Extra Activities 3: Problem Solving

Learning Outcomes

• to recognise problem solving, especially communication difficulties, as a task of a team leader.

• to understand and practise solving problems and making decisions through consensus and/or negotiation.

• to identify strategies for conflict resolution.
Reference:
Key Words

technical: mechanical, scientific, practical
resolve: find a solution/fix a problem
conflict: fight or argument or disagreement
relevant: concerned with the matter or issue
maintenance: keep in repair or good working order
opinions: what people think
consensus: general agreement by everyone
modify: make changes
advantage: good, benefit
disadvantage: not so good, not beneficial
prefer: what you think is best
pressure: to attempt to persuade someone or make him do something against his will
negotiation: a way to resolve conflict
prejudice: bias
acknowledge: show that you agree
OHS: Occupational Health & Safety

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Team leaders often have to fix problems. Technical problems, such as machinery breakdowns or quality, may be more easily fixed because team leaders have a lot of experience on the job or production line.

It can be more difficult to resolve problems that are due to conflict or communication difficulties.

**Activity 1:** Describe and talk about some of the problems you have had at work. What kind of problems were they? Were they technical or communication problems? Complete the following table:

| Problem | Technical | Communication |
Activity 2: Discuss these typical work “problems” with other team leaders

**Problem:** Workers want to have Saturdays off if they have completed the production targets before then.

- What issues are important or relevant?
- What would you do?

**Problem:** The section supervisor is angry and upset when production is 2 days behind schedule. She yells at one of the workers, who makes a complaint.

- What issues are important or relevant?
- What would you do?

**Problem:** Machine number 4 is still faulty, even though maintenance has checked and serviced it three times in the last week.

- What issues are important or relevant?
- What would you do?

**Problem:** The night shift often leaves a mess in the work area. You spend much of your time in the mornings tidying up, doing the “housekeeping.” This gives you less time to do your other jobs.

- What issues are important or relevant?
- What would you do?

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Problems are actually solved in many different ways. Whichever way you solve a problem, there are some general “rules” which you can follow:

- identify the problem
- get all relevant information
- gather different opinions
- brainstorm any possible solutions
- review each possible solution
  - what is good/bad
  - what works/doesn’t work
- make the decision
- develop a plan on how to put the decision into action
- act on the decision and solve the problem