

Essay Self Reflection

by Jef Pascual

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Essay: Training Session Self Reflection and Why does it Matter in Hospitality?

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The hospitality industry is inherently experience-driven, with organisational success dependent on staff delivering exceptional guest experiences (Mann et.al, 2024). While technical skills are necessary, leadership, adaptability, and decision-making are frequently underdeveloped within the workforce, contributing to a persistent skills gap (Emma, 2024). This gap stems from weak workplace learning structures, high staff turnover, and poorly designed training systems that fail to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Ghani et.al, 2022). Within this context, self-reflection emerges as a transformative approach that supports professional growth, enhances service quality, and fosters continuous improvement. The training session on self-reflection aims to help hospitality employees recognise the importance of introspection, link personal performance to guest satisfaction, and apply structured reflection frameworks such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988) to daily practice. *A clearly written and persuasive introduction. A strong start.*

The training's learning outcomes focus on enabling participants to understand what self-reflection is, recognise its relevance to hospitality, explore its benefits for personal and organisational growth, learn from experience through reflective models, and create individual action plans for improvement. Each objective aligns with principles of adult learning (Knowles, 1980), which emphasise that adult learners are autonomous, goal-oriented, and motivated by relevance to real-life challenges. Within hospitality, where the work environment is fast-paced and emotionally demanding, reflective learning helps employees make sense of experiences, develop resilience, and transform practice (Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983). *Relevant points.*

The training session begins with an introduction to the changing dynamics of hospitality, highlighting the industry's shift from traditional service provision to a global experience economy where emotional connection, authenticity, and personalisation define competitive advantage (Sidhu, 2024). Research consistently demonstrates that staff are the face of the brand, with employee attitudes, communication, and professionalism shaping guest perception and satisfaction (Barreto and Mayya, 2024; Shyju et al., 2023). Poorly trained or disengaged staff not only compromise service quality but also negatively impact brand loyalty. Therefore, empowering employees through reflective learning helps them to internalise service values and understand how their actions contribute to the wider organisational mission.

The session defines self-reflection as a conscious process of examining one's own experiences, values, emotions, and behaviours to gain deeper self-awareness and insight (Moon, 2013). Through this process, employees become capable of analysing their own decisions and interactions, identifying both effective and ineffective behaviours. Reflection turns daily work experiences into measurable growth opportunities, encouraging staff to learn from mistakes, build confidence, and adapt to change. Research suggests that reflective employees are more likely to develop emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, and empathy, all of which directly correlate with superior service delivery (Wang and Jiang, 2024).

The training is designed using digital and interactive materials to accommodate diverse learning preferences. The presentation slides are visually engaging and clearly structured, including colour-coded examples linked to Gibbs' Reflective Cycle. Green highlights positives, red represents challenges, blue denotes analysis, and purple indicates action planning. This visual method intentionally supports both **visual and kinaesthetic learners** (Manning and Mills, 1992). Additionally, it helps non-native English speakers or individuals with lower literacy levels connect meaningfully with abstract concepts. The session incorporates an acronym summarising the five stages of reflection: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, and action plan to enhance retention. The inclusion of a short digital quiz midway through the session serves as a formative assessment, allowing participants to consolidate understanding while maintaining engagement.

Hospitality workplaces are typically diverse environments, and inclusivity in training encourages equitable participation and psychological safety. The session explicitly communicates that reflection is personal and non-judgemental, with no right or wrong answers. This reduces anxiety, encourages

openness, and reinforces trust between participants.  Moreover, the choice to include examples from the trainer's personal experiences creates authenticity and relatability, enabling participants to see that self-reflection is not about self-criticism but about personal development. *An important and relevant point.*

The training integrates Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which asserts that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. By combining reflection and experimentation, employees learn to apply insights from one situation to another, developing practical judgment. Similarly, Schön's (1983) notion of "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action" is embedded throughout the session. Reflection-in-action encourages participants to think critically while performing a task, while reflection-on-action prompts them to evaluate outcomes retrospectively. Both stages are vital in hospitality, where immediate decision-making and post-service evaluation are equally important. 

A key strength of the session is its interactive approach. Participants are asked to write about a personal work experience using the Gibbs framework, considering what went well, what is challenging, why these challenges occur, and how improvement can be achieved. After completing their reflections, they share their insights in small groups. This activity fosters collaborative learning and peer support, consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which views learning as a socially mediated process. Sharing reflections helps participants recognise that many challenges in hospitality such as stress under pressure, communication breakdowns, or weak technical execution are shared experiences rather than individual failures. This peer validation encourages empathy, reduces defensiveness, and promotes collective problem-solving. 

The training session is underpinned by understanding of staff performance analysis and training techniques. Performance in hospitality is typically measured through indicators such as guest satisfaction, service efficiency, teamwork, and behavioural competencies (Baum, 2019). By linking reflection directly to these metrics, employees are encouraged to view self-awareness as integral to achieving operational excellence. Reflection also complements formal HR processes such as performance appraisals and 360-degree feedback systems (Maylett and Wride, 2017), both of which rely on employees' ability to self-assess and respond constructively to feedback. Furthermore, the session aligns with the Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale (Smith and Kendall, 1963), where observable behaviours derived from reflection can be used as measurable performance criteria in appraisals.

The training outcomes emphasise professional development, emotional intelligence, and service excellence. Research supports the assertion that reflective employees demonstrate stronger decision-making, reduced repetition of errors, and improved interpersonal communication (Ractham and Srisamram, 2018). In hospitality, these qualities translate into higher consistency in service delivery and improved guest experiences (Jaiyeola, 2025). Encouraging employees to analyse their emotions and actions builds accountability, self-efficacy, and resilience which attributes associated with reduced burnout and increased job satisfaction (Johns, 2025). The reflective approach therefore contributes not only to individual performance but also to organisational culture and retention.

Critical analysis of the session reveals that while the training is engaging and contextually relevant, several challenges remain. Time constraints represent a significant barrier to consistent reflection in hospitality. The fast-paced nature of service work leaves limited time for staff to record reflections or discuss them with supervisors (Quilty and Murphy, 2022). Without managerial reinforcement, reflective practice risks becoming a one-off exercise rather than an embedded habit. Furthermore, some participants initially resist reflective methods, perceiving them as unnecessary or overly introspective (Lengelle, 2016). To overcome this, follow-up mechanisms such as reflective journals reviewed during team meetings or brief debriefs after service shifts support continued practice.

Another potential limitation is the balance between reflection to promote and encourage learning and excessively focusing on negative thoughts. While reflection aims to promote learning and improvement, excessive focus on negative experiences can lead to self-doubt and decreased motivation (Lengelle, 2016). The facilitator therefore needs to create supportive environments that guide participants towards constructive action planning rather than emotional over-analysis. Additionally, reflection is most effective when accompanied by mentorship and feedback to ensure learning is contextualised and goal-oriented (Giousmpasoglou and Marinakou, 2024). Embedding reflection within wider learning and development strategies such as coaching programmes, peer review sessions, and skill-based workshops maximises its impact.  7  8

Evaluation of the session indicates strong engagement from participants, with many reporting that the structured Gibbs model makes self-reflection approachable and practical  9. The use of colours and relatable examples improves retention and comprehension  10. Some participants note increased confidence in identifying areas for improvement and a greater appreciation of how their performance influences guest experiences. Although quantitative data on service outcomes are not collected, qualitative feedback suggests improved communication among staff and a willingness to discuss performance openly  11. These outcomes align with Lundgren et al. (2017), who find that reflective training interventions in service industries significantly enhance team cohesion and customer satisfaction.

To ensure sustainability, follow-up resources such as microlearning videos, reflective prompts sent via email, or a shared online platform where staff can record and discuss reflections anonymously provide ongoing support. This approach aligns with blended-learning methods (Hai, 2021), who highlight the importance of accessible, technology-enhanced learning in promoting engagement. In addition, reflection can be embedded into performance appraisal frameworks, transforming it from an isolated training exercise into an ongoing organisational practice.

The inclusivity of the session further contributes to its success. The training materials are designed to support learners of different learning needs, experiences, and abilities  12. The workbook can be adapted based on the user's ability i.e., using mind map or infographics to complete their reflection journal. Language is kept clear and simple, and examples are drawn from common hospitality scenarios, making them relatable across departments. Psychological safety is prioritised by reinforcing that reflection is confidential and voluntary. Such practices align with contemporary inclusive training literature, which stresses the need for safe spaces in learning environments to encourage authentic engagement (Gravells, 2017).

Self-reflection is not only a developmental tool but also a mechanism for improving organisational performance. Reflective employees demonstrate higher adaptability to change, better teamwork, and improved guest interactions (Prilla et.al, 2014). By helping employees link self-awareness to external outcomes, reflection bridges personal growth and organisational goals. It enables service staff to see themselves not merely as task executors but as active contributors to brand identity and customer loyalty. This shift from reactive to proactive service behaviour proves transformative for hospitality businesses facing recruitment and retention challenges.  13

Overall, the self-reflection training session demonstrates strong educational foundations, inclusivity, and engagement. It effectively combines theoretical grounding with practical application, enabling participants to contextualise reflection within their everyday professional experiences. The integration of digital materials, colour-coded examples, the availability of the handouts in different formats and group activities makes the learning user-friendly and engaging. However, the sustainability of its impact relies on consistent reinforcement through managerial support, follow-up sessions, and integration into wider performance management systems. Future development can involve mentoring programmes, peer-led reflection group discussion, and linking reflection outcomes to measurable performance indicators.

In conclusion, self-reflection represents a vital, though often underutilised, tool in hospitality training. It promotes self-awareness, accountability, and continuous improvement qualities essential for service excellence and long-term retention. By embedding reflection into learning culture and performance evaluation, hospitality organisations can transform individual growth into collective success. The session on self-reflection thus illustrates how simple but well-structured learning interventions can address the industry's broader challenges of staff development, performance consistency, and guest satisfaction. When effectively implemented, reflection becomes not only an educational practice but a strategic asset that empowers individuals, strengthens teams, and enhances the guest experience that lies at the heart of hospitality.

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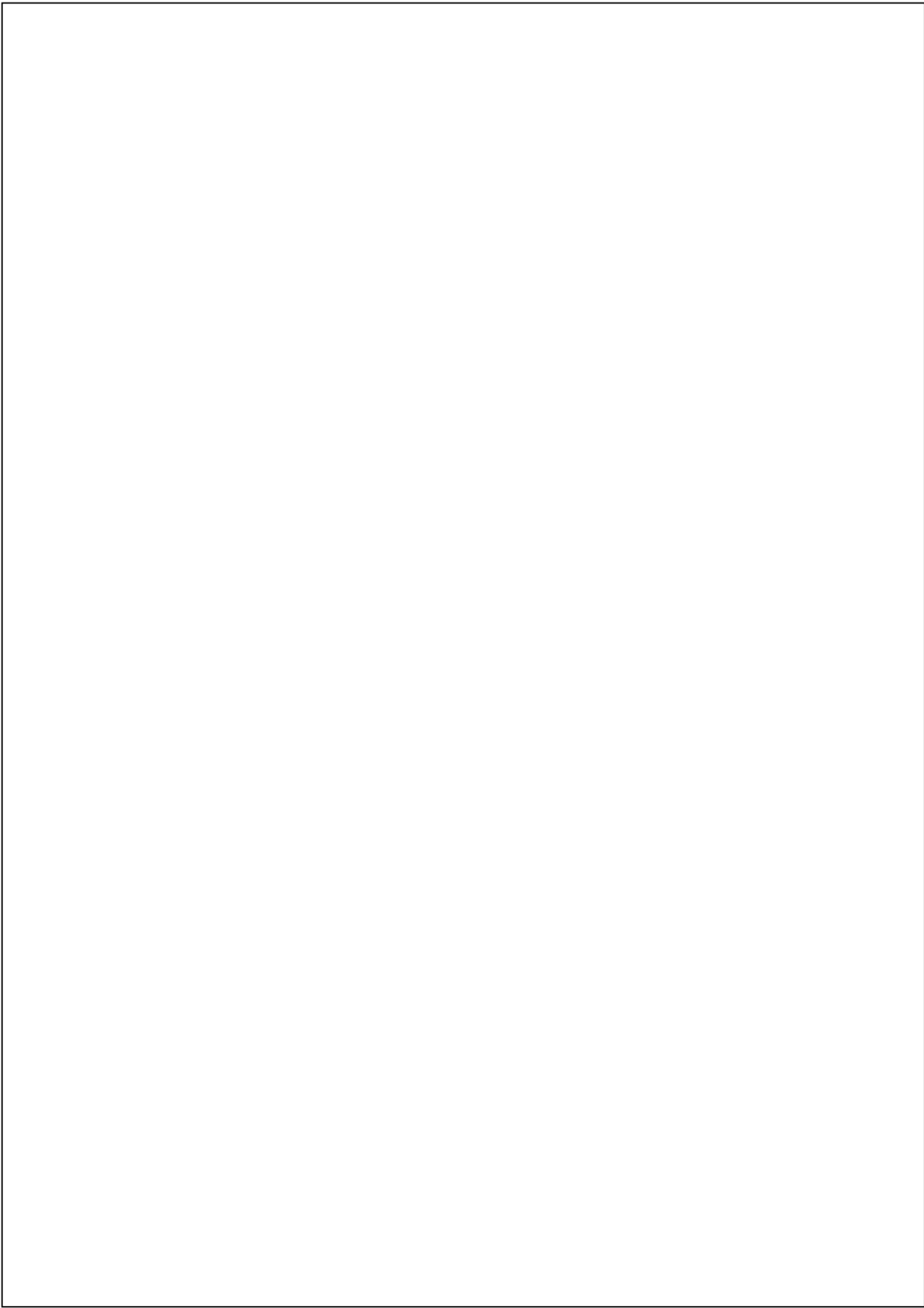
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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

65/100

This paper has been accessed and marked by a second marker (Jess Newport), who agrees with the mark provided by Antoinette Milne.

PAGE 1

PAGE 2

Text Comment. A clearly written and persuasive introduction. A strong start.

Text Comment. Relevant points.



Comment 1

It is important to briefly explain these terms and how they directly link to your approach, to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.



Comment 2

It is important to provide an in-text citation to support this point.

PAGE 3



Comment 3

It is important to provide an in-text citation to support this point.

Text Comment. An important and relevant point.



Comment 4

It is important to provide in-text citations to support these statements.



Comment 5

This source doesn't appear to exist in the references. It is vital to include all sources in the reference list.



Comment 6

It is important to provide in-text citations to support these statements.

Text Comment. Important and relevant points with a solution offered.

**Comment 7**

It is important to provide an in-text citation to support this statement.

**Comment 8**

It can be helpful to offer a specific example of these within hospitality.

**Comment 9**

It is unclear as to whether you are referring to the evaluation of your training session or not.

**Comment 10**

It is important to provide an in-text citation to support this statement.

**Comment 11**

It is unclear as to whether you are referring to the evaluation of your training session or not.

**Comment 12**

More detailed discussion of learning styles directly linking to your training session approach is important to include, to demonstrate enhanced knowledge, understanding and critical thinking skills.

**Comment 13**

It is important to provide in-text citations to support these statements.

**Comment 14**

More discussion of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and specific examples of their use in hospitality, can be helpful to demonstrate effective staff performance criteria and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

GRADING FORM: BMGM6003 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

JEF PASCUAL**65**

ENGAGEMENT WITH LITERATURE /10



You have provided the required references. You have used in-text citations throughout, however, there are a number of statements that require them for support (please see in-text comments). The Vygotsky source on page 3 doesn't appear to exist in the references. It is vital to include all sources in the reference list.

6

KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING /20



Your introduction is clearly written and persuasive. A strong start. On page 2, it is important to briefly explain these terms (visual and kinaesthetic) and how they directly link to your approach, to demonstrate enhanced knowledge and understanding. On page 4, it is unclear as to whether you are referring to the evaluation of your training session or not. More detailed discussion of learning styles directly linking to your training session approach is important to include, to demonstrate enhanced knowledge and understanding. More discussion of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and specific examples of their use in hospitality, can be helpful to demonstrate effective staff performance criteria and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

13

COGNITIVE & INTELLECTUAL /20



You have identified barriers to reflective thinking and provided a solution, demonstrating critical thinking. More detailed discussion of learning styles directly linking to your training session approach is important to include, to demonstrate enhanced critical thinking skills. More discussion of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and how they relate to staff performance criteria is important to include.

13

PRACTICAL APPLICATION /25



You have linked theory to practice, demonstrating practical application skills. On page 4, it can be helpful to offer a specific example of these within hospitality (workshop, coaching programme etc.), to further enhance practical application skills. You have discussed a number of relevant theories and linked them to practice. More linking of learning styles to training session approaches and KPIs to staff performance criteria are important to include to demonstrate enhanced practical application skills.

16

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS /25



You have generally written clearly and in a well organised way. On page 4, it is unclear as to whether you are referring to the evaluation of your training session or not. Your training session was professionally delivered and you demonstrated your ability to engage naturally and clearly with Chef Sam and Nicci. You were respectful and maintained eye contact, whilst keeping a steady pace. Although you were a little nervous at first (to be expected for almost everyone), you soon gained confidence. It is important to consider speaking a little more slowly and finding out more about what the audience knows about the subject at the beginning (which will help to measure knowledge gained during the session). Your training materials are very helpful and both Nicci and Chef Sam were interested to use them in the future. Well done!

17