Assessing your own performance

What personal qualities do you need to be able to work with others?

Employers expect team members to be able to work together to achieve their goals.

Being a leader means that people are willing to follow you. They choose to follow, they don’t have to be made to head in the direction you want them to go. This can only happen if you have the knowledge and skills you need to perform in your role, and that you are able to behave in the right way. This knowledge and these skills combine together to shape your behaviour—what you actually do and how you do it.

The knowledge you need includes knowledge about the people you lead and the tasks you have to perform. You also need to know about the organisation’s goals, policies and procedures (how tasks should be performed). The skills you need include the skills needed to perform the different tasks you have to perform, and skills in communicating with people, motivating them and recognising what makes them tick. You also need skills in recognising your own strengths and weaknesses. Assessing your own performance is all about being able to recognise what you need to be able to do and knowing how well you actually do it.
Team leaders usually have to do the same sort of work as the people they lead—they are members of their teams as well as being the leader of the other team members. This is probably the hardest kind of leadership role. It makes it really important that you understand what the role is all about and what knowledge and skills you need.

A study done into management and leadership a few years ago identified 12 of the most important features of effective leadership. These are described below.

**What makes a good team leader?**

1. **Communication and social skills**
   Being able to explain things clearly, ask questions, listen well, and be aware of what people really feel (as opposed to what they may say).

2. **Personal drive, sense of purpose and motivation**
   Knowing where you are going, and why, and not needing to be supervised and controlled to make sure you do what is needed.

3. **Dependability, conscientiousness and persistence**
   Being trusted to do things, and not giving up at the first hurdle.

4. **Ability to motivate others**
   Getting other people to do what is needed because they want to, not because they are told to.

5. **Innovation and vision**
   Not being stuck in the past, but welcoming new tasks and new ways of working.

6. **Honesty and integrity**
   Doing what you say you will do, and not doing what you believe is wrong.

7. **Self-confidence, willingness to accept challenges and take risks, emotional maturity**
   Someone people respect and trust, who knows their own capabilities and who is willing to try out new things.

8. **Ability to inspire trust**
   By not letting people down, they learn to believe in what you say.

9. **Intelligence**
   You don’t have to be academic to be interested in what is happening and why, and to be willing to learn and solve problems.

10. **Knowledge about the organisation you work for**
    What its goals are, how it is structured and what is happening across the organisation.

11. **Genuine interest in others and valuing them**
    You care what people think and feel about a situation, and show them the respect and trust you want them to show you.

12. **A team orientation**
    You like working with a team of people.
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Think about the skills in this list and then rate yourself on the self-assessment by circling the correct answer, using the following scale:
1. I am known to be very good at this; other people model themselves on me
2. I am quite good at this but there are ways I could improve
3. I am adequate at this, and do need to get better
4. I am poor at this and really need to improve a lot

Why not ask your manager and members of your team to do the same thing, assessing your skills. Copy this page before you complete the self-assessment and ask them to assess you as well. Later in this session you will find out how useful feedback from others is in assessing your own performance.

How effective are you as a leader?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communication and social skills</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Personal drive, sense of purpose and motivation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Dependability, conscientiousness and persistence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ability to motivate others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Innovation and vision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Honesty and integrity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Self-confidence, willingness to accept challenges and take risks, emotional maturity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Ability to inspire trust</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Knowledge about the organisation you work for</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use this self-assessment to help you plan your own development priorities in the session *Taking responsibility for your own development.*
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Being self-aware

The list on page 2 broadly describes what makes someone an effective team leader. However, knowing what you should be able to do is not the same as being able to do it. Assessing your own performance means:

- Knowing what you should be doing
- Being able to look at your own performance as objectively as possible, and make judgements about it

‘Objectively’ means not being biased by the fact that you want to be good at what you do. This can make you see what you want to see, and miss what you don’t want to see. This is what happens in the case study below.

Case Study

Galena and Mike work at a small bakery. Galena serves customers at the front counter and takes telephone orders. Mike works in the back as a baker. Today there was a communication problem between the two of them. Galena took a telephone order for twelve special strawberry tarts. She walks to the baking area and calls out the order.

Galena: “Mike, a dozen strawberry tarts needed by twelve-thirty.”

Mike: “How many dozen?”

Galena: “Just twelve.”

Mike begins to make the tarts. When he's finished, he boxes them up and brings them out to Galena. To Galena's surprise, Mike has baked twelve dozen strawberry tarts. When she asks Mike about it, Mike loses his temper and tells Galena that she ordered twelve dozen. Galena denies it.

Galena: “Mike, I said 'a dozen strawberry tarts needed by twelve-thirty'.”

Mike: “But I asked you how many dozen and you said ‘twelve’.”

Galena: “I said ‘just twelve’, Mike.”

Mike: “Yes, exactly, ‘just twelve’ dozen!”

Galena: “This is pointless. You can never accept you’ve made a mistake, can you? What are we going to do with all these strawberry tarts? Throw them out?”
Neither Mike nor Galena is willing to admit that they made a mistake. The problem was poor communication, neither of them checking that the order had been passed on correctly. It's an easy mistake to make in a busy organisation, and both people share responsibility for the misunderstanding. Unfortunately, people don’t always recognise their own weaknesses and shift responsibility to others. Leaders accept responsibility for their own performance and for those that they lead. If either Galena or Mike had acknowledged that they might be at fault, it would have been far easier for the other to accept some as well.

If you are going to assess your performance properly you need to be able to accept that you sometimes make mistakes and learn from them. If you don’t you will go on making mistakes.

**How are you expected to perform?**

The skills and behaviours on page 2 are what all leaders need to be able to do. However, most organisations will have a specific list of the tasks you are expected to perform in your **job description**. This is the basis of your contract of employment and says what the job involves. Some employers also have **person specifications**. These say what the person doing the job should be like. This will often describe skills and behaviours like those listed on page 2.

If you are going to be able to assess your performance effectively then you will know what both these say. You will also know what else is expected of you. This may not be written down but is just as important. You should make sure that you know what is written down in your job description (and person specification, if there is one). You should also be prepared to ask your manager and your team what they expect of you. Make sure you are clear about what is expected and how your performance will be judged by others. This should set the standard that you work to and how you judge yourself.

**Case Study**

Susie is the team leader in the bakery where Mike and Galena work. When she comes back from her break she sees the 12 boxes of strawberry tarts and senses the tension in the air. Susie’s job description includes responsibility for making sure that the bakery isn’t left with surplus stock at the end of the day.

*(Continued on page 6)*
She is also responsible for building an effective team and encouraging team members to trust and respect each other. Susie asks both Mike and Galena, separately, what has happened. She then calls them both together when the shop is empty and tells them:

Susie: “I'm sorry about what happened this morning. I should have made sure that we didn't have mistakes like that. When we're all busy, it's too easy to mishear what each other is saying. I'll ask if we can have a small whiteboard put up by the telephone where you can see it from the bakery, Mike. We'll write up all special orders on it so there won't be any more mistakes like this. Do you think that'll work better?”

Galena: “That's a good idea.”

Mike: “Yes, that's much better. Thanks Susie. I know it gets busy in the shop and it can be so noisy in the bakery that it's not surprising we misheard each other this morning.”

Susie could have blamed either Mike or Galena, or both. Instead, she blamed herself for letting the situation occur. Accepting responsibility for other people's mistakes is what being a leader is all about. That's what is meant by honesty and integrity, and it encourages others to accept their responsibility as well. That's why Mike said what he did, admitting that it was down to them mishearing each other, and not solely Galena’s fault, as he said before.

Inviting feedback

One of the best ways of assessing your performance is to get feedback from those you work with. Feedback simply means inviting people to give you their views on how you perform. Many organisations have procedures for giving feedback as part of an appraisal or performance management system. These will often happen at fixed times (one or twice a year, once every quarter). They may involve records being made of what is said and forms being filled in. Performance management systems can also include decisions about bonuses and even promotion or sacking.

Some organisations use a system called 360° feedback. 360° feedback means getting feedback from all around you, including those who manage and lead you, and those you manage and lead. Sometimes this is done using the Internet or an organisation’s Intranet (private ‘Internet’). This allows
Assessing your own performance

people to make their comments anonymously. It also encourages people to be truthful, although it also allows people to make judgements based on whether they like you personally or not.

Whether or not you have a formal appraisal or 360° feedback system, you shouldn’t be afraid to ask for feedback from your team members and your manager. This is particularly the case when you have done something new or difficult, when you most need to review your performance, and possibly develop and improve it.

Asking for feedback is only difficult if you make it difficult. This example shows how it can be done.

Susie invites feedback

Susie has been training Errol, a new employee. After taking him through the basics of serving customers, taking money and using the till, she supervises him for a while, to see how he performs. She then sits down in the office and runs through a few things that he has done well, and areas where he needs to improve. She then says:

Susie: “OK, that’s enough about you. I’m also being trained as a team leader, and I’d like some feedback on how I trained you today. Is that all right?”

Errol: “Yes, sure.” *(He sounds a bit surprised)*

Susie: “I should have started by explaining what we were going to do today, checking you were clear about it, and then taking you through the basics of customer service and payment. Did I make it clear what we were going to do? Did you understand what I went through? Was anything unclear when I let you start serving customers?

Errol: “It all seemed clear, but it was difficult to remember it all when I started.”

Susie: “Did it help having me supervise you? Or did you feel I was checking up on you too much?

Errol: “No, it was OK. I felt a bit uncertain at first. It was nice having you there keeping an eye on me. I could ask for help if I needed it. Like the things I couldn’t remember clearly”

Susie: “Was there anything I could have done differently? Or anything I didn’t do?

Errol: “No—it was all fine.”

Susie: “Good. You certainly picked it up well.”
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Susie asked Errol for feedback by saying what she had intended doing and then asking specific questions about what she did. She didn’t say “What did you think of the training?” or something like that, because that just invites comments like “It was fine”. By asking specific questions she gets feedback that means something.

What does it mean?

If you are prepared to look at your own performance objectively and welcome feedback from others, you still need to be able to use it to improve your performance. This is helped if you are able to reflect on what you have learnt about yourself. Reflection means 'consciously thinking about and analysing what you have done'. Although we all tend to think back over recent experiences from time to time, we don’t often do so consciously. Consciously means asking yourself questions to which you want answers.

For example, if you go to see a film you will decide if you liked it or not. However, that will probably be a very simple and largely unconscious reaction. If you start asking yourself – Was the storyline effective? Were the characters realistic? Did the actors perform well? – then you will arrive at a fuller judgement based on 'consciously thinking about and analysing' what you have seen. That is reflection. To help you reflect, here are some steps you can take to reflect on any experience you have:

- What happened? Simply describe events (to yourself) to make them clearer. Avoid making judgements, just focus on what happened.
- What were you thinking & feeling? How did that affect your behaviour and your reactions to other people.
- What was good and bad? Why do you think that?
- What can you learn from the situation?
- What else could you have done, including doing nothing?
- If it occurs again, what would you do?

This session has looked at what your job involves, how you can collect information on your performance, and how you can reflect on that to assess your performance. But there is no point assessing your own performance unless you are prepared to do something about what you have found. The BS2 session Taking responsibility for your own learning looks at what you can do when you have identified areas in which you need to improve.
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Comprehension Check

Complete the following exercises. Refer back to the session if necessary.

A. List three qualities you need to be a good team leader.
   1. __________________________________________
   2. __________________________________________
   3. __________________________________________

B. List two documents that describe what your employer expects from you.
   1. __________________________________________
   2. __________________________________________

C. Complete each sentence. Circle the letter in front of the answer.
   1. When you act with integrity, you:
      a. do what you say you will do.
      b. blame others.
      c. tell other people what to do.

   2. Feedback:
      a. is information from others about your performance.
      b. is when you have overheard others talking about your performance.
      c. is what your manager writes privately about you in an appraisal.

   3. Feedback from everyone you work with is called:
      a. 24/7 feedback.
      b. 180° feedback.
      c. 360° feedback.

   4. Reflection means:
      a. giving feedback to a team member.
      b. explaining your performance to your manager.
      c. thinking consciously about your performance.
Making Connections

Answer the questions following the case.

Case

Carl works for the Ace Plumbing and Heating Company. He has been working for them for nearly twelve years, having been taken on as a trainee. He came top in his region when he qualified and has also been to his local college for an evening class to gain additional technical qualifications. His manager frequently gives him the more complex jobs to do, and has congratulated him on the quality of his work. He has just been made leader of a team installing the plumbing into a new hotel.

One Friday he is asked to come back to the depot at the end of the day and is rather worried in case he is in trouble. Steve, his manager, takes him into his office and introduces him to Julie. He explains that she has just left school and the company has agreed to take her on as a trainee, and he would like Carl to be responsible for her on-the-job training. Steve asks Carl if he would be happy to take on the extra responsibility. Carl says he would be and tells Julie that it's a great job and he looks forward to working with her. As he leaves, he wonders why Steve has asked him to take on the responsibility, and if he is really capable of training her.

1. What should Carl have done if he wondered why Steve asked him?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. How could reflection help Carl prepare to train Julie?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
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Think and Apply

How well do you use the skills in this session? Think about a time when you have had to work on a task in a small group.

- Did each team member add something to the process?
- Did team members encourage one another?
- Were there disagreements?

1. Read the list of skills. Tick the boxes to show your strengths and weaknesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>strengths &lt;- - - - &gt; weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'm good at this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recognising what is expected of you in your job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accepting responsibility for your own performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asking for and accepting feedback from others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflecting on your own performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Do you want to improve any of these skills?

3. How do you plan to improve the skills you listed in question 2?
   (You might want to discuss this with your line manager or your tutor/mentor/coach.)