

MA International Music Marketing
Module: Creation in International Music
Marketing Term 3: Reflective Commentary

Chiara Filomeni

2122216

18/10/2022

Introduction

For the purpose of this reflective piece, I want to develop my skills in how to run a new project effectively. This will implicate a better understanding of the market I am considering for my project and the marketing strategies used by competitors.

The resources I found more useful and applicable to my journey have been mainly Gibb's reflective cycle - which I decided to apply partially or entirely during the whole course of my reflective commentary - mindtools.com - kindly suggested by my programme leader Steve Cole, after an interesting conversation about where to start to write a reflective piece - a SWOT analysis - which I found to be a fundamental element for my personal development plan.

My reflective commentary was also supported by other sources, which I will illustrate subsequently. They have as well contributed to the finalisation of my project, expanding my skills and helping me to have a complete view of my approach to my project.

Start With Why

When I was reading again my written proposal handed over a few months ago, I returned to the concept of the very first question I asked myself before starting my project of the creation of a music school: why.

Reading Sinek's book was very interesting for me because it opened my eyes to the importance of the clarity of why (Sinek, 2009). As Sinek points out, "it all starts with clarity" (Sinek, 2009). If you don't know why you're doing what you're doing, the project you're planning to do will have its limits from the very beginning.

It is precisely from this reflection that I began to ask myself not only the reason for my decision to create a music school - which, summed up in a sentence, is to give the opportunity to young people who want to start making music to learn the essential elements of this discipline, ie voice and rhythm, so as to find themselves benefited if they decided to start studying any musical instrument - but also the reason why I am writing this reflective commentary. Surely it is part of my assessment, but this doesn't tell the deep Why.

I believe that thanks to this simple and direct question - Why? - I have been able to identify the importance of the expression of my ideas in writing.

I have always given importance to writing: as a songwriter, I know that the words are always clearer once they have been put on paper, but despite being accustomed to

writing lyrics and expressing my emotions and my thoughts in this way, it was not easy and immediate for me to take this path of writing this reflective analysis.

Below, I will present some phases experienced while I was working on this assignment, but in this paragraph, my intention was to give the right importance to reading *Start With Why* by Simon Sinek: during these months spent doing research and deepening thoughts, resources and methodologies, this book periodically reminded me of the meaning of all this, each time bringing to light the reasons, the basics, the foundations of this assessment.

The Project

Although the point of this reflective composition is to work on personal growth and the development of critical thinking related to the methodologies used during the project, I think it is still necessary to dwell briefly on what my final project consists of.

The assignment's objective is to develop a three-year marketing plan on a topic of our choice.

Despite I have always focused more on my path as an artist, I found the idea of looking so far ahead in my music career very complex. Therefore, I thought that it would be more accessible for me to work on a parallel project, which I have had in mind for a long time and which, thanks to the knowledge acquired during this master's year in International Music Marketing, now seems much closer and more concrete, possible to achieve.

The idea is to open a music school for young pupils: my vision is built on the belief that music learning works best when the voice and the whole body are involved.

The main reason that prompted me and Daniel to the creation of a music school was the need to implement some shortcomings that we both suffered during our musical growth.

We wondered what would be useful to know from the first approach to music, and we noticed a lack of connection between body movement, rhythm, singing and music theory. These elements are essential for any instrument you want to undertake in your musical path.

The mission of All About Music as a school is to prepare the pupils to develop a music foundation that will inspire them and provide them with the right tools to approach different musical instruments.

We encourage children and young people to take bold and fearless musical steps, to approach any instrument they are playing or want to play following their predisposition and interest, learning to express themselves in a very personal musical way.

Some of the students might develop an interest in singing, as well as show more propensity for rhythm, thus deciding to continue their musical path approaching the drums, bass, and piano - considered a percussion instrument, given the mechanism connected to hammers, but especially for its eclecticism and complexity (Roger, no date).

SWOT analysis

I found it very beneficial to start my personal development plan by conducting a SWOT analysis, to examine my strengths and overcome my weaknesses.

The first consideration concerned my abilities, which I then considered as strengths. I started to wonder what I was good at, which achievements I was proud of, and if that could be considered a resource for others and an advantage over my competitors. (Putter, 2021).

The answer that I have elaborated on is closely connected to the skills acquired during these years as a vocal coach: I noticed that in addition to the ability to explain certain musical notions simply and intuitively, I can relate well with my students, whether they are adults or children. I can empathise with pupils when something is particularly difficult and takes more time to master. Learning a new instrument requires a lot of patience, which I have developed over the years working with myself, and which I am now sharing with my student, showing them how to understand their own needs, limits, priorities and capabilities: what comes out of it is a better understanding and delineation of their own objectives and the goals to be reached together during the musical journey undertaken.

This consideration of my abilities made me conscious of a very important aspect of the project itself: by creating a school of music, I could be able to efficiently and effectively share the musical notions that I intend to implement in my teaching methodology, leading students to feel comfortable enough to embark on a long-term musical path, without abandoning after the first attempts, but persevering because they feel comfortable with themselves and with me as a coach.

After identifying my strengths, I committed to determining my weaknesses, in order to prevent possible issues from arising during the implementation of the project itself.

I noticed that there are certain tasks that I try to avoid due to a lack of confidence (Putter, 2021). One of these is the implementation of the marketing ideas learned during the course of my studies and extremely useful for my project of creating a music school. Although I know that I can plan marketing strategies - which are closely related to research and acquired notions - I cannot think of being able to implement what I planned,

thus developing an imposter syndrome. It takes several forms, but the most common is the one I have experienced, which is the feeling of not being good as everyone else (Day, 2021). After reading a very compelling article by the therapist Danielle Day, which was gently suggested by Karma Bertelsen - one of the most outstanding tutors during the course of the year - I discovered that imposter syndrome is rooted in anxiety, which is in its turn based on thoughts. Thus, imposter syndrome is an experience of thoughts that then create uneasy feelings of nervousness and apprehension (Day, 2021). Even though it seems that feelings must be the main issue, in reality, they are the natural response to thoughts.

What I have learned from this article and the words of this therapist is that comparison is mostly what is convincing us we are imposters, not good enough to deal with a certain situation. Consciously limiting comparisons to others can really help to relieve this self-doubt, together with accepting the fact that everyone has unique abilities (Rypole, 2021). It is completely natural to struggle, but we are strong enough to act despite our feelings, in the same way we manage to work out when we are not motivated, or we are doing something even if it's scary (Day, 2021).

Sometimes I am also believing I can be a “soloist” (Rypole, 2021), so that I should be able to handle everything solo, otherwise I consider myself unworthy because I didn't manage to achieve success independently. I am finally starting to believe that asking someone for help, or accepting support when it's offered, doesn't mean failing my own high standard (Rypole, 2021).

Another very important point is the acceptance of failure (Day, 2021). This is a very big theme that involves me emotionally and sometimes it is blocking me from acting.

As Danielle Day explains, failures are everywhere at any time, but the beauty of human beings is that can adjust, adapt, and refocus (Day, 2021). This is what I am reminding myself of every time I am feeling like an imposter and I think failure will affect my performance and compromise my success: I am deliberately choosing to view failure as a stepping stone to success, which can help me to overcome the feelings of imposter syndrome (BetterHelp Editorial Team, 2022).

The conduct of the SWOT analysis subsequently converged on the investigation of opportunities and threats, which are more focused on external factors.

What I found to be an opportunity to take was the chance to tap into an undeveloped niche in the music school marketplace (Putter, 2021). The target audience I have in mind is a specific group of people, who want to learn how to use the voice considering it as the only internal instrument we possess, accompanied by the development of a sense of

rhythm and body coordination. Developing a new method and having a specific target will help me to differentiate my business from my competitors, creating a space and an opportunity in the crowded market of music schools.

What I identified as a threat is having a limited budget at my disposal and the risk that my weaknesses could become a threat (Putter, 2021) if not taken under control: to avoid this, I need to be careful not to be held back by the fear of failure.

To turn the limited budget into an opportunity, I thought I'd start researching funds that can be used by young entrepreneurs, and if this research is not successful, I'd strive to make my marketing strategy as organic as possible, with the use of specific tags, the identification of effective marketing strategies used by competitors, and the channelling of my energies into word-of-mouth and building a good reputation from the very beginning with the help of ambassadors and good reviews from my current vocal students.

Reflecting with others

Deciding to engage with other people around me and present my ideas about my project was crucial to conducting my reflective commentary.

I thought this would give me a better picture of my work, so I began to interrogate myself about the value of reflecting in conversation with others and the resulting benefits: considering that sharing thoughts and ideas can provide guidance with perspective-taking (Brookfield, 1995), I started a series of conversations with various people around me.

It was very interesting for me to start my journey with a zoom call with my program leader Steve Cole. I had the opportunity to gain his perspective on my project, being more aware of some elements I didn't acknowledge before our conversation. I also managed to gain a deeper understanding of how to take my work to the next level.

Another interesting aspect that I reflected on after reading a valuable article written by the University of Edinburgh, was the fact that it is very likely that different types of conversations will fluidly switch back and forth between reflective and non-reflective elements, giving the chance to receive feedback, extremely valuable to conduct an analysis of an assignment (The University of Edinburgh, 2018).

Firstly, Steve and I talked about the topics to be presented in my reflective commentary. Coming from a different academic methodology acquired during my studies in economics in Italy, I explained to Steve the difficulty of understanding how to set this reflective piece,

diversifying it from a regular essay. It was the first time I had to try my hand at this kind of writing, much more personal, but at the same time endorsed by valid academic resources and research that can support my thoughts and the way I reflect on the path taken during this assessment. It wasn't quite immediate at first, and I brought a lot of questions to Steve, but once our call was over, I had much clearer ideas, understanding how to differentiate the rest of the assessment - developing a portfolio and a presentation - from the reflective commentary.

One of the most useful tips during the conversation with Steve was to arrange a call with the manager of the marketing department of Tileyard Education - Angie Bhandal. Considering that my task was to develop a three-year marketing plan for the project that I decided to undertake - the creation of a music school - talking with Angie helped me with another very important aspect: the chance to capture the vision of a person who deals with marketing campaigns on a daily basis.

If Steve gave me a great hand developing the main topics for this reflective commentary, Angie definitely contributed to the planning of my three-year marketing plan, suggesting valid ideas on how to set up both the research work that was still in place back then and concretely referring to how to undertake this project in practice.

In the written proposal I handed in a few months ago, I was also unsure about the development of SEO and the use of PPC from the first year of my marketing plan. I asked Angie to give me her expert opinion, and she reassured me by making me understand that my biggest stumbling block - namely the lack of large funds - should not block me or scare me, because the creation of a music school is very much based on reputation and word of mouth, and these two things are fortunately disconnected almost completely from monetary investment in the project itself (Bhandal, 2022).

Tileyard Education has also provided me with a mentor with whom I could meet and discuss my goals and how to proceed in my musical career. I had the honour of having Sister Bliss as my mentor. Founder of the music project Faithless, Sister Bliss has 28 years of career as a DJ and is now a female icon of the world electronic music scene (Tileyard Education, 2022).

Our conversations were initially aimed at my project as a singer-songwriter, and I must admit that until now it is still the focus of our conversations every time we meet.

However, in our last session, we diverted, addressing the topic of my intention to open a music school. I really appreciated the feedback received from Sister Bliss, and I was pleased to see that she also suggested that I deepen some research that will be very useful for the development of the teaching method. We talked about the Feldenkrais

method, from which I can take inspiration on how to apply the movement of the body and coordinate it to the use of the voice.

Once again I was happy to be able to express my ideas out loud and have the chance to compare my thoughts with a person with years of experience. Sister Bliss has perfectly covered the role of mentor, which is normally a person with more experience, in the music field for long time and whom I admire very much (The University of Edinburgh, 2018).

A common element in these different types of conversation is the use of reflective listening (Herrity, 2022).

Reflective listening is a communication technique in which the listener aims to understand the speaker's concept and then communicates it back to them to establish it was understood accurately. Most conversation techniques generally require the listener to provide a response to the speaker's information, but reflective listening expects the speaker to be able to reflect on the speaker's ideas and feelings as meticulously as possible. Focusing on words, tone of voice and non-verbal indications, I was able to grasp as much as possible from the different conversations I had with the persons mentioned above (Herrity, 2022).

Reflective listening is tightly connected to active listening (MindTools, 2009).

Being an active listener means paying the right attention to the speaker, looking directly at the person if the communication is happening face to face, or using verbal comments to encourage the speaker you are present in the conversation. Using body language and other signs to acknowledge your interest in the conversation can help the speaker to stay focused and deliver the message in a proper way and can also benefit the attention of the listener - which was my role most of the time during those conversations (MindTools, 2009).

Active listening is a model for appreciation and comprehension, gaining information and a new perspective on the topic of the conversation. It's very important to be honest, open and to assert opinions respectfully (MindTools, 2009).

I can certainly say that this was my experience of conversation with the people who contributed by lending their invaluable help during the course of this final assessment.

To-do lists

I have always been a big fan of to-do lists, especially since I live in London: they have always helped me to have direction during my days, without delaying too much the most urgent matters.

During this master's course of study, I noticed that my to-do lists helped me stay focused. I have always attended classes during the academic year, but the third term was mainly focused on self-management.

Since my free time increased - the lessons have mostly been online and have been reduced to a few hours a month to allow us more time to spend on the final assessment - I have noticed that I started to have difficulty managing my time as effectively as before. After reading an interesting article about some time management strategies, I decided to apply some of the suggested tips.

The first strategy I applied was prioritisation: I realised that writing a to-do list wasn't enough to get the results I hoped for, so I decided to start my days with the most important and difficult tasks (Kirby, 2022). It may seem a trivial reflection, but even just the idea of focusing on those tasks first and then moving to the easiest ones helped me a lot both to remain motivated and to proceed faster to complete them.

When I started working on my final project on the music school, I chose to begin my days with research advancement and later on, once the research was ultimate, I substituted it with the development of the assessment: I first dedicated myself to the creation of the portfolio, so I could then approach the reflective commentary with a clearer mind and self-reflection.

Another strategy I decided to take into consideration was routinisation. A study showed that when you conduct the same task every day at the same time, this results in predictability that allows you to better organise your schedule, and makes the task almost automated (Kirby, 2022).

Indeed I noticed that dedicating my early mornings to the portfolio and consequently to my reflective commentary, helped me to be very methodical and I managed to continue with more linearity to carry out my assignment.

As part of my personal development plan, I also decided to set some goals (Putter, 2021), remembering to outline them so that they are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-sensitive (Kirby, 2022).

When I set the goals I aimed to achieve, the major difficulty was in setting up short-term goals. I found it easier to have weekly and monthly goals, but it was very difficult to

quantify the daily goals. In particular, I noticed it was particularly challenging to define the research goals.

Being in the exploration phase means facing the chance not to find what you are looking for straight away: there were days when I was able to find many new and interesting resources to use, and others where searches simply failed, making that time devoted to research mostly wasted.

At first, it was difficult to overcome the frustration that inconclusive research created within me. I must admit that what helped me the most was talking about it with my course colleagues. I could confront myself and understand that it is a process experienced by most of my classmates. The moment you are dedicating yourself to something new, something which has yet to be explored, part of the process is just to spend your time figuring many elements out, and often this can be time-consuming.

When I noticed that I was becoming too frustrated and exhausted after an intense search that did not go as I expected, I decided to scan my time and give myself time limits: the daily search could last a maximum of three hours: if I hadn't been able to find anything relevant to my project during this time, I would have turned to something else. Often I found I just needed to stop focusing on the assessment for that day, and allowing myself to do that helped me to overcome the issue and get back on track the day after, with less pressure on it.

Journaling

Journaling is a way to keep track of the experiences, thoughts, and feelings I encounter when I am working on my daily tasks.

Before starting my assessment, I was already aware of journaling as a method of self-improvement and clarification of ideas. I started it in paper form months ago and then abandoned it after a while.

After some research, however, I decided to try again, using a new format - the digital one - and I also chose to write it in my mother tongue, Italian.

A few months ago, when I started my paper journaling, I started it in English, and, with the benefit of hindsight, I think that it was one of the reasons why I abandoned it: when I am thinking in English, I am still slow and more controlled. Although I am becoming more and more familiar with the English language, I find it more productive to write in my native language, so that I have a real flow of thoughts.

In writing my daily journaling, I was able to manage the stress more effectively and develop my critical thinking and problem-solving (MindTools, 2022). Being able to re-read my thoughts and reflections helped me to identify my weaknesses. I realised that quite often my limit is to spend more time planning what to do rather than the action itself. After acknowledging this aspect of my personality, and reading back about my daily achievements, I decided to change methodology, taking advantage of what I do best, which is planning. I managed to plan my actions, using my strength - planning - to overcome my weakness - acting. Knowing my deadline for this assessment, I decided to plan what to do and when on a daily basis, being very specific about the task to accomplish day by day.

From Monday to Friday, I spend an average of 10 hours on my assessment. At the very beginning, more than 50% of the time was dedicated to research. Once I had enough material, I would then start my portfolio.

I started with the portfolio because I discovered I need to have a visual representation of the project, and this brought me to have clearer ideas about what to focus on in my reflective commentary.

Only after having a good part of my complete portfolio, and after doing essential research for the music school I want to create, I could start writing, describing my process, with a clearer idea about the project itself.

According to Dr Lynell Burmark, short-term memory processes words and can only keep about seven bits of information, whereas, images are directly processed by our long-term memory, where they get indelibly incised. Images are the simplest and the most effective way for information to get stored as long-term memory. (Jandhyala, 2017). From a scientific perspective, it's been found that using relevant visuals helps to memorise the information more effectively. 90% of the information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text (Smiley, 2019).

During my research about the visual approach coming even before words, I also discovered that emotions and visual information are processed in the same part of the human brain.

The fact that visual stimuli and emotional responses are linked and generate what we call memories helped me understand why, when I have to approach something new - in this particular case when I needed to start my final assessment - I am always starting with a visual representation of my thoughts. It definitely helps me to connect better emotionally with the project and create lasting memories.

This keeps me focused and what I am having in front of me, even if it is already partially written and I am using some words, it remains more impressive in my mind because connected to images, colours and diagrams.

Another point is also that I could manage to stay focused on my main goal, as I could always go back and visually have in front of me the objectives of my project.

In addition to it, considering that my research is closely related to marketing, visual communication is not only a way to stay productive, but also to communicate my ideas more effectively: it is a critical element of any content marketing strategy (Nucklos, 2020). So while I was conducting this research, I determined a new strength I wasn't entirely aware of. Consequently, the awareness of the approach used in the realisation of my final assessment helped me to outline and identify a soft skill to add to my resume, and a characteristic of my personality that I can mention during interviews.

All the previous reflections came out of the analysis of my daily journaling.

I got closer to journaling after consulting an interesting article on [mindtools.com](https://www.mindtools.com) about how journaling is considered an important aspect of professional development.

I became aware of the [mindtools.com](https://www.mindtools.com) website after the zoom call I had with my programme leader Steve Cole.

During our conversation, I asked him what resources I could use to write my reflective commentary. Since this is the first time I have written a reflective piece, I found it difficult at first to understand which sources to use. Talking to Steve about my doubts helped me a lot exorcise my fear of being behind and to understand that, in addition to some of the resources already mentioned in our classes during the third term, - like Gibb's cycle - I could consult [mindtools.com](https://www.mindtools.com) for more inspiration to differentiate my approach and make it more varied and interesting (Cole, 2022).

Conclusions

All the resources used during the drafting of this reflective commentary led me to draw important conclusions.

First of all, I realised how essential it was for me to document every resource, which will not remain a pure theory on this reflective piece, but which has already affected my point of view, and my thoughts about the music school I want to open and how to manage such an important project.

Knowing my own strengths and weaknesses helped me to know from the beginning how to act and if necessary, to whom to ask for help.

Talking out loud about my ideas with my peers, with my programme leader, the head of the marketing department of Tileyard Education and with my mentor Sister Bliss helped me concretely to focus more on my initial ideas, which although they had a foundation, they have now taken a slightly different direction, more specific and focused.

I am very satisfied with the work I have done with my portfolio, but at the same time, I found it crucial to spend some of my time researching resources, writing down my thoughts, methodology, and the approach I was using: it was extremely helpful in getting a broader and more complete view of this whole project.

Bibliography

Bertelsen, K. (2022) *WhatsApp chat with Chiara Filomeni and classmates*, 20th September 2022.

BetterHelp Editorial Team (2022) *What Is Imposter Syndrome And How To Overcome It*
Available at: <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/careers/what-is-imposter-syndrome-and-how-to-overcome-it/>

Bhandal, A. (2022) *Zoom Call with Chiara Filomeni*, 27th September 2022.

Cole, S. (2022) *Zoom Call with Chiara Filomeni*, 15th September 2022.

Day, D. (2021) *A Therapist's Guide to dealing with Imposter Syndrome*
Available at: <https://www.babylonhealth.com/en-gb/blog/health/a-therapists-guide-to-dealing-with-imposter-syndrome>

Herrity, J. (2022) *How To Practice Reflective Listening (With Tips and Examples)*
Available at: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/reflective-listening>

Jandhyala, D. (2017) *Visual Learning: 6 Reasons Why Visuals Are The Most Powerful Aspect Of eLearning* Available at: <https://elearningindustry.com/visual-learning-6-reasons-visuals-powerful-aspect-elearning>

Kirby, S. (2022) *13 Most Successful Time Management Strategies*
Available at: <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/time-management/>

Martin, M. (2022) *Conducting a Personal SWOT Analysis to Chart Your Future* Available at: <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5543-personal-swot-analysis.html>

MindTools (2022) *Journaling for Professional Development* Available at: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/journaling.htm>

MindTools (2009) *Active Listening: Hear What People Are Really Saying* Available at: <https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>

Nucklos, B. (2020) *What Is Visual Communication and Why Is It Important* Available at: <https://visme.co/blog/visual-communication/>

Putter, M. (2021) *What Is a Personal Development Plan?* Available at: <https://cpdonline.co.uk/knowledge-base/business/what-are-personal-development-plans/#how-do-i-write-a-personal-development-plan>

Roger, K. (no date) *Is the Piano a Percussion or a Stringed Instrument?* Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/story/is-the-piano-a-percussion-or-a-stringed-instrument>

Rypole, C. (2021) *You're Not a Fraud. Here's How to Recognize and Overcome Imposter Syndrome* Available at: <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/imposter-syndrome>

Sinek, S. (2010) *Start With Why* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA&themeRefresh=1

Sinek, S. (2009) *Start With Why* Penguin Business (USA)

Sister Bliss (2022) *Face-to-face conversations with Chiara Filomeni*, September 2022.

Smiley, L. (2019) *How To Use Visual Communication and Why It Matters* Available at: <https://www.techsmith.com/blog/why-visual-communication-matters/>

The University of Edinburgh (2018) *Reflecting With Others* Available at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflectors-toolkit/producing-reflections/ways-reflecting/with-others>

Tileyard Education (2022) *Sister Bliss* Available at: <https://tileyardeducation.co.uk/tutors/sister-bliss/>