and end up proceeding with conflicting approaches. This conflict leads to delays and rework.

c) Two individuals in the construction team have personal conflicts that extend beyond work-related matters. They may have had previous conflicts outside of work that have created animosity between them. This personal animosity affects their ability to cooperate and collaborate, causing disruptions and negativity within the workplace.

d) There is a clash between two co-workers who have contrasting beliefs about sustainable construction practices. One values environmentally friendly methods and materials, while the other prioritizes cost efficiency and quick completion. This conflict lead to disagreements and difficulty in collaborating effectively.

e) A limited supply of materials, such as concrete, on a construction site results in conflicts between different teams attempting to secure the available resources for their respective projects. This scarcity leads to tension as teams compete for access to the critical resources.

Miscommunication	
Competition	
Difference in values	

Scarce resources	

Personal differences	

End of Section 2

Indigenous Consensus and Approach to Decision Making

Indigenous Perspectives on Decision Making

Consensus

Indigenous cultures hold rich and diverse perspectives on decision making, which are deeply rooted in collective wisdom, consensus-building, and respect for other viewpoints. These perspectives emphasize the importance of incorporating Indigenous cultural values and practices into the decision-making process.

In many Indigenous communities, decision making involves collective participation, where input from different community members is valued. The focus is on **reaching a consensus rather than individual opinions**, ensuring that decisions are made by considering the wellbeing of the entire community. This approach recognizes that decisions have long-term consequences and should be made with the interests of future generations in mind.

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Indigenous decision-making processes often prioritize **relationships and interconnectivity**. Respect for diverse viewpoints and the inclusion of marginalized voices are fundamental principles. This approach acknowledges that everyone brings unique knowledge and experiences to the table, and decisions are made by integrating these various perspectives.

Etuaptmumk - Two-Eyed Seeing

One concept that has gained prominence in the context of Indigenous decision making is "two-eyed seeing." Coined by Mi'kmaq Elder **Albert Marshall**, this term refers to the ability to integrate Indigenous Knowledge and Western knowledge systems to develop holistic solutions. It encourages organizations to value and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing alongside mainstream practices. By utilizing two-eyed seeing, decision makers can draw on the strengths of both knowledge systems, leading to more comprehensive and culturally responsive solutions.

Creating an inclusive and culturally responsive decision-making environment requires several key considerations. Firstly, it is crucial to actively involve Indigenous voices in decision-making processes. This may include seeking input from Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members who possess Traditional Knowledge and can provide valuable insights.

"I use the term 'two-eyed seeing' to encourage the transformative potential of embracing both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. It invites us to see the world through the lens of both ancient wisdom and modern science, harmonizing our understanding and fostering a more balanced and holistic approach to life.*"*

Albert Marshall
Mi'kmaq Elder

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In conclusion, embracing an Indigenous cultural approach to decision making involves valuing collective wisdom, consensus-building, and respect for diverse viewpoints. Incorporating Indigenous cultural values and practices, including the concept of two-eyed seeing, can lead to more holistic and culturally responsive decisions. Creating an inclusive decision-making environment includes actively involving Indigenous voices, educating oneself about Indigenous cultures, and establishing mechanisms for ongoing consultation and engagement. By integrating these practices, organizations can work towards collaborative and equitable decision making that respects Indigenous Knowledge and promotes positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

True or False?

True	False	
☐	☐	Indigenous decision-making processes emphasize individualism over the collective voice of the community.
☐	☐	In Indigenous decision-making processes, decisions are often made through a hierarchical structure where a single leader makes the final call.
☐	☐	Indigenous decision-making processes prioritize sustainable practices and stewardship of the environment.
☐	☐	One of the key aspects of Indigenous decision making is consensus-building within the community.

End of Section 3

How can you integrate self-awareness of your communication style to effectively manage conflicts? Additionally, how can you incorporate Indigenous consensus-building elements into your professional practice?

You have reached the end of the Module