

Unit 5: Develop and Maintain Professional Networks

Unit reference number: **J/506/1949**

QCF level: **4**

Credit value: **3**

Guided learning hours: **15**

Unit summary

In this unit, you will learn how to build and maintain relationships through networking by developing effective communication and interpersonal skills. Networking is about making connections and building mutually beneficial relationships. Social networking is very important in today's business world and you need to be aware of how to use it effectively to develop professional networks as well as understanding the risks this can pose in terms of privacy and confidentiality.

Developing network relationships is an important factor for business success and professional development. People do business with those they know and trust. In this unit, you will be able to establish potential business contacts by using a range of different opportunities to seek and find the people, agencies and organisations that can help cultivate networking for mutual benefit.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

To pass this unit, the learner needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria outline the requirements the learner is expected to meet to achieve the unit.

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
1 Understand the principles of effective networking	1.1 Describe the interpersonal skills needed for effective networking 1.2 Explain the basis on which to choose networks to be developed 1.3 Evaluate the role of shared agendas and conflict management in relationship-building 1.4 Evaluate the role of the internet in business networking 1.5 Assess the importance of following up leads and actions 1.6 Analyse ethical issues relating to networking activities

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
2 Be able to identify professional networks for development	<p>2.1 Identify potential networks for professional development from an analysis of their benefits compared with individual needs and aspirations</p> <p>2.2 Shortlist networks for development against defined criteria</p> <p>2.3 Assess the benefits and limitations of joining and maintaining selected network(s)</p>
3 Be able to maintain professional networks	<p>3.1 Identify the potential for mutual benefit with network members</p> <p>3.2 Promote their own skills, knowledge and competence to network members</p> <p>3.3 Provide information, services or support to network members where the potential for mutual benefit has been identified</p> <p>3.4 Establish the boundaries of confidentiality</p> <p>3.5 Agree guidelines for the exchange of information and resources</p> <p>3.6 Take action to ensure that participation in networks reflects current and defined future aspirations and needs</p> <p>3.7 Make introductions to people with common or complementary interest to and within networks</p>

Unit amplification

AC1.1: Describe the interpersonal skills needed for effective networking

- *Networking*: definition, i.e. the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; business networking, i.e. nurturing productive relationships for employment or business; social networking
- *Interpersonal skills*: e.g. communication skills (verbal and non-verbal), creating good first impressions, building rapport, empathy, courtesy, respect, tolerance, personal presentation

AC1.2: Explain the basis on which to choose networks to be developed

- *Choosing networks*: reasons e.g. alignment with personal and career goals, industry connections, organisational goals, technological changes in the industry

AC1.3: Evaluate the role of shared agendas and conflict management in relationship-building

- *Role of shared agendas*: common purpose, shared commitment, diversity of knowledge and ideas, innovation
- *Cause of conflict*: power struggles, professional differences, barriers to communication, e.g. poor listening skills or sharing of information
- *Role of conflict management*: conflict can lead to new ideas and approaches; strengthens relationships; builds trust ; supports emotional awareness and self-management

AC1.4: Evaluate the role of the internet in business networking

- *Global network platforms*: social e.g. Facebook, Twitter; professional, e.g. LinkedIn, Plaxo, Biznik
- *Risks associated with internet networking*: e.g. hacking and posting of threatening online messages, cyber bullying

AC1.5: Assess the importance of following up leads and actions

- *Generating leads*: set achievable goals; know your target audience; practice professional pitch; interact and contribute to group discussions; capture contact information
- *Importance*: e.g. to produce results; builds trust, reputation and relationships

AC1.6: Analyse ethical issues relating to networking activities

- *Ethical issues*: integrity risk, e.g. posts that violates the organisation's ethical policy; irresponsible advertising and marketing practices; employees' rights to privacy and fairness; duty of care, e.g. maintaining personal and professional boundaries

Information for tutors

Suggested resources

Books

Townsend, H. – *FT Guide to Business Networking: How to Use the Power of Online and Offline Networking for Business Success (The FT Guides)* (Financial Times/Prentice Hall, 2011) ISBN 9780273745822

Vermerien, J. – *How to Really Use LinkedIn* (Booksurge Publishing, 2009)
ISBN 9781439229637

Websites

www.gov.uk – the Government services and information website, where practical business advice on networking can be found

www.britishchambers.org.uk – the British Chambers of Commerce website which provides business support and advice on networking

Assessment

To pass this unit the evidence that the learner presents for assessment must demonstrate that they have met the required standard specified in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and the requirements of the Assessment Strategy.

To ensure that the assessment tasks and activities enable learners to produce valid, sufficient, authentic and appropriate evidence that meets the assessment criteria, centres should apply the *Unit Assessment guidance* and the requirements of the Assessment Strategy below.

Wherever possible, centres should adopt a holistic approach to assessing the units in the qualification. This gives the assessment process greater rigour and minimises repetition, time and the burden of assessment on all parties involved in the process.

Unit assessment requirements

This unit must be assessed in the workplace in accordance with the Skills CFA Assessment Strategy for Business Administration, Customer Service and Management and Leadership, in *Annexe A*. Simulation is not allowed for this unit. All evidence of occupational competence should be generated through performance under workplace conditions; this includes evidence of achievement for knowledge-based learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria.

Unit assessment guidance

This guidance supports assessors in making decisions about how best to assess each unit and the evidence needed to meet the assessment requirements of the unit. Centres can adapt the guidance for learners and the particular assessment context, as appropriate.

Evidence to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes 2 and 3 is likely to come from a combination of reviewing the learner's work products, witness testimony and professional discussion or reflective account. The learner's work products could include network analysis documents, reports shortlisting networks for development, detailing the benefits and limitations of chosen networks and records detailing the outcome of establishing boundaries of confidentiality. The work products should be reviewed by the assessor and used to support the professional discussion to evidence the knowledge and understanding underpinning the learner's performance. Within the professional discussion the learner could discuss the criteria used to shortlist networks for development (AC2.2), how they established boundaries of confidentiality and agreed guidelines for the exchange of information and resources (AC3.4 and AC3.5). Alternatively, a reflective account could be used to assess the underpinning knowledge and understanding. Witness testimony from colleagues and the line manager should also be used to confirm that the learner has consistently met the requirements over a period of time, as well as met organisational requirements.

Due to the cognitive demand of the assessment criteria in learning outcome 1, the evidence to confirm achievement would best come from a reflective account. If a reflective account is used for learning outcomes 2 and 3, it would be best to integrate the assessment of this learning outcome, giving the learner the opportunity to link and apply their knowledge to workplace activities. For example, the learner could reflect on the basis on which they have chosen networks to be developed, how they have used the internet in their networking activities and any ethical issues, which relate to networking activities and how these have affected their activities (AC1.2, AC1.4 and AC1.6). The learner's reflective account must be in sufficient depth and breadth to meet the level of demand of the operative command verbs of AC1.1 to AC1.6.

Evidence of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can also be used within the unit to confirm competence. Wherever possible, the learning outcomes in this unit should be assessed holistically across the qualification.