**M&L 25 Develop and maintain professional networks**

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| **Learning Outcome** | **Assessment Criteria** | **Guidelines and range****The candidate provides evidence that they understand:** |
| 1.Understand the principles of effective networking  | 1.1 Describe the interpersonal skills needed for effective networking  | Effective networking can be defined as ‘The ability to actively seek, identify and create effective contacts with other people and to maintain those contacts for mutual benefit’. Good interpersonal skills and the way you interact with people are essential for effective networking. Appropriate use of body language is important and in addition:Influencing and persuading skillsThe ability to create rapport and build trust with new contactsFeeling comfortable and confident in networking situations  |
|  |  | *In this criterion the learner is required to describe the principal features of three or more of the interpersonal skills needed for effective networking*. |
|  | 1.2 Explain the basis on which to choose networks to be developed  | Effective networking is about developing valuable relationships over time, based on the principles of reciprocity and confidentiality. That is, a network should only be developed if the parties involved will gain from exchanging information, ideas and other resources with each other that are not confidential. |
|  |  | *In this criterion the learner is required to explain the basis on which to choose networks to be developed. (You may wish to provide examples to illustrate your answer).* |
| 1.3 Evaluate the role of shared agendas and conflict management in relationship-building  | Members of personal networks need to be aware of each other’s’ expectations and have the confidence to develop a shared agenda of common interests within the constraints of confidentiality. Members should acknowledge when their own interests are in conflict with common goals and state their own views clearly and confidently in conflict situations. |
| *In this criterion the learner is required to evaluate the role of shared agendas and conflict management in order to ascertain their usefulness in relationship building.* |
| 1.4 Evaluate the role of the internet in business networking  | Using the internet for business networking is now accepted as one of the better ways to develop personal networks and source new business leads. There are a number of ways to use the internet in business working, including social networks, blogs and forums. Social networks, for example, allow people to create personal profiles, build communities, communicate with each other and make recommendations, and include specialist business sites such as e.g. LinkedIn. |
| *In this criterion the learner is required to evaluate the role of the internet in business networking in order to ascertain its usefulness.* |
| 1.5 Assess the importance of following up leads and actions  | Following up leads and actions is important for generating new customers and building your customer base, and should be done as soon as possible. Conversely, by failing to follow up on a lead or action you are passing up an opportunity to gain a new customer.  |
| In this criterion the learner is required to assess and make a judgment on, using appropriate criteria, the importance of following up leads and actions. |
| 1.6 Analyse ethical issues relating to networking activities  | In simple terms, an ethical issue arises when an individual must choose between alternatives that are right (ethical) or wrong (unethical). Ethical issues related to networking activities may arise over, for example, confidentiality, personal interest and the accurate portrayal of networking activities. Professional and specialist networks are like to have a Code of Conduct, or Code of Ethics, that members must adhere to.  |
| In this criterion the learner is required to analyse the essential features of two or more ethical issues relating to networking activities in order to draw conclusions. |
| 2. Be able to identify professional networks for development  | 2.1 Identify potential networks for professional development from an analysis of their benefits compared with individual needs and aspirations  | Networks will vary in their usefulness, and each potential network should be analysed to determine its essential features and to draw conclusions as to the benefits of the network compared with individual needs and aspirations. |
| In this criterion the learner is required to identify a range of five or more potential networks for professional development based on an analysis of their benefits compared with individual needs and aspirations. |
| 2.2 Shortlist networks for development against defined criteria  | Potential networks should be shortlisted for development against defined criteria, such as their benefits and own individual needs and aspirations. |
| In this criterion the learner is required to shortlist two or more networks for development against defined criteria. |
| 2.3 Assess the benefits and limitations of joining and maintaining selected network(s) | Joining and maintaining networks involves time and commitment, and these costs and limitations must be set against the potential benefits of membership. |
| In this criterion the learner is required to assess and make a judgment on, using appropriate criteria, the benefits and limitations of joining and maintaining one or more selected network(s). |
| 3. Be able to maintain professional networks  | 3.1 Identify the potential for mutual benefit with network members  | The creation and maintenance of ‘mutual benefit’ is the rationale for effective networking, and identifying the potential for mutual benefit with network members is central to effective networking. This may be done face-to-face or through the internet and social media and professional business sites, although it is not sufficient merely to exchange personal details and other pertinent information at a first meeting as networking is a long-term strategy that needs to be continually improved over time.  |
| In this criterion the learner is required to identify the potential for mutual benefit with two or more network members. |
| 3.2 Promote their own skills, knowledge and competence to network members  | Networking is a reciprocal relationship that must consist of give-and –take, and to be an effective and useful member of a network it is important to let other members of the network know that they may be able to benefit from your skills, knowledge and competence. |
| *In this criterion the learner is required to provide evidence that he or she has appropriately promoted their own skills, knowledge and competence to network members.* |
| 3.3 Provide information, services or support to network members where the potential for mutual benefit has been identified  | In order to network effectively, a network member must be an active, rather than a passive, member of his or her networks, and active participation will include providing on-going information, services or support to network members where the potential for mutual support has been identified. |
| *In this criterion the learner is required to provide evidence that he or she has actively participated in networking by providing information, services or support to network members where the potential for mutual benefit has been identified*. |
| 3.4 Establish the boundaries of confidentiality  | Confidentiality is central to the reciprocal relationship, and network members will need to set boundaries to what information can, and cannot, be shared. In some instances, the boundaries of confidentiality may be established by industry or sector legislation, requirements, regulations or policies and professional codes relevant to networking. |
| *In this criterion the learner is required to provide evidence that boundaries of confidentiality have been established.* |
| 3.5 Agree guidelines for the exchange of information and resources  | In addition to setting boundaries on what information can, and cannot, be shared, networks will need to agree guidelines on how information and resources can be exchanged. Again, guidelines may be established by industry or sector legislation, requirements, regulations or policies and professional codes relevant to networking. |
| *In this criterion the learner is required to provide evidence that guidelines for the exchange of information and resources have been agreed.* |
|  | 3.6 Take action to ensure that participation in networks reflects current and defined future aspirations and needs | In addition to providing on-going information, services or support to network members where the potential for mutual support has been identified, active participation in networking also provides the opportunity to continually update own current and defined future aspirations and needs. |
| *In this criterion the learner is required to provide evidence that he or she has actively participated in networking by providing information, services or support to network members where the potential for mutual benefit has been identified.* |
| 3.7 Make introductions to people with common or complementary interest to and within networks  | The first step in networking is to make introductions to people with common or complementary interest, either face-to-face or online.  |
| In this criterion the learner is required to provide evidence that he or she has made introductions to two or more people with common or complementary interest to and within networks. |