

Reflective Summary



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The purpose of this reflective summary is to reflect on the group assignment and how I impacted the outcome of our project. Additionally, I will discuss how digital technology was utilised within the project and how it is commonly used in the creative industry.

1. Why is a reflective summary important?

A reflective summary is important because it is a platform for the author to recount their experience within a project or life experience and then learn what they could have done to achieve a better result (Oxbridge Essays, 2020). Reflective writing can be used as a tool in all industries to help identify unseen issues and is ultimately a skill that can be developed over time. It is not always easy for writers to criticise themselves when writing (Epp, 2008). By writing this reflective summary, I can hope to better myself and also learn how to achieve better results in future projects that I am involved in.

2. The assignment

The assignment had my class put into groups of three to four. Our task was to develop an original artist campaign to release and promote a single within a theoretical £500 budget. At first, my thoughts of working in a group with people I had only known for a few weeks seemed quite daunting, but I believe I got into a good group with people who know what they are talking about. Our group, titled 'Raspberry Beret', originally consisted of myself, Ben and Emma, with Kalina joining us further on due to her group being disbanded. The song we decided on creating a campaign for was titled "Who We Are" by Aramu Muru (Ben's electronic duo). As Aramu Muru was a brand new artist, it added more excitement to the project as we were essentially creating a new artist and the campaign for the song. This added an extra challenge for us to tackle as a team, and I believe it helped strengthen our teamwork skills.

The music industry is built on collaboration and is an integral part of success because you are always in situations where you need to collaborate with others (Mrugala, 2017). Examples of this can be seen in the team efforts of an orchestra or band. However, teamwork is also rather essential in the music business as well (Mrugala, 2017). To put it in perspective, a professional musician needs a team around them to continue being successful. They will need a team that can include a manager, a live agent, publicists, music publishers, lawyers, distributors and sometimes more, depending on what their record label provides (Soundfly Partners, 2017). When I was younger, I used to have the idea of being able to do everything in music independently, and with age, I have learned more and more every year how important working in a team is when it comes to being successful.

3. First steps

The group's first step was to create a Whatsapp group and then coordinate a Zoom meeting to decide what song we would make a campaign for. Fortunately, we had plenty of ideas to choose from. One idea was to use a song that I had already written and recorded, which was ready for release, but due to the music already being mastered and finalised, it seemed too easy to put the idea forward. Another idea was to contact a rapper that Emma was friends with and speak to her about writing a new song that we could record and release, as she

had been inactive as of recent. The final idea was a beat that Ben and his friend were making, which needed a singer.

We settled on the latter, as Ben and his co-writer didn't even have an alias yet, and it seemed an exciting prospect to create a new song as well as a new artist. This led to an A&R session of the track, where we all listened and discussed our thoughts on the track. As the track was only the instrumental, there wasn't too much feedback for us to give. However, one piece of feedback I offered was to shorten the song's length when uploading to DSPs (Digital Service Providers). It was initially between 6-7 minutes long. By shortening the length, I believed the song would see more commercial success. This is because many believe that due to the influence of streaming platforms algorithms and the shrinking attention spans of today's society, shorter songs are more likely to be listened to all the way through. A song on Spotify must be streamed for 30 seconds to count as a stream, but if a listener was to skip the song before the end, this might affect the songs' rankings (Bemrose, 2019).

We all agreed upon my idea and proceeded to the next step, which was sourcing vocals. This task was assigned to Ben, as it was his song, and he had a vocalist in mind that he wanted to use. With this done, it was now time to discuss our roles and what we could all bring to the table. When Kalina joined the team, we had to step back to where we started for just a moment so that she could see what we were working on and what we had achieved so far, as she joined us reasonably far into the project.

The first thing we did with her was hold another A&R session, which was needed anyhow as the song now featured vocals from Manchester-based singer Yemi Bolatiwa, sourced by Ben. With vocals secured, each member could provide feedback on the song before the final mix. Being a vocalist, Kalina was able to provide some valuable feedback on the vocal mixing. This inspired me to offer my producer's services to the track at a discounted fee. Later on, we decided not to my producer as Ben's musical partner could mix it for free. We then assigned Kalina with the role of budgeting, as we were juggling this between us at the time.

4. My role

My role consisted of organising assets that could be used for song promotion via our social media pages that Emma had created. I'm not very good with editing software, at least not good enough to make things myself, so I contacted two guys I had worked with before via Fiverr. I used their services to animate and edit short promotional videos for the group to use. I also took it upon myself to be in charge of evidencing everything we did as a group and ensuring others did the same, as we knew we still had to document our work in a portfolio after. Sometimes getting carried away in the project can cause people to forget we are doing it for an assignment, but we remembered regardless.

I found that it had also become my role to organise when and how often we would meet on Zoom to discuss the status of our project. This was a role that I enjoyed, as I like to be

organised, and due to my previous people management skills, I found it easy to keep everyone motivated on the task at hand.

As we worked together on this project, I wanted to understand better how I could maximize my contributions, strengthen my weaknesses, effectively respond to any threats, and take advantages of my opportunities. To do so, I turned to a popular business tool, the SWOT analysis. It is seen as an essential tool that provides insight into a company's business environment, both internally (strengths and weaknesses) and externally (opportunities and threats). It is often favoured over similar tools used for strategy analysis, such as PEST analysis and Porter's Five Forces analysis, due to its simplicity (Phadermrod, Crowder and Wills, 2019). My completed SWOT analysis is presented in Figure 1.

Strengths • Creative • Good problem solving • Well organised	Weaknesses • Can sometimes delegate too much • Sometimes forgetful • Impatient
Opportunities • Learn more about PR from Ben • Potentially work together as a team in the future on projects • Expand my network and establish connections	Threats • May forget something vital which in a real-life scenario could affect my career • May rush unfinished projects due to impatience • By delegating too much, it could leave me with no work to do, which gives people the assumption that I'm lazy

Fig. 1: SWOT Analysis

Writing this SWOT Analysis was not an easy task, as it can be pretty intimidating to some to honestly list your weaknesses. Although, I now feel that by using this SWOT analysis, I can understand how to use my strengths to utilise my opportunities.

5. Belbin team roles

Since this was a team project requiring extensive collaboration, I wanted to better understand how each member contributed and found the Belbin Model of Team Roles an effective tool. As seen in figure 2, there are nine team roles, according to Belbin.

Resource Investigator	Helps in finding ideas for the team. They are often enthusiastic and love exploring new opportunities. A weakness of this role is they may forget to follow up leads and can sometimes be over-optimistic.
Teamworker	Helps the team to gel and sometimes completes work on behalf of the group. They are often very cooperative and diplomatic. A weakness of this role is they

	can sometimes be indecisive and tends to avoid confrontation.
Co-ordinator	A Co-ordinator helps the team to focus on their objectives, and delegates work out appropriately. They are usually mature and confident but can sometimes be seen as manipulative or lazy as they can occasionally over-delegate tasks.
Plant	A Plant helps in solving problems unconventionally and brings creativity to the team. They are usually very creative and imaginative but may sometimes be somewhat absent-minded or forgetful.
Monitor Evaluator	Helps in making impartial judgements where required and provides a logical eye to the team. They are strategic and can see all options and judges them accurately. Sometimes they may be slow to come to decisions and cannot inspire others.
Specialist	Helps in bringing in-depth knowledge to critical areas of the team. They are usually single-minded and dedicated. Sometimes they can overload you with information, which can be seen as a weakness.
Shaper	A Shaper helps provide the drive to ensure that the team doesn't lose focus on the task. They can be challenging, and they thrive under pressure. Sometimes they may be seen as aggressive and can offend people's feelings.
Implementer	Helps in planning a workable strategy. They are practical and reliable but may be slow to respond to new possibilities.
Completer Finisher	Helps near the end of tasks to polish and check work for errors. They search out for mistakes and are perfectionists. Sometimes they can be reluctant to delegate and often accused of taking their perfectionism to extremes.

Fig. 2: Belbin's nine team roles (Belbin, 2021).

Although Belbin once said that a team of six is the best to solve complex problems (Fisher, Hunter and Macrosson, 1998), I found that our group of 4 was sufficient. I would consider myself a Plant and a Co-ordinator when referring to the nine Belbin team roles (Belbin, 2021). I chose Plant because I believe I have used my creativity to create ideas and solve any problems that we have faced. An example of a problem that I solved with my creativity is receiving artwork with incorrect spelling. Due to time constraints, I fixed the artwork myself

using Microsoft Paint. I also found that I could be pretty forgetful at times too, which was a weakness that continued to annoy me. For example, if I had worked my day job on the weekend, I would find it hard to remember what I had to do for the project without consulting the Whatsapp group. I also identify as a Co-Ordinator because I would regularly check up on people in the Whatsapp group to ensure that tasks were being completed and that everyone was okay with their assigned jobs (Belbin, 2021).

If I had to describe my other team members as one of the nine Belbin team roles, I would label Ben a Specialist. When he knows something, he knows it to the finest detail but can sometimes overload us with information we don't fully understand. Because the song our project was focussing on was created by Ben, I would also say that we share a Plant role. His creativity gave us the music that our promotional campaign is for. I would label Emma a Resource Investigator as she is very good at exploring new ideas but can sometimes forget to follow up on some of the ideas. Finally, I would label Kalina an Implementer, as she can be efficient and reliable but occasionally slow when responding to new ideas or tasks to do (Belin, 2021).

6. Utilising digital technology in the creative industry

Digital technology is often referred to as the reason for growth or innovation in creative industries (Mangematin, Sapsed and Schüßler, 2014). Some also note that it has essentially changed the music industry for the better. Digital technology has a significant impact on creating and developing products and distributing products to consumers and stakeholders. The creative industry primarily utilises digital technology daily, from creating digital artwork to distributing music through digital service providers (Mangematin, Sapsed and Schüßler, 2014). Examples of digital technology used in our group project range from simple software such as Microsoft Paint to Adobe Photoshop and Adobe After Effects.

I utilised Microsoft Paint after receiving two artwork designs for the project that had incorrect spelling. Using Microsoft Paint, I could paste the correct text onto the artwork, which was a quick fix. Adobe After Effects was utilised by two guys I usually contact for artwork via Fiverr. They used the software to animate a piece of artwork that I had and added some sound to another piece of artwork. As I do not possess the skills to use Adobe After Effects, it seemed a less time consuming and somewhat inexpensive alternative to learning to do it myself, and thanks to Fiverr, this was all made possible. Emma used Adobe Photoshop to create promotional banners and artwork that she could post onto the social media she managed. Of course, the most important digital technology that we used within our project is DSPs. The ability to upload the song digitally to multiple platforms makes it almost too easy for people to spread their music globally.

Because digital technology has significantly transformed the landscape of creative industries, it is easier to copy and distribute material through the Internet. This greatly benefits technology and communication companies, which are experts in employing digital information, making them the new middlemen between artists and consumers (Jones, Lorenzen and Sapsed, 2015). An example of this can be seen in Apple with iTunes, which originally took over physical CD sales to invent digital downloads (Jones, Lorenzen and

Sapsed, 2015). However, digital downloads have now been replaced by the likes of Spotify, which is currently dominating the sales, generating more revenue than the sales of CD's, vinyl and digital downloads combined (Clough, 2019). This shows how digital technology, such as uploading music to streaming platforms, has changed how consumers listen and interact with artists.

Other examples of how digital technology has changed the creative industry can be seen in copyright and blockchain. Digital Technology has made it easier for people to steal others' ideas. However, digital technology has also made it easier for stakeholders to see copyright infringement regarding their material being used without their permission. Content creators can do this thanks to tools such as Content ID on YouTube, a tool that scans all videos uploaded against a database of files that copyright holders submit (Google, 2021). Artists like Gramatik and Pitbull support blockchain's technology in the music industry. It means artists can release music more efficiently and streamline royalty payments and eliminate very costly intermediaries from the process of releasing music receiving royalties (Daley, 2020).

7. Conclusion

I believe that I completed my tasks to the best of my ability. Although I did find myself preoccupied with other assignments towards the start, I feel we all really gelled and came together to put everything into the assignment towards the last few weeks of the project. Ben's creation of the song and marketing plans were fantastic, and he had much knowledge due to working in PR that we all took on board. Emma's social media planning was excellent, and I believe she excelled in creating Aramu Muru's social media pages and her attempt to gain a following. Kalina was brilliant in organising the split sheets for the singer, and her budgeting skills were very much needed. Lastly, I believe Ben and Emma could use the assets I had created to do their jobs properly.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the project and learnt a lot about myself when working with a group to achieve the same goal. I would happily work with this group again in the future. The development of digital technology in the creative industry has only made our job easier as the years go by. It is rather exciting to think about which digital technologies will shape the future of the creative industries.

Word Count: 2344

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