

Change Makers - Professional Development Plan

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Introduction

Research suggests that a Personal Development Plan is a structured self reflection of the skills a person possesses and skills that they need to develop. The QAA suggests that learning is a lifelong and life-wide process and can be used to evaluate a person's skillset, and where they need to develop (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2009).

Skills Audit

To help identify areas for improvement, the author conducted a skills audit, to assist with the completion of a skills audit, the author used an online skills audit provider, career smart. The career smart skills audit asked a number of questions, to which had to be answered, once all questions had been answered, the system output areas for development. The researcher has used The Dot Group as a case study to complete this personal development plan. The Dot Group is the author's own brand, and supplies event and communication solutions.

Commercial Awareness

The audit shows that Commercial Awareness is an area that's important, and an area that is one of the most important to develop. Research suggests that Commercially Aware people are more employable, due to reasons such as but not limited to; proactive thinking, development of new ideas and help reduce commercial risk (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, n.d.).

Self Management

Self management is another area highlighted in the skills audit, as an area that also requires further development. Asana, an online time management tool argues that Self Management in Business covers many properties, including Time Management, Motivation, Stress Management, Adaptability and Personal Development (Alicia Raeburn, 2022).

Team Work

The report noted that areas that are well developed, include but not limited to Team Work, Customer Service, Influence and Digital Competencies. Teamwork can be defined as “the activity of working together in a group with other people, especially when this is successful” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). This tends to imply that teamwork has to end in a successful outcome. In argument to this, Google’s dictionary defines Teamwork as “the combined action of a group, especially when effective and efficient” (Google Dictionary, n.d.). This implies that Teamwork is the combination of people working together to achieve a common goal.

Following on from this audit, the author has collated a SMART table to help identify learnings from the skills audit and realistic timeframes to reach a goal. Research into habit forming seems to suggest that 10 weeks is a realistic time frame to effectively delete old habits (Gardner, Lally and Wardle, 2012).

Interest and Passion

The author has identified key areas of interest, which include:

- Live Music
- Events
- Customer Service
- Self Management
- Creating an environment for people to enjoy

Smart Analysis

Specific Goal	How will it be measured	Is it attainable	Is it relevant to the industry	When will it be complete	How to obtain the goal
Become more Organised and use time more effectively	Research suggests, better time management can help reduce stress and a better work life balance (bakker elkhuisen, n.d.). Using this data, the measurement will be based on a reduction in stress, and a more productive use of time.	Using tools to assist with time management and planning such as a calendar, the author believes this goal is attainable within a relatively short time frame.	The Business Sector, Specifically the events sector is reliant on time management and having a good schedule.	The Short to Mid term goals, is to better manage productive time, and reduce procrastinating time.	Using a suite of tools, such as Calendar and time management plugins may help effect better use of time. Time Blocking in a calendar may further assist with productivity.
Working as part of a team / Building Teamwork Skills.	Bright HR say teamwork and collaboration innovate faster, work more efficiently and learn faster than individuals outside of a team (brighthr, 2010). Using this hypothesis, the author will use	Using a mix of online tools such as Zoom, Google Docs and Kanban boards can be useful tools to assist with teamwork. The author believes this goal is attainable, both for virtual and local projects.	Teamwork is an important tool for Business, and can help better a customer's experience. Scarnati defines customer experience as "as a cooperative process that allows ordinary people to achieve	The author would like to progress team working skills over the next academic year, and aims to become more knowledgeable with team working within the next 6-8 months.	Research into online resources and methodologies that could aid teamwork.

	productivity and innovation as a measurable for this goal.		extraordinary results” (Scarnati, 2001). Hospitality as a sector has many challenges, and at times the requirement on team members to provide an extraordinary customer experience requires extensive team work.		
Self Management and reduce procrastination.	Steel suggests that procrastination has become a widely known phenomenon, however delivering a method to measure procrastination has proven complicated (Steel, Brothen and Wambach, 2001). Further research suggests there are 2 common scales used to measure procrastination, The Pure Procrastination Scale, and the	Using various methods, such as removing distractions, taking regular short breaks and goal setting could alleviate procrastination tendencies. The author therefore believes this goal is attainable.	The author feels that sometimes in the events and hospitality sector a degree of procrastination is good, as it can enable tasks to get completed that may otherwise be forgotten about. However, as a whole procrastination deviates from an efficient working practice, and could slow decision making and planning.	Research suggests that it can take up to 10 Weeks to break a habit and learn a new one (Gardner, Lally and Wardle, 2012).	Following on from research, the author believes he can reduce procrastination tendencies by reducing distractions and spending more time focussing on a single project or task.

	irritative procrastination scale (Svartdal, 2015). .				
Commercial Awareness	Research Suggests that one way to gauge business awareness is to evaluate your experiences on competition, recent business news, challenges facing a sector and learnings from previous challenges (Manchester University, n.d.).	Yes, using online resources such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok can help gain an insight into what other businesses are doing, and learn about business news, and industry updates. Additionally, joining an association can help further gain information regarding a specific sector.	The institute of chartered accountants states, people who are commercially aware are also proactive, develop new ideas are ways of working, help reduce risk and its a fundamental skill to have for management or directorship roles (icaew, 2019).	The author already feels fairly commercially aware, but would like to increase commercial awareness skills over the next 3-4 months.	The author is in the process of creating his own business, and believes that the learnings from this will help increase commercial awareness. Completing SWOT & PESTLE exercises on other companies in the same field, will help understand what other organisations are doing, and therefore learn for his own business.

Critical Evaluation

The author believes the most important skill to focus on is procrastination, and that's a skill that directly impacts productive work time, and one that they feel affects most of the other skills listed. Furthermore, using the methods listed in some of the other sections on the SMART evaluation above could be tools to help alleviate procrastination.

Time blocking

Following research into productive time management, time blocking strategies allow proactive time management. Online ToDo lists can assist with time blocking, one such service ToDoist states that time blocking can allow you to complete many projects, be more proactive, and less reactive and help find time for "big picture thinking" (Scroggs, n.d.).

Pros of Time Blocking can include:

- More Productive use of Time
- A list of tasks to complete, and in what time frames
- Proactive Planning
- Offering a good customer service allowing customers to have proactive contact rather than reactive contact
- Better to gain business prospects and customers

Cons of Time Blocking can include:

- Force projects to be completed in a set space of time, therefor projects may be rushed
- You may run out of time to complete a set task
-

Following on from this, the author used time blocking to help manage a busy week where they had a lot of tasks to complete, Appendix 1 shows the author time blocking in google calendar. Appendix 1 shows some overlapping tasks, the tasks overlapping are to count for discrepancies in time, as some tasks may require more or less time.

Edutainment

One area identified in the above SMART table, is Commercial Awareness, the researcher believes that this is a learning point that he will need to expand his knowledge on. Having a good knowledge of commercial awareness, will help grow the author's own brand. Using online platforms, such as Youtube and TikTok could be a good method to learn new skills in relation to commercial awareness. Research Suggests, TikTok has been an ever popular platform to gain new skills and enhance knowledge on pre-existing skills (Fanbytes, 2020).

Pros of influencer learning

- Easy to access information
- "Edutainment" is a fun way to learn new skills and information
- A large array of entrepreneurs on platforms such as TikTok and Youtube who share their skills and provide free educational videos in relation to business.
- Most platforms are free

- Many videos will focus on a specific event or business that does something well

Pros of influencer learning

- There's a vast array of videos, some are not as helpful as others
- Some may be biased, as they are provided by influencers that have a paid for course, with the aim to direct viewers to the paid for course.
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In contrast to this, researching into the structures of corporations, and how they work could provide a valuable insight into commercial awareness.

Team Working Tools

An investigation into tools that can aid team work was conducted by the writer, and many tools have been identified. Services such as Trello, an online collaborative KanBan tool, Asana an online collaboration suite or shared document services such as Google Drive all could assist with effective team working.

Online tools seem to provide great platforms to assist with working in a team, with a focus towards collaboration. In contrast to online tools, research suggests that there are more tangible factors to effective team work.

Harvard Business Review suggests that teamwork is most effective in small well structured teams, and teams with a diverse skill set (Haas and Mortensen, 2016).

Hospitality remains a good case study for teamwork, with different departments responsible for a different part of the guest or customer experience. An example would be the Food and Beverage team collaborating with the Back of House team to ensure service can be timed to follow a schedule (Detail 2 Recruitment, 2020). Additionally, teamwork can help establish a safe working environment, an example of this would be when completing a lift, where multiple people work together to safely lift a large item.

We've discussed tools available to help develop skills, however research suggests that different strategies suit different people. Zapier, an online automation service, describes different strategies to learn and develop skills:

Meaningful Learning

Zapier suggests that learning new skills should have a meaning behind them, in contrast to using traditional learning styles. As an example, learning something without an end goal or without meaning is likely to result in the newly learnt skill being forgotten (Farheen Gani, 2017).

Learn by Doing

Skill development is a constant process, once a new skill has been acquired, it should be rehearsed, and used often to ensure the skills learnt are not forgotten (Farheen Gani, 2017).

Passing your learning on.

A study was conducted containing two groups both learning the same skill, one group had to learn a new skill with the expectation to teach the skill to others, and one group just had to

learn the new skill. The group that had to teach the skill to others, succeeded in a higher retention rate of the new skill over the group that did not (Nestojko et al., 2014).

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