

# Workplace Role Play Scenarios



# **Workplace Role-Play Scenarios:**

## **Practise Navigating Difficult Conversations, Negotiation and Mediation**

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# MEET THE AUTHOR

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Dr Sarah Steen is a Lecturer in Human Resource Management at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, has received an Australasian award for Recognition of Excellence and Contribution to Student Learning, and received a Vice Chancellor's award for her thesis on Questioning the Value of Usefulness of Student Evaluation of Teaching. She has a proven twelve-year track record of outstanding teaching excellence with extensive undergraduate and postgraduate experience across areas of Human Resource Management, Organisational Behaviour, and Management. As a passionate educator, she strives to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to all learning needs, encourages students to contribute their ideas in a safe space, and ultimately, encourages students to learn new perspectives and skills. As an advocate for learning by doing, Sarah seeks to create learning environments where students can put theory into practise for example by immersing themselves in role-plays that replicate real-life situations to develop and enhance various skills which they require to confront the challenges in the real world. She is excited to have this resource available to assist with students' learning on navigating difficult conversations, negotiation, and mediation in the workplace.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*And finally, the author would like to thank all the MMH250 students who continue to inspire the author to create the ultimate learning experience and develop new ways for students to immerse themselves in role-plays to develop and enhance their skills which they will need to confront the challenges in the real world.*

Front cover image Pixelbay



# INTRODUCTION

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This book has been designed to include a vast array of scenarios that can be utilised for role-plays covering topics of difficult conversations, negotiation, and mediation. The scenarios have been designed to reflect the modern Australian workplace, covering diverse industries, and are proudly language and content inclusive. They are practical, authentic, and relatable. Each scenario includes the context, instructions on how to facilitate the role plays, observer briefs (optional), and individual and seminar group debrief and reflection questions. The questions can also be adapted to suit your needs and provide an opportunity for relevant curriculum theoretical concepts and ideas to be applied.

# ROLE-PLAY PREAMBLE

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Before commencing the role plays, it is important to create a safe and welcoming learning environment where everyone feels comfortable participating in the scenarios. A fun ice-breaker activity might be a good idea to run before asking the participants to engage in the role-plays. It is also important to highlight that everyone is 'having a go', to be respectful of each other, and to ask participants to fully immerse themselves in the shoes of the people that they are role-playing. In the spirit of learning through action and reflection, at the conclusion of each role play it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. Each scenario has a standard list of debrief questions that can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include your curriculum content-specific questions. All scenarios, organisations, and people mentioned are fictional.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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## **Deakin University's Acknowledgement of Country**

Deakin University is located in Victoria, Australia. We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our University campuses are based: The Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation on whose Country our Geelong campuses are located, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation on whose Country our Burwood campus is located and the Peek Whurrong people of the Maar Nation on whose Country our Warrnambool campus is located. We pay our respects to elders past and present on whose lands the creation of this resource was undertaken and where many students using this text will be located.

# ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

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### **Accessibility features of the web version of this resource**

The web version of this resource has been designed with accessibility in mind by incorporating the following features:

- It has been optimized for people who use screen-reader technology.
  - all content can be navigated using a keyboard
  - links, headings, and tables are formatted to work with screen readers
  - images have alt tags
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone.

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PART I

# SECTION 1 - DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS



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# SCENARIO 1A: UNMOTIVATED EMPLOYEE SEEKING A CHANGE

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***This scenario involves an employee who is unmotivated in their role as a designer at Suttonberry Interiors and decides to speak to her manager about how she is feeling.***

## Role-Play Scenario



Photo by Magnet.me on Unsplash

Addison, a homewares designer has worked at Suttonberry Interiors for 5 years. Suttonberry Interiors is a high-end business that sells luxury homewares that are proudly designed and manufactured in Australia. Since joining the company, Addison has designed several homewares that have resulted in large sales due to the items being loved and shared by several celebrity clientele. Lately, Addison has been feeling quite unmotivated in her role and hasn't felt inspired each day at work to create new homeware designs. Due to the creative nature of her role, being creative is essential and she is quite concerned that she has lost her spark which she is proudly known for. She has been feeling this way for a few

weeks now and it is starting to have a big impact on her output. She has started looking for a new job as she feels a change is what she needs. The thought of working at a new organisation is quite exciting which reinforces that perhaps it is time for her to move on from her role at Suttonberry. She decides to have an honest conversation with her manager, Michael (Suttonberry's Head of Design) about how she is feeling.

### Role Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (Designer Addison, Head of Design Michael, observer)
2. Ask participants to read the role-play scenario information
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role Player 3: Observer

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two role players. Part of your role is not to make judgments or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the conversation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the conversation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. What skills did Michael display in the conversation?
2. What non-verbal cues were utilised by Michael in the conversation?
3. Did the conversation end in a resolution? If so, what and how?

4. What skills could have Michael utilised to assist in the conversation?

### Post Role Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two role players. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the counselling process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role play?
4. What skills were evident in the role play?
5. What would have helped improve your experience in the role play?
6. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?

# SCENARIO 1B: WORK-LIFE BALANCE STRUGGLES

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***This scenario involves an employee who is struggling with managing her work-life balance and discusses this with her manager during her mid-year performance review.***

## Role-Play Scenario

It's June and time for the employees at Echo Plus to have their mid-year performance review with their manager (Peter). Zara is first on the list for her review with Peter. As a mother and carer, Zara has been struggling to manage her work-life balance. She is having a hard time meeting work deadlines and her co-workers have mentioned to Peter that she is struggling whilst they understand the pressure she is under, they are concerned that as a team they will not be able to meet their important non-negotiable project deadline due to her limited contributions. She sometimes has to take many phone calls during the day, often is 30 – 60 minutes late to work and in the past has had to leave unannounced to tend to her mother. Zara logs onto Zoom and begins her chat with her manager, Peter.



Photo by Daniel Thomas on Unsplash

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (employee Zara, manager Peter, observer)
2. Ask participants to read the role-play scenario information
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role-Player 3: Observer

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two role players. Part of your role is not to make judgments or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the conversation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the conversation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. What skills did Peter display in the conversation?
2. What non-verbal cues were utilised by Peter in the conversation?
3. Did the conversation end in a resolution? If so, what and how?
4. What skills could have Peter utilised to assist in the conversation?

### Post Role-Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two role players. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the counselling process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role play?
5. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
6. What skills were evident in the role play?

# SCENARIO 1C: TOUGH TIMES AT LUXX AND CO

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***This scenario involves an employee who is struggling to cope with his stressful job. He decides to ask his colleague for advice on how to better manage the current situation.***

## Role-Play Scenario



Photo by Direct Media on StockSnap

Times are tough at Luxx and Co, a luxury leather goods company. With the tough financial situation of the current economy and potential looming recession, Luxx and Co's have noticed a consistent decline in sales over the last few months. The decline in sales is particularly worrying as this is usually Luxx and Co's busiest time of the year. Connor the marketing manager is particularly stressed as the last two marketing campaigns have not resulted in any growth in sales and have been doubted "a fail" on the grapevine. Connor has been working long hours including weekends to strategise on new campaigns and it is starting to take a toll on Connor. He is struggling to cope with the stress of being responsible for poor marketing campaigns and cannot see a clear path on how the organisation can improve sales.

He decides to speak with Jethro, a close colleague from the finance department to see how he is coping and ask for any advice on how to manage the current situation.

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (employee Connor, employee Jethro, observer)
2. Read the scenario information
3. Ask participants to read the role-play scenario information
4. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role-Player 3: Observer

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two role players. Part of your role is not to make judgements or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the conversation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the conversation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. What skills did Jethro display in the conversation?
2. What non-verbal cues were utilised by Jethro in the conversation?
3. Did the conversation end in a resolution? If so, what and how?



4. What skills could have Jethro utilised to assist in the conversation?

### **Post Role-Play Debrief Questions**

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two role players. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the counselling process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role play?
5. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
6. What skills were evident in the role play?

## SCENARIO 1D: GRIEVING WIDOW

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***This scenario involves an employee who is struggling to cope at work after the loss of her husband. After her colleagues notice her struggles, she is encouraged to speak with her team leader.***

### **Role-Play Scenario**

A few weeks ago, Jing's world fell apart. Her husband of 10 years passed away suddenly in a horrific car accident. After taking a week off work to grieve, Jing returned to work in her role as an accountant at Dollars Accounting. Whilst the routine of work helped provide structure and meaning to her life, she was struggling to keep up with her job tasks. Her ability to focus had diminished and she was worried that she was letting her team down. After noticing her struggles, her colleagues suggested she speak with Annika their team leader. Annika suggests they catch up over coffee at the nearby coffee shop.



Photo by Milada Vigerova on Unsplash

## Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (employee Jing, team leader Annika, observer)
2. Ask participants to read the role-play scenario information
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

## Role-Player 3: Observer

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two role players. Part of your role is not to make judgements or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the conversation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the conversation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. What skills did Annika display in the conversation?
2. What non-verbal cues were utilised by Annika in the conversation?
3. Did the conversation end in a resolution? If so, what and how?
4. What skills could have Annika utilised to assist in the conversation?

## Post Role-Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two role players. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the counselling process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role-play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role-play?
5. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
6. What skills were evident in the role-play?

# SCENARIO 1E: DISAPPOINTED AT NOT GETTING A PROMOTION

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***This scenario involves an employee who is disappointed after learning that they were unsuccessful at getting a promotion which has impacted his attitude toward his work. His manager calls him aside to have a chat.***

## **Role-Play Scenario**

Viliami opens his new email. *'Thank you for submitting your application for a promotion. While you had a good application, unfortunately, your application has been unsuccessful. We encourage you to reflect on the feedback provided and reapply next year'* In frustration, Viliami slams his laptop closed, *'You have got to be joking ... after all the effort I put in. What a joke!'* Viliami storms out of the office, ignoring his colleagues who are trying to see if he is ok. A week later and Viliami is still very unhappy with the news that he did not get the promotion. He complains to anyone who will listen to him, in the daily catch-up meeting he has started to complain about all aspects of work and is exhibiting a poor attitude, which is impacting on his colleagues around him. Concerned about his behaviour, his manager Nikau invites him to have a chat over lunch.



Photo by Chroki Chi on Unsplash

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (employee Viliami, manager Nikau, observer)
2. Ask participants to read the role-play scenario information
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role-play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role-Player 3: Observer

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two role players. Part of your role is not to make judgments or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the conversation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the conversation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. What skills did Nikau display in the conversation?
2. What non-verbal cues were utilised by Nikau in the conversation?
3. Did the conversation end in a resolution? If so, what and how?
4. What skills could have Nikau utilised to assist in the conversation?

### Post Role-Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two role players. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the counselling process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find challenging about the role-play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role-play?
5. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
6. What skills were evident in the role-play?





## PART II

# SECTION 2 - NEGOTIATION



Photo by Christina @ [wocintechchat.com](https://www.wocintechchat.com) on Unsplash



## SCENARIO 2A: SALARY NEGOTIATION AT LAWSON & CO

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*This scenario involves an employee negotiating a salary with the HR manager after accepting a new job offer.*



Photo by Christina @ wocintechchat.com on Unsplash

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (new employee named Amara, HR manager named Zola, observer)
2. Each role has a separate role-play brief. Ensure participants only read their role brief
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role-play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role-Player 1: New Employee Amara Brief

*This brief should only be read by the person playing the role of Amara.*

Read through the following brief to provide context to the scenario you are role-playing as Amara.

You are Amara. A 30-year-old finance professional who has been looking for a new job after wanting a change from your current organisation. You are keen to continue working in the finance industry in a similar role but want the opportunity to tackle new challenges in a different environment. In terms of your preferred working style, you thrive on working in an office environment but also like to mix up the working location by working from home and different cafes every so often.

You were very excited to learn that a job opening had become available at Lawson & Co in a similar role to the one you had before, however, with a few additional leadership responsibilities. You have heard about many good experiences from others who work there and were particularly keen to learn about their career development opportunities, which were lacking in your previous organisation. After a lengthy recruitment process, you are thrilled that you were successful, and you are now at the stage where you are reviewing your contract details and the all-important salary. A good salary is important to you as you are saving for a house and looking to invest

in your future self. You have arranged to meet with the HR manager Zola to negotiate your salary. Whilst you have good negotiation skills, you are feeling a little nervous approaching the discussion with Zola. You know that preparation before the negotiation is key and there are many factors to consider when determining your strategy to approach the negotiation. For example, what is your desired salary amount? What is the lowest you are willing to accept? In contemplating your desired salary, you consider your worth and the experience you bring to the role. After some reflection and researching similar jobs advertised, you establish that your desired salary amount is \$100,000 with the lowest you are willing to accept is \$90,000. However, depending on what benefits might be included in the salary package, you would be willing to compromise and accept \$85,000.

You are now going to meet with Zola to negotiate your salary. All the best with your negotiation!

### **Role-Player 2: HR Manager Zola Brief**

*This brief should only be read by the person playing the role of Zola.*

Read through the following brief to provide context to the scenario you are role-playing as Zola.

You are Zola. The HR manager at Lawson & Co. You have been working at Lawson & Co for 10 years. After the departure of one of your finance employees, you have been undertaking an extensive recruitment process to find a suitable replacement. This is the second recruitment round you have conducted after the first one did not yield a strong candidate. This time was a success and you were happy to offer Amara the role. Amara has the experience and desire required to excel in the role. You have recently emailed Amara the letter of offer that contains the contract details, with the salary to be negotiated. The maximum you can offer Amara is \$90,000 and you are keen to initially offer her \$85,000. The market rate is currently within the \$85,000 to \$90,000 range. After a lengthy recruitment process, you know how hard it is to find suitable candidates so you don't want to lose Amara based on not meeting her salary expectations. So, you are able to include some benefits such as share options, wellness programs, flexible work schedules, and additional weeks of leave (5 weeks annual leave) if needed to assist with the negotiation.

You now going to meet with Amara to discuss her salary. All the best with your negotiation!

### Role-Player 3: Observer

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. Part of your role is not to make judgments or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the negotiation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the negotiation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. Were non-verbal cues utilised? If so, what and by whom?
2. What was the negotiation salary range?
3. Were any negotiation tactics utilised? If so, what and how did the other party respond?
4. What negotiation skills were evident?
5. Did one/both parties need to compromise and if so, explain what and how?
6. Was an agreement reached? What was it?
7. What could the role players do differently in the negotiation?

### Post Role-Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the negotiation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What did you find difficult about the role-play?
3. What would have helped improve your experience in the role-play?

4. Thinking about your salary negotiation role-play, what would you do differently next time you negotiate?
5. What skills were evident in the role-play?

## SCENARIO 2B: NEGOTIATING PROJECT TIMELINE OF DELIVERABLES FOR SKS LAWYERS

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***This scenario involves an employee negotiating on behalf of their organisation (TrainingCo) with their client SKS lawyers about the timeline of a required project deliverables.***



Photo by Amy Hirschi on Unsplash



## Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 people and allocate roles (TrainingCo Client Service Manager Amar, SKS Lawyers Learning Coordinator Zheng, observer)
2. Each role has a separate role-play brief. Ensure participants only read their role brief
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

## Role-Player 1: TrainingCo Client Service Manager Amar

*This brief should only be read by the person playing the role of Amar.*

Read through the following brief to provide context to the scenario you are role-playing as Amar. You work for TrainingCo as the Client Service Manager. Your organisation specialises in developing tailored training programs for clients from different fields including education, law, and marketing. Your organisation offers a wide range of skills from a dedicated in-house team that works directly with clients to investigate the learning needs of their staff to then develop effective training programs.

One of your long-term clients SKS Lawyers is growing exponentially and is seeking to overhaul their orientation program and subsequent training programs for their new intake of employees. Following the usual protocol, SKS Lawyers have sent through a brief outline of their project requirements. They are seeking a review of previously delivered training programs, redevelopment of the orientation program, and redevelopment of five separate training programs which cover compliance topics and skills-based training. They have requested that the review of the previous training programs be completed within the next two weeks, the redevelopment of the orientation program to be completed within the next month, and the redevelopment of five different training programs to be completed within the next 3 months.

Due to changes in the educational space, demand from your education clients is high and your teams are extremely busy meeting their demands. You are planning to hire two new staff to assist with the current demands but due to the recruitment process and onboarding of the new staff members, they will not be ready to assist with the workload for a few months (at the earliest). After reviewing the current projects, you are concerned that you will not be able to meet the tight deadlines as outlined by SKS Lawyers. You decide to organise a meeting with SKS Lawyers to negotiate the timeline of the deliverables so that your team can meet their project expectations.

You will need four weeks to review the previous training programs, six weeks to redevelop the orientation program, and up to 20 weeks to redevelop the five different training programs. Usually, you find that SKS Lawyers are willing to negotiate new deadlines however, you have not negotiated with the new SKS Lawyers' Learning Coordinator Zheng who is meeting with you.

You are now meeting with Zheng to negotiate the timeline of deliverables as required by SKS Lawyers.

### **Role-Player 2: SKS Lawyers Learning Coordinator Zheng**

*This brief should only be read by the person playing the role of Zheng.*

Read through the following brief to provide context to the scenario you are role-playing as Zheng.

You are Zheng. The Learning Coordinator at SKS Lawyers. You have recently started this new role after previously working as a Learning Development Assistant at a rival law firm. You were very excited to land this job at SKS Lawyers and you are keen to make a good impression to your manager and the senior management team as this is your dream job. One of the urgent tasks you need to do before the next intake of new junior lawyers in the next few months is to evaluate the existing training programs, redesign the orientation program and redevelop five of the most critical training programs. The need to do so was emphasised by the previous Learning Coordinator and was cemented by your manager as a KPI. To assist with the training program needs, SKS Lawyers outsources the evaluation and development of training programs to TrainingCo. You have been told that there is a strong relationship with TrainingCo and following the usual protocol, you have sent a brief outline of your project requirements to them. After reviewing timelines for the intake of the junior lawyers, you have communicated the deadline for all deliverables. For example, the review of the previous training programs needs to

be completed within the next two weeks, the redevelopment of the orientation program to be completed within the next month, and the redevelopment of five different training programs to be completed within the next 3 months. You have added in a slight buffer in case of any delays, however, the timeline as communicated is set. You have heard back from Amar, the Client Service Manager at TrainingCo that she wants to meet with you to discuss the project requirements in detail and more importantly the deadlines. You have not met Amar before so you are a little apprehensive as to how the discussion will go. You are now meeting with Amar.

### **Role-Player 3: Observer**

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. Part of your role is not to make judgments or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the negotiation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the negotiation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. Were non-verbal cues utilised? If so, what and by whom?
2. Were any negotiation tactics utilised? If so, what and how did the other party respond?
3. What negotiation skills were evident?
4. Did one/both parties need to compromise and if so, explain what and how?
5. Was an agreement reached? What was it?
6. What could the role players do differently in the negotiation?

### **Post Role-Play Debrief Questions**

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and

conversation between the two players in the negotiation. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the negotiation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role play?
5. What would you do differently next time you negotiate?
6. What skills were evident in the role play?

# SCENARIO 2C: NEGOTIATING NEWKICKS' NEW MARKETING CAMPAIGN WITH AGITATE MARKETING AGENCY

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***This scenario involves an employee negotiating on behalf of their organisation (NewKicks) for the deliverables required for a new marketing campaign with an employee from Agitate Marketing Agency.***



Photo by LinkedIn Sales Solutions on Unsplash

*The case was inspired by 'the book deal negotiation' from Fells & Sheer, Effective Negotiation: From Research to Results 4th edition, Cambridge.*

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (NewKicks Product Manager Jerome, Agitate Marketing Agency Client Manager Landon, observer)
2. Each role has a separate role-play brief. Ensure participants only read their role brief
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role-Player 1: NewKicks Product Manager Jerome

*This brief should only be read by the person playing the role of Jerome.*

Read through the following brief to provide context to the scenario you are role-playing as Jerome.

Following the boom of casual wear during COVID lockdowns, the interest and sales of sneakers have skyrocketed. NewKicks also experienced an increase in sales and is looking to continue the 'sneakers hype'. The company operates fully online and stocks the latest-release sneakers from the US.

So far, you have relied on word of mouth and are keen to employ a marketing agency to assist with the advertising of the brand, especially because you are about to stock a new range of sneakers by a well-known rapper. The target audience is 15 to 25. As the

NewKicks Product Manager, Jerome, you are very excited to be stocking the new range of sneakers to sell on your website. After thorough research, you and the team have decided that Agitate Marketing Agency would be the perfect choice to assist with your new marketing campaign.

After reaching out to Landon, Agitate Marketing Agency Client Manager you are keen to negotiate a good deal. As part of the negotiation, there are many aspects of the marketing campaign that you needed to consider and agree on. You will need to agree on the overall budget, the duration of the marketing video ad for distribution on YouTube and Facebook, the number of TikTok videos to be developed, the use of some of Agitate Marketing Agency's social media influencers that they have signed on to assist with the marketing campaign, the number of the press events and the deadline for the deliverables. The value of the negotiable items is as follows (see table below). You are aiming to get the highest score possible. You are now meeting with Landon to negotiate the terms of the contract. Good luck!

Terms in Contract	Options	Points
Budget	\$100,00	500
	\$110,00	400
	\$120,00	300
	\$130,00	200
	\$140,00	100
Duration of Marketing Video	3 minutes	300
	2 minutes	200
	1 minute	100
Number of Tik Tok's	5	500
	4	400
	3	300
	2	200
	1	100
Number of Social Media Influencers for Campaign	3	300
	2	200
	1	100
Number of Press Events	3	300
	2	200
	1	100



Deadline for all Deliverables	4 months	300
	5 months	200
	6 months	100

**Role-Player 2: Agitate Marketing Agency Client Manager Landon**

*This brief should only be read by the person playing the role of Landon.*

Read through the following brief to provide context to the scenario you are role-playing as Landon.

Agitate Marketing Agency is a modern marketing agency that prides itself on meeting and exceeding their client marketing requirements. As a digital disrupter, it is well known for its tongue-in-cheek advertising that generates millions of clicks, views, likes, and comments. As the client manager, you Landon have been approached by NewKicks to assist with an advertising campaign. As a sneaker lover and customer, you are very excited to be involved with NewKicks. As with all new campaigns, there are many aspects to negotiate and you are looking forward to meeting with Jerome, NewKicks Product Manager. The value of the negotiable items is as follows (see table below). You are aiming to get the highest score possible. You are now meeting with Jerome to negotiate the terms of the contract.

Terms in Contract	Options	Points
Budget	\$140,000	500
	\$130,00	400
	\$120,00	300
	\$110,00	200
	\$100,00	100
Duration of Marketing Video	1 Minute	300
	2 minutes	200
	3 minutes	100
Number of Tik Tok's	1	500
	2	400
	3	300
	4	200
	5	100
Number of Social Media Influencers for Campaign	1	300
	2	200
	3	100
Number of Press Events	1	300
	2	200
	3	100

Deadline for all Deliverables	6 months	300
	5 months	200
	4 months	100

### Role-Player 3: Observer

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. Part of your role is not to make judgments or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the negotiation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the negotiation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. Were non-verbal cues utilised? If so, what and by whom?
2. What was the highest score achieved in the negotiation?
3. Were any negotiation tactics utilised? If so, what and how did the other party respond?
4. What negotiation skills were evident?
5. Did one/both parties need to compromise and if so, explain what and how?
6. Was an agreement reached? What was it?
7. What could the role players do differently in the negotiation?

### Post Role Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer

to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the negotiation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role play?
5. What would you do differently next time you negotiate?
6. What skills were evident in the role play?

# SCENARIO 2D: NEGOTIATING A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

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***This scenario involves an employee negotiating their transition to retirement with their HR Manager.***



Photo by krakenimages on Unsplash

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (FutureSelf Employee Christine, FutureSelf HR Manager Easton, observer)
2. Each role has a separate role-play brief. Ensure participants only read their role brief
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role-Player 1: FutureSelf Employee Christine

*This brief should only be read by the person playing the role of Christine.*

Read through the following brief to provide context to the scenario you are role-playing as Christine.

You have been working at FutureSelf for 20 years. During your career, you have received many accolades for your success and have enjoyed managing a team of 10. You feel you have reached many heights in your career and have been pondering retirement for some time. After careful consideration, you have decided that you want to retire by the end of the year. Whilst you are excited about the thought of endless travel and spending quality time with family and friends, you are quite nervous about retiring as you enjoy the challenges associated with your work and have made long-life friends at FutureSelf. You enjoy mentoring new employees and you love mentoring your colleagues to help them thrive. Whilst this is your last year before retiring, you are not keen on going from working five days a week to nothing. You arrange to have a meeting with the HR Manager Easton to negotiate your transition to retirement.

**Role-Player 2: FutureSelf HR Manager Easton**

*This brief should only be read by the person playing the role of Easton.*

Read through the following brief to provide context to the scenario you are role-playing as Easton.

Christine has asked to meet with you as the HR Manager at FutureSelf. Christine has recently expressed interest in retiring at the end of the year. Christine has been working at FutureSelf for 20 years and manages a team of 10. She is a phenomenal employee, a top performer and a great mentor. She is a strong part of FutureSelf culture and always set a positive tone amongst others. Having Christine retire will be a huge loss to FutureSelf, but she deserves it! After an exceptional career, she desires all the freedom that retiring has to offer. You have heard that Christine is a little apprehensive about retiring and is keen to ensure she has a smooth transition to retirement. The next few months are predicted to be very busy and you have initiated a large recruitment campaign of which you were hoping Christine would help with mentoring the new staff. You ponder whether she would be interested in working part-time to assist with the transition. You are now meeting with Christine to negotiate what her transition to retirement looks like.

**Role-Player 3: Observer**

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. Part of your role is not to make judgments or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the negotiation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the negotiation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. Were non-verbal cues utilised? If so, what and by whom?
2. Were any negotiation tactics utilised? If so, what and how did the other party respond?
3. What negotiation skills were evident?
4. Did one/both parties need to compromise and if so, explain what and how?

5. Was an agreement reached? What was it?
6. What could the role players do differently in the negotiation?

### **Post Role-Play Debrief Questions**

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the negotiation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role play?
5. What would you do differently next time you negotiate?
6. What skills were evident in the role play?



# SCENARIO 2E: NEGOTIATING TO LEAD A PROJECT AT TECHHQ

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***This scenario involves two employees negotiating who gets to lead a project at TechHQ.***

## Role-Play Scenario

You have just heard that your organisation (TechHQ) has secured a contract to complete a special project from their top client. It has taken several months for the organisation to obtain the contract and they need a team leader to lead the project. The opportunity to lead the project could result in further opportunities and the potential for future promotion. Only one team member can be promoted to the lead role. You (Amanada) are very keen to lead your very first project, however, Hunter also expressed interest in the lead role. The organisation has asked you and Hunter to work out who should lead the project. Let the negotiation begin!

Photo by Jess Bailey on Unsplash



### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (Employee Amanda, employee Hunter, observer)
2. Ask participants to read the role-play scenario information
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role-play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time (observer to also provide feedback to role players): 10 minutes
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role Player 3: Observer

As the observer, your role in the scenario is to observe the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. Part of your role is not to make judgements or interrupt the role play, but rather take notes on the negotiation. Taking observation notes will be a critical part of the debrief, where you are able to provide the role players with your perspective on how the negotiation went. To assist with taking observational notes, here are some questions to consider:

1. Were non-verbal cues utilised? If so, what and by whom?
2. Were any negotiation tactics utilised? If so, what and how did the other party respond?
3. What negotiation skills were evident?
4. Did one/both parties need to compromise and if so, explain what and how?
5. Was an agreement reached? What was it?
6. What could the role players do differently in the negotiation?

## Post Role-Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. It is also important for the observer to provide the role players with feedback on what they observed in the relationship and conversation between the two players in the negotiation. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the negotiation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role-play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role-play?
5. What would you do differently next time you negotiate?
6. What skills were evident in the role-play?



## PART III

# SECTION 3 - MEDIATION



Photo by TienDat Nguyen on Unsplash

The mediation scenarios have been authored by Dr Isuru Kirige and edited by Dr Sarah Steen.



## SCENARIO 3A: DYSFUNCTIONAL MANAGER AND SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIP

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***This scenario involves a dysfunctional relationship and conflict between a manager and a subordinate, where the HR manager is required to mediate the conflict.***



Photo by Headway on Unsplash

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (employee Ellen, head of marketing Charlie and HR manager Jesse (mediator))
2. Each role has a separate role-play brief. Ensure participants only read their role brief
3. The mediator (Jesse) can use the mediation script to navigate the mediation between Ellen and Charlie
4. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role-play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time : 10 minute
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role-Player 1: Employee Ellen Clark

You are a team member of the marketing department at ALN Electronics company. You have been working at ALN for seven years now. You have been one of the well-performing team members in the department, and you always had a good working relationship with the head of the department, Charlie. As a result of your stellar performance and experience working at ALN, you have been entrusted with extra duties, such as training and mentoring all the new employees of the department. Although these extra duties take significant time and effort, you always did these tasks without criticising your workload. Last year, there were two rounds of promotions for the role of team leader in your department. With your extensive experience working at ALN, you applied for this promotion, hoping that it would allow you to progress in your career. However, crumbling all your expectations, Charlie promoted two newly joined employees to team leaders. You asked Charlie for the reasons why you were not promoted, and he bluntly mentioned that new employees bring fresh perspectives to the company.

Five months ago, you noticed that most of the other team members of the department have relatively lower performance targets than you. When you raised concerns regarding your



performance targets, Charlie claimed that performance targets are decided based on experience, and he can't change anything about these high-performance targets. After this conversation with Charlie, you felt unmotivated to work and didn't want to put extra effort into achieving your monthly targets. Charlie arranged a meeting to discuss reasons for lower performance. In the meeting, you didn't mention why you disengaged from work responsibilities. However, Charlie was adamant about getting to the bottom of this issue and arranged a second meeting. In the second meeting, you decided to ask for two weeks of paid leave. After returning from two weeks of paid leave, your team members and Charlie asked you to mentor a new employee who had just joined the company. Since it is not part of your job description, you refused to mentor the new employee. After this incident, you thought it would be better to take another month to think about your future and your career.

Last week was your first day after returning from one month's leave. While you are working on your computer, you received the email below from Jesse Malcom, the HR manager of ALN. After reading the email, you walked into Jesse's office.

From : Jesse Malcolm <Jesse.M@ALN.com >

Subject : HR Meeting

To : Ellen Clark <Ellen.c@ALN.com>

Dear Ellen,

The head of the marketing department has raised some concerns regarding your recent performance. I would like to arrange a meeting for us to discuss this issue. Please visit my office when possible.

Best Regards

Jesse

Here is your conversation with Jesse. "I don't know why we are having this meeting." Jesse replies: "Charlie has raised some concerns regarding your performance in the last couple of months." Of Ellen proclaims "I am not sure what Charlie said, but I am a hard worker. I have been with this company for almost 3 years and have always achieved my monthly performance target. I have always helped everyone in my team. And I have always been an over-performer. Yes, it is true that I took some personal time off, but now I am back. However, I think some of the performance targets that Charlie has set for me are unrealistic. I talked to some of the other team members in my department, and it seems that I am the only one with such high-performance targets." Jesse replies: "did you try to speak to Charlie about your performance targets". "Yes, I tried to discuss this with Charlie, but he shut me down and said, you have the most experience in this department, so your targets should be higher than anyone else. Well.... I don't think that is fair. I have applied for several promotions in the last couple of years, but Charlie never allowed me to get those promotions. So, I feel that my efforts are not appreciated

by my direct supervisor. Now I try not to do anything extra. Also, I don't think I can work with Charlie anymore."

Later that week, Jesse contacted you to arrange a mediation meeting with Charlie. Although you don't want another meeting with Charlie, you decided to give it a go.

### **Role-Player 2: Head of Marketing Department (Charlie Jackson)**

You are the head of the marketing department at ALN Electronics company. You have been working at ALN for almost 5 years now, and throughout the years, the marketing department has been considered the department with the best performance. The marketing department consists of five teams, with five members in each team.

Ellen Clark is one of your most trusted subordinates working in the department. She has been with the department for 7 years and has always been one of the best-performing team members in the department. You have always raved about her stellar performance records in the performance evaluation reports. As she is one of the most experienced members in the department, you have assigned her as a mentor and trainer to all new employees of the department. Last year, there were two rounds of promotions to select team leaders. Ellen applied for both team leader positions. Although Ellen is one of the most experienced team members in the department, you always wanted to give the team leader position to someone who can bring fresh perspectives to the company. Therefore, you selected two people who recently joined the company with diverse work experiences. Soon after the end of the promotion rounds, Ellen inquired about her performance targets and argued that it was higher than anyone else in the department. You immediately rejected her claim and explained that the performance targets are determined based on experience and justified the reason for her higher performance targets.

5 months ago, you noticed that Ellen Clark was not meeting the monthly performance targets and had been disengaged from her work. Some of the team members raised concerns regarding her behaviour with you. Therefore, you decided to meet with Ellen to discuss why she is failing to achieve performance targets. Ellen was quite reserved in the meeting with you and didn't mention a specific reason why she is not performing according to the company's expectations. Although this was an unproductive meeting, you wanted to help Ellen achieve the monthly performance targets. With that in mind, you arranged a second meeting with Ellen. In the second meeting, Ellen mentioned that she was dealing with some personal issues and needed two

weeks of paid leave. You approved her paid leave, hoping she would be back to her routine work schedule once she returned from leave.

Contrary to your expectations, Ellen's performance did not improve after returning from two weeks of paid leave, and her lack of contribution has adversely affected the other members. After a while, Ellen requested a month of paid leave, citing her personal issues. You approved her request and told her to take time to resolve her personal issues and return when she was ready. After a month, Ellen returned, but there was no sign of performance improvement afterward. Frustrated by Ellen's performance issue, you sent the email below to the new HR manager Jesse Malcom who joined ALN three months ago.

From : Charlie Jackson <Charlie.J@ALN.com>

Subject : CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE!!!! NEED A MEETING!!

To : Jesse Malcolm <Jesse.M@ALN.com >

Dear Jesse,

As the HR manager could you please arrange a meeting for us to discuss the performance of Ellen Clark. I tried to resolve this issue internally, but it is not working. It is time for HR to do something about this. This needs to be solved immediately as it is taking all my time and energy.

Best Regards,

Charlie

Jesse replied to your email and asked you to meet her at 2.00 pm. At 2.00 pm you walked into Jesse's office and wasted no time explaining what happened. Here is your conversation with Jesse. 'Ellen is one the most experienced employees in the company, and she has been working as my subordinate since I joined this company 5 years ago. She used to be one of my best team members. She used to be the first person to come in the morning and do all her tasks on time. She used to mentor all new employees in the department. But everything changed in the last five months. She is always late and then leaves early. And she has been falling behind in achieving her performance targets.' Jesse then asked Charlie "Did you try to speak with Ellen about her behaviours?" and Charlie responded with 'Yes, I talked with Ellen a couple of times. In fact, I had two meetings with her to discuss her behaviour change and how it affects the department. She told me she needed a week to work on some personal issues. So, I allowed her to take time for herself and return to work when she was ready. And that was 4 months ago. After two weeks of paid leave, she returned, and I thought she would do well after taking time off. Surprisingly, she wasn't contributing to any team discussions and failed to meet her monthly performance targets. Since she is one of our most experienced employees, I really wanted her to return to her usual work routine.' Jesse then asked: 'so, what did you do after that?' and Charlie explained 'Well... then she needed more paid leave, and it is a month this

time. Anyway... I approved her leave, thinking that she would be ok once she come back after a month. Well... now she is back, but she is not doing any work. She is always on her phone, and she hasn't met any of the monthly performance targets for the last 5 months. In the marketing department, we work as a team and the entire team is affected by her lack of contribution. I don't want others in my department to suffer because of Ellen. I did my best to help her, but her performance is not improving. So, I want HR to do something about this issue.'

Later that week, Jesse contacted you to arrange a mediation meeting with Ellen. Although you don't want another meeting with Ellen, you decided to give it a go.

### **Role-Player 3: Mediator (Jesse Malcom)**

Jesse Malcolm is the newly recruited HR manager of ALN Electronics company. Although it has been only three months since Jesse joined ALN Electronics, she has been working hard to redesign several HR-related aspects of the company, such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), performance evaluation systems, and new series of Training and Development programs. Jesse was working on a presentation for the CEO regarding the newly designed programs when an urgent email notification popped up on her computer screen. Jesse clicked on the notification quickly and noticed it was sent by the head of the marketing department – Charlie Jackson.

From : Charlie Jackson <Charlie.J@ALN.com>

Subject : CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE!!!!!! NEED A MEETING!!

To : Jesse Malcolm <Jesse.M@ALN.com >

Dear Jesse,

As the HR manager could you please arrange a meeting for us to discuss the performance of Ellen Clark. I tried to resolve this issue internally, but it is not working. It is time for HR do something about this. This needs to be solved immediately as it is taking all my time and energy.

Best Regards,

Charlie

## Post Role-Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the mediation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role-play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role-play?
5. Were all parties satisfied with the outcome of the mediation?
6. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
7. What skills were evident in the role-play?

Jesse was puzzled by this email as this was the first time Jesse heard anything about a performance issue in the marketing department. Jesse replied to Charlie's email mentioning she is available for a meeting with Charlie at 2.00 pm. In preparing for the meeting with Charlie, Jesse browsed through the HR records to check whether there were any previous performance issues with Ellen Clark. Ellen has been with ALN Electronics for 7 years, and all performance evaluation records for Ellen Clark turned out to be solid and described as a person with a stellar performance.

At 2.00 pm, Charlie walked into Jesse's office and wasted no time getting to the point. 'Ellen needs to step up her game or leave.' Jesse asked Charlie to calm down and start explaining from the beginning. In the meeting with Jesse, Charlie mentioned the following: "Ellen is one the most experienced employees in the company, and she has been working as my subordinate since I joined this company 5 years ago. She used to be one of my best team members. She used to be the first person to come in the morning and do all her tasks on time. She used to mentor all new employees in the department. But everything changed in the last five months. She is always late and then leaves early. And she has been falling behind in achieving her performance targets.' Jesse then asked Charlie 'did you try to speak with Ellen about her behaviours?' and Charlie responded 'yes, I talked with Ellen a couple of times. In fact, I had two meetings with her to discuss her behaviour change and how it affects the department. She told me she needed a week to work on some personal issues. So, I allowed her to take time for herself and return to

work when she was ready. And that was 4 months ago. After two weeks of paid leave, she returned, and I thought she would do well after taking time off. Surprisingly, she wasn't contributing to any team discussions and failed to meet her monthly performance targets. Since she is one of our most experienced employees, I really wanted her to return to her usual work routine.' Jesse then asked: 'So, what did you do after that?' and Charlie explained 'Well... then she needed more paid leave, and it is a month this time. Anyway... I approved her leave, thinking that she would be ok once she come back after a month. Well... now she is back, but she is not doing any work. She is always on her phone, and she hasn't met any of the monthly performance targets for the last 5 months. In the marketing department, we work as a team and the entire team is affected by her lack of contribution. I don't want others in my department to suffer because of Ellen. I did my best to help her, but her performance is not improving. So, I want HR to do something about this issue.'

After the meeting with Charlie, Jesse decided to arrange a meeting with Ellen to hear her side of the story. In the meeting with Jesse, Ellen mentioned the following: 'I don't know why we are having this meeting' and Jesse replied, 'Charlie has raised some concerns regarding your performance in the last couple of months.' 'I am not sure what Charlie said, but I am a hard worker. I have been with this company for almost 3 years and have always achieved my monthly performance target. I have always helped everyone on my team. And I have always been an over-performer. Yes, it is true that I took some personal time off, but now I am back. However, I think some of the performance targets that Charlie has set for me are unrealistic. I talked to some of the other team members in my department, and it seems that I am the only one with such high-performance targets.' 'Did you try to speak to Charlie about your performance targets' Jesse asked Ellen. 'Yes, I tried to discuss this with Charlie, but he shut me down and said, "you have the most experience in this department, so your targets should be higher than anyone else.' Well.... I don't think that is fair. I have applied for several promotions in the last couple of years, but Charlie never allowed me to get those promotions. So, I feel that my efforts are not appreciated by my direct supervisor. Now I try not to do anything extra. Also, I don't think I can work with Charlie anymore."

Reflecting on the meetings with Ellen and Charlie, Jesse was struck by their conflicting accounts of who was at fault. Both people seemed to be describing totally different points of view. As the HR Manager, you proposed a mediation meeting between the two parties. At first, Charlie and Ellen were slightly reluctant about the idea of a mediation meeting, but eventually, they both agreed. Though Jesse feels a bit anxious about the meeting, she hopes that the situation is fixable.

### **Statement to Assist with Running the Mediation**

Thank you, Ellen and Charlie, for agreeing to chat with me today. I will be acting as a mediator to help address the problems that you have both communicated.

We will take it in turn so that each of you is able to convey your side of the story. When each person is talking, please do not interrupt.

Any questions?

Ok, let's hear from Ellen first.

## SCENARIO 3B: PROJECT DISAGREEMENT

***This scenario involves two employees who are facing issues working together so they decide to ask their manager to assist with mediating their disagreement.***

### Role-Play Scenario

Jane and Kim are sales executives at Jetwing retail company. The head of the sales department recently asked Jane and Kim to work together on a project to develop a sales plan and budget for the next quarter. The project is due in 2 weeks' time. Jane has been working at Jetwing retail company for five years and has extensive experience in the sales department. Kim joined Jetwing retail company two years ago and has an accounting background. Although Jane and Kim are both from the sales department, they have never worked together. They both decided to arrange a meeting to discuss how to work on this project of developing the sales plan and budget for the next quarter. The initial meeting went quite well, and Jane and Kim decided on who was doing what and when to complete each task. Since Jane has extensive experience working in the sales department, she agreed to draw the draft sales plan, and Kim agreed to work on the draft for the budget. Both agreed



to complete these tasks by the end of the first week. During the week, Jane asked for Kim's help in conducting some research for the sales plan. At the end of the week, Jane and Kim decided to meet again, and in the meeting, they started having disagreements regarding the workload. Jane thinks she does most of the work while Kim is only responsible for a minor part of the

project. On the other hand, Kim accused Jane of being too bossy and delegating some of her tasks to Kim. After several hours of arguments and disagreements, Jane and Kim decided to approach their manager, Lee, to mediate their dispute.

Photo by Tim Gouw on Unsplash



### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (Jane, Kim, and Lee as the mediator)
2. Read the role-play scenario information
3. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time : 10 minute
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Post Role-Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the mediation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role-play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role-play?
5. Were all parties satisfied with the outcome of the mediation?
6. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
7. What skills were evident in the role-play?

## SCENARIO 3C: THE CASE OF THE CRACKED TILES

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***This scenario involves a dispute between a construction company and a tile supplier that needed a mediator to help resolve their dispute.***



Photo by Mark Potterton on Unsplash

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (Magenta Constructions Operations Manager, Newtown Tiles Operations Manager, and the mediator)
2. Distribute the background information to the role players but NOT the mediator
3. Distribute the confidential details for each role
4. Suggested role-play time is 50 minutes
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role-play time: 20 minutes
  - Debrief time : 10 minute
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

Provide only the 'Role of Mediator' section for the mediator without providing background details. As the mediator is not being provided with the background information, the mediator will not be able to prepare in advance. The mediator is not intentionally given any background information in order to improve their listening skills.

### Role of Mediator

Magenta Construction is a home building company, and Newtown Tiles is a medium-scale Tile manufacturer and supplier in Victoria. You have been assigned to mediate a dispute between Magenta Construction and Newtown Tiles.

### Background Information (for the role-players only and not the mediator)

Magenta Constructions is a construction company in Victoria. Established two years ago, they have recently gained attention in the residential building industry for their modern home

designs. Magenta Construction's mission statement focuses on building exceptional quality homes for its customers. In order to achieve the quality-focused mission of Magenta Constructions, they have partnered with suppliers who provide quality construction materials.

Newtown Tiles is a medium-scale manufacturer and supplier of ceramic tiles. They are committed to providing high-quality products to customers while striving to ensure customer satisfaction. In order to manufacture and supply high-quality products, they have been adhering to quality management systems and conducting regular internal quality audits.

Newtown Tiles is the trusted ceramic tile supplier for Magenta Constructions and have been in a partnership for the last two years fulfilling all of Magenta Construction's residential building ceramic tile requirements. The two companies worked well in maintaining their supply relationship for the last one and a half years. However, the relationship between Magenta Construction and Newtown Tiles has become quite strained in the last six months. Magenta Constructions has been complaining about the low-quality tiles supplied by Newtown Tiles, citing the increased number of cracked tiles after installation. Newtown Tiles is fed up with Magenta Construction's complaints and cited that the increased number of cracked tiles is due to incorrect installation.

Considering the past relationship and future business prospects, the operations managers of Magenta Constructions and Newtown agreed to attend a mediation session with a professional mediator to resolve this conflict.

### **Role-Player 1: Confidential Details for Operations Manager- Magenta Constructions**

As the Operations Manager of Magenta Constructions, you have been overseeing all the operational activities of your building sites. Due to the increase in new home building contracts, you decided to recruit new tradespeople with previous experience in roofing and tiling. You have recently received several complaints from your tradespeople regarding the quality of ceramic tiles supplied by Newtown Tiles. They have mentioned that the floor tiles crack easily after installation. The finance department has flagged the increase in the replacement and reinstallation cost of tiles as an issue.

## **Role-Player 2: Confidential Details for Operations Manager- Newtown Tiles**

As the operations manager of Newtown Tiles, quality has been your number one priority. You have been following all the quality standards. However, due to the recent increase in raw materials costs, the company is struggling financially. This financial situation has led to the decision to eliminate internal quality audits, as it takes at least four people to conduct these audits. By removing the audits company is saving money. You have verified that the elimination of the audits does not affect the quality of the products, as all the other quality standards are followed accurately. You have received no complaints from any other customers except from Magenta Constructions.

## **Post Role Play Debrief Questions**

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the mediation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. What went well in the role-play?
3. What did you find difficult about the role play?
4. What would have helped improve your experience in the role play?
5. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
6. What skills were evident in the role play?

# SCENARIO 3D: TROUBLES AT ANDROMEDA TRAVELS AND TOURS PTY LTD

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***This scenario involves a dispute between a finance manager and a marketing manager working on the same project which the CEO has asked the HR manager to step in and assist with resolving the dispute.***

## **Role-Play Scenario**

Mike Raymond is the Marketing Manager, and Nate Coleman is the Finance Manager of Andromeda Travels and Tours Pty Ltd.

Mike has ten years of experience working in the tourism industry and has overseen several successful marketing campaigns. Mike recently enrolled in university to gain an academic qualification in marketing.

Nate is a graduate of one of the prestigious universities with a degree in Accounting and Finance. Nate has five years of experience in other organisation and recently joined Andromeda Travels and Tours Pty Ltd as the Finance Manager.





Photo by Damaris Isenschmid on Unsplash

Mike and Nate have been interacting on a daily basis to work on the company's marketing campaigns and related finance decisions. They are currently working together on a new social media promotional campaign to promote Andromeda Travels and Tours. Employees of the finance and marketing departments find the interdepartmental meetings refreshing and insightful, as Mike and Nate set clear agendas and facilitate insightful discussions in the meetings. Other department managers have set up an internal chat group to send quick messages to the finance and marketing department employees. Mike and Nate are two of the most frequent users, using the chat group to share ideas, and updates on projects, and send video stories using funny filters.

During the past month, the relationship between Mike and Nate has become quite strained. In the last interdepartmental meeting, Nate criticised the decisions made by Mike and questioned the credibility of Mike's decisions. Mike asked everyone else in the meeting room to leave. Everyone in the office could hear the furious voice of Mike arguing with Nate. During the next couple of days, the interdepartmental meetings were quite stressful, and both Mike and Nate continuously challenged each other's decisions and opposed each other's ideas without any reason. The growing tension and animosity between Mike and Nate have delayed the launch of the new promotional campaign.

The CEO noticed the delay in the promotional campaign and asked the HR manager to assist with resolving the dispute between Mike and Nate.

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 3 and allocate roles (Marketing Manager- Mike Raymond, Finance Manager- Nate Coleman, and the HR Manager acting as the mediator)
2. Distribute the background information to the role players and the mediator.
3. Distribute the confidential role details for Mike and Nate.
4. The suggested role-play time is 65 minutes.
  - Preparation time: 15 minutes
  - Role play time: 30 minutes
  - Debrief time: 10 minute
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Role-Player 1: Confidential Information for Mike Raymond

You are the Marketing Manager of Andromeda Travels and Tours Pty Ltd and have extensive experience overseeing successful promotional campaigns. You started working from a very young age to take care of your family and didn't have an opportunity to pursue tertiary education. However, that didn't stop you from being effective in your job and successfully achieving your work targets. You have known as a self-motivated, tenacious, and optimistic person. With your experience, you were able to develop successful marketing campaigns in the Tourism industry and got promoted to the Marketing Manager of Andromeda Travels and Tours Pty Ltd.

You are currently working on a joint project with the Finance department. With your extensive marketing background, you are expected to lead this project and allow the Finance manager and their team to make budget-related decisions. Contrary to your expectations, in a meeting with the CEO, Nate then suggested that he wants to get involved in leading this project. The CEO also approved Nate's suggestion. Therefore, you agreed with Nate's suggestion, thinking that you could expand your experience by leading an interdepartmental team. Since Nate has zero experience developing a promotional campaign, he asked you to set meeting agenda, which you did without hesitation. The first few interdepartmental meetings were refreshing, and employees from both departments shared some insightful ideas. You had a good feeling about



this project. After the initial meeting, Nate set up a social media chat group for Marketing and Finance departments and emailed you asking you to start using the chat to share the project updates and create video stories using funny filters. Although you didn't see the need for using a chat group to share updates, you decided to send the project updates through the group chat anyway.

In the meetings, you noticed that Nate tries to get credit for the ideas you share with the team, and he acts as if he came up with the ideas. One day you overheard Nate talking with one of his colleagues: "Well I don't think Mike knows anything about what is happening in the world now. Emails are ok, but group chats make it easy to share things, and you can respond quickly. And this campaign is based on social media, so we have to keep up with the technology. And to be honest, I don't know how he is keeping up in his position, but I am sure he won't be able to be promoted any further with those ancient ideas".

This conversation has troubled you greatly. After thinking about it for a long time, you decided it was time to update your academic knowledge, so you enrolled in a university to start a degree in marketing. Now having an academic qualification hasn't bothered you before, and it has never prevented you from getting promoted before, however, after overhearing Nate, you have doubts regarding your future career.

Recently, in a meeting, Nate started questioning the credibility of your ideas, which lead to a heated argument between you and Nate. In this heated argument, you decided to confront Nate about how he tries to get credit for your ideas, to which his response was, 'It's not only your ideas. I shared my views too, and we both lead this project together, so I should be getting the credit too.' With that answer, you decided you don't want to work with Nate anymore. You have spent months preparing for this project, and you really want this project to be a success. However, since the CEO wants you to work with Nate and Finance department, the last few meetings were unproductive and have led to a delay in the launch of the promotional campaign. You also heard from the other team members Nate has clearly mentioned that he won't be withdrawing from this project.

Now, the CEO has referred you to a mediation session with Nate to resolve the dispute. The HR manager is conducting the mediation session.

Your Position: Nate needs to back off from this project or work under your leadership

In the private meeting with the mediator- You are quite stressed about what Nate has talked about with his colleague. This has impacted negatively on your mental health and work performance.

**Role-Player 2: Confidential Information for Nate Coleman**

You are the Finance Manager of Andromeda Travels and Tours Pty Ltd. You have five years of work experience and graduated from one of the prestigious universities in Australia with a degree in Accounting and Finance. After joining Andromeda Travels and Tours Pty Ltd, you have been working with the marketing manager, Mike, in approving the budgets for promotional campaigns. In a recent meeting with the CEO and the Marketing manager, Mike proposed a new social media promotional campaign that he has been working on. As a social media enthusiast, this new promotional campaign seems interesting to you, and you know that your experience working on a project like this would look good on your resume. So, you asked Mike whether you and a few members of the finance department could join and lead the team to work on the new promotion campaign. The CEO also approved your idea. You could sense a slight hesitation from Mike, but with the CEO's approval, he said yes.

Since you have no previous experience working in a marketing campaign, you asked Mike to set up the meeting agenda. The first few interdepartmental meetings were refreshing, and members from both departments shared some insightful ideas. However, you noticed that Mike is taking all the decision-making authority in the project work, even the budget-related decisions. Since you are both from the same management levels, you want to demonstrate some authority in the meetings and project work. Therefore, you decided to create a social media chat group for this meeting to share and update the project details quickly as well as create videos based on current social media trends. Also, members from the financial and marketing departments liked the idea of a chat group, as it is more informal, team members can motivate each other and reduce the power distance between the managers and the other team members. Mike questioned the usefulness of the chat, but you noticed that he started using the chat to provide project updates.

Although Mike has several years of experience overseeing promotional campaigns, he is not up to date with current social media trends. In the next few meetings, you noticed that Mike doesn't appreciate and acknowledge your ideas and tries to undermine your authority in the project. This behaviour of Mike is troubling you, and even one of your colleagues asked you about Mike and his behaviours in the project work, and you decided to share your honest opinion with your colleague: 'Well I don't think Mike knows anything about what is happening in the world now. Emails are ok, but group chats make it easy to share things and you can respond quickly. And this campaign is based on social media, so we have to keep up with the technology. And to be honest, I don't know how he is keeping up in his position, but I am sure he won't be able to promote any further with those ancient ideas.'

In the last few meetings, you realised that some of Mike's ideas are not suitable for social media

promotions. Also, from a finance perspective, you were concerned about Mike's suggestions, as some of them were not profitable. So, you decided to confront him regarding the credibility of these ideas. Unexpectedly, this led to a heated argument between you and Mike. Mike ordered everyone in the room to leave and asked why you were trying to get credit for his ideas.

So you responded, 'It's not only your ideas. I shared my views too, and we both lead this project together, so I should be getting the credit too.'

Although you don't want to work with Mike, you really need to complete this project as it will be useful in expanding your work experience. So, you have clearly expressed that you will not be withdrawing from this project, and you want Mike to acknowledge your ideas. The last few meetings with Mike were unproductive and have led to a delay in the launch of the promotional campaign.

Now, the CEO has referred you to a mediation session with Mike to resolve the dispute. The HR manager is conducting the mediation session.

Your position- You don't want to withdraw from the project, and Mike should respect your ideas.

### **Role-Player 3: Mediator**

You are the HR manager of Andromeda Travels and Tours Pty Ltd. Your CEO has asked you to mediate a dispute between Mike Raymond and Nate Coleman.

### **Post Role-Play Debrief Questions**

At the conclusion of the role-play it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the mediation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. Were you able to communicate what you wanted to the other party?
3. What role did the mediator play in the mediation?
4. How did you feel about the outcome of the mediation session?
5. What went well in the role-play?
6. What did you find difficult about the role-play?
7. What would have helped improve your experience in the role-play?
8. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
9. What skills were evident in the role-play?

# SCENARIO 3E: TEAMS ARE CLASHING AT WIDE-EYE TECHNOLOGY

***This scenario involves a dispute between two teams which require a HR manager to set in and facilitate a mediation session to help resolve their dispute.***

## Role-Play Scenario

The R&D (Research and Development) department of Wide-Eye Technology consists of 2 project development teams (Team A and Team B) with five members in each team. Team A focus on the development of fundamental aspects of the product prototypes, and Team B relies on the output of Team A to work on the advanced elements of the products and finalise the product prototypes before sending them to the production department.



Photo by Marvin Meyer on Unsplash

Team B members always found that they have to spend more time correcting the work of Team A and had less time to focus on the advanced aspects of the products. Team B members had raised this concern with Team A members before, which they did not take very seriously. So, Team B mentioned it to the Head of the Department but never saw any changes in the actions of Team A members. Team B members have noticed that they are falling behind the performance targets due to unnecessary time spent on correcting the mistakes done by Team A members.

Recently, the production and sales departments are putting immense pressure on R&D Team A to complete the new product prototypes quickly and have alerted the fact that Team A will be held accountable if there are any delays in the production process, which could cost a significant loss to the company.

Team B claimed that they were swamped with work as they had to focus on correcting the mistakes done by Team A, which is causing the team to get behind on their own work. Team A took great offence to these claims made by Team B, and they met with the Head of the Department and explained that they were doing the best they could and that the fundamental aspect of the prototype takes more time to develop than the final elements of the prototype.

After Team B's meeting with the Head of the Department, heated arguments occurred between Team A and Team B members. These arguments lead to an exchange of unpleasant words resulting in Team A members name-calling Team B members.

Team A thinks Team B members are perfectionists and accuses Team B of making up errors. Team B members accused Team A members of their know-it-all attitude, but not doing their tasks correctly.

After these arguments, communication between the two teams broke down, leading to even lower performances in both teams.

The Head of the Department suggested the HR manager acts as a mediator to resolve the dispute between the two teams. Therefore, the HR manager has invited two representatives from each team to attend the mediation session.

### Role-Play Instructions

1. Organise participants into groups of 5 (2 participants representing Team A and 2 participants representing Team B and an HR manager acting as the mediator).
2. Ask participants to read role-play scenario information.
3. Suggested role-play time is 60 minutes.
  - Preparation time: 10 minutes
  - Role-play time: 30 minutes
  - Debrief time: 10 minute
  - Group debrief time: 10 minutes

### Post Role-Play Debrief Questions

At the conclusion of the role-play, it is imperative that the participants are given the opportunity to debrief with each other and other role-playing groups. The debrief should be prefaced by first outlining the importance of feedback in the spirit of learning through action and reflection and not seen as the opportunity to highlight weaknesses or communicate criticism. The following questions can be utilised to guide the debrief process, with the ability to include further content-specific questions on the mediation process and/or skills in accordance with your curriculum.

1. How did you find the role-play exercise?
2. Were you able to communicate what you wanted to the other party?
3. Were both parties satisfied with the outcome of the mediation?
4. What role did the mediator play in the mediation?
5. How did you feel about the outcome of the mediation session?
6. What went well in the role-play?
7. What did you find difficult about the role-play?
8. What would have helped improve your experience in the role-play?
9. What would you do differently next time you engage in a similar conversation?
10. What skills were evident in the role-play?







Photo by DocuSign on Unsplash

**Workplace Role Play Scenarios:**

**Practise Navigating Difficult Conversations, Negotiation and Mediation**



**Dr Sarah Steen, FHEA.**

# VERSIONING HISTORY

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This page provides a record of changes made to this textbook. Each set of edits is acknowledged with a 0.01 increase in the version number. The exported files for this toolkit reflect the most recent version.

If you find an error, please contact [s.steen@deakin.edu.au](mailto:s.steen@deakin.edu.au)

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Version	Date	Change	Details
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