

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Academic and employability skills
(BMSW4001)

Academic report
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Introduction

We started 2020 filled with the best wishes and goals, thoughts about profits, improvements or holidays. Unfortunately, we have seen a pandemic that has affected millions of people worldwide and not limited to individual health but also to the economy and professional life.

While all this happening, I stopped to think and review myself professionally and understood the difficulties that are about to come as a lot of people will saturate the work marked in the near future.

It is decisive to prepare myself and continue my studies, develop new skills to be capable of new work opportunities and have a chance in the middle of the competence.

I have chosen CV writing and cover letter as the primary tools to apply for a job, also critical and analytical thinking skills will help me in my desired career.

All topics will be covered using the six stages of Gibbs's reflective cycle.

To finish I will give my personal opinion on this first term.

Gibbs's reflective cycle

In one of his recent articles, the University of Edinburgh (2020) says that this circular model of reflection is one of the most noted and popular.

It was developed by Graham Gibbs in 1988 as a way to work through your learning and it could be applied to a single or repeated situation.

The structure use six questions to help you understand and reflect your knowledge and experience, which are:

- Description
- Feeling
- Evaluation
- Analysis
- Conclusion
- Action plan

I also considered using Driscoll (2007) and Kolb (1984) model but those were a bit simple to develop so I have chosen Gibbs model for its complexity and in deep detailing.

Cover letter

Description

It is relatively easy to apply and get a job in a non-qualified role. For 5 years period I have successfully applied and get the job in the first try without a cover letter but I understand that those jobs were easy to perform with some training, and my “luck” was actually the need to cover the vacancy as soon as possible with a suitable person.

Feelings

During those years I had mixed feelings as that was the first time doing the roles and being in a different country without family was depressing me, also my English level did not help at the beginning, but my life goal keeps me in track and made me work harder on my weaknesses. Overall, I am happy with the experience and will not change anything.

Evaluation

What I felt about my job applications was that a cover letter was not highly necessary as those jobs required a suitable person to cover the vacancy as soon as possible and, in my case, I prepared myself nicely for the interview and a good looking and well-structured CV did the job.

Analysis

Although those applications were successfully made without a cover letter, my experience and what I have seen during my supervisor position is that applicants usually do not make use of a cover letter, also a small percentage of people will be unprofessionally applying through a friend or a direct talk to the manager, skipping all the process.

During a vocational education and training in administration that took place in Murcia, Spain, and the seen in this academic year I learned that a cover letter is highly recommended to distinguish yourself and gain visibility against other applicants.

Also, a study from OfficeTeam, a company specialised in administrative workers, shows that 4 of 5 hiring responsible sees cover letters effective when taking candidates into consideration. (Caroline, n.d.)

Conclusion

A cover letter was not necessary in my situation applying for non-qualified roles, the learned during this term and from previous years of study, also my work experience and the current world situation shows me that I must use a cover letter in future applications for roles that requires high levels of responsibility to help me have more chances of having an interview.

Action Plan

For future applications I will check and review carefully sources to aim my cover letters specifically for that desired position, also, keeping my knowledge up to date with professional recommendations.

CV writing

Description

CV writing may give headaches to many people aiming to make a good document to apply for a job, the main points are:

- No mistakes
- Specifically made for the job applied
- Not too large or short
- Well structured
- Good looking

Over the years I could see how I have improved in CV writing; I did practice a lot during my academic years in Spain and know very well the Spanish format. however, is totally opposite to what we use in the United Kingdom. I only have used a CV in three occasions when applying for a job in London.

Feeling

When I was doing my first CV on British format, I felt very frustrated as I had no idea how to start, what data introduce, and research only messed my head as there were so many different points. My only relief was a good knowledge on office suit. It also makes me very proud and happy that we must not introduce information that could cause discrimination such as race, colour or sex for example.

Evaluation

Overall, I think my first cv was acceptable, I took extra time to review the speech and design for the next two and adapt them for the position I was applying for. On my perfect CV I like to mix the structure with a good design as I like to reflect my personality in the document.

I imagine myself looking tens CV's, most of them almost with the same structure and black and white, then find one modern looking in full colour. At the end of the day, I will still have in mind that CV as it broke the usual. There is where I want to be.

Analysis

There are many guides, books and articles online on how to write the best CV with most of them giving almost the same insights about what and how a CV should be. At this point I know most people will follow those rules, basically same structure with different personalities. But I like to think about little details that could make you stand apart.

For example, Innes and James (2009) mention in their book that on these digital years we need to bear in mind the document name when sending it to employers. For their experience, documents with silly names are obviously discarded.

Also, according to Mills (2009) some employers will not post the required skills, instead they will be looking and discarding the ones that does not match the requirements.

My thoughts are that they do not want people to look the offer and make a suitable profile, instead they want candidates to think about what of their skills will help or suit better the position.

Conclusion

Until now, a generic CV developed according to my application was working, but for future qualified jobs I will need to study my desired career to be able to make an outstanding CV.

There are many points to keep in mind when developing a CV along with skills and I must work hard if I want to have a chance of getting interest from employers.

Action plan

I will continue my studies and prepare myself as much as I can, and my current position allow me to manage my rotas according to my personal circumstances. I must develop new skills and knowledge and for that reason I will keep my CV developing on hold. However, I will review it and keep it up to date twice a year just in case a new opportunity approach.

Analytical and critical skills

Description

Since I was a child and conscious, I remember always being curious and looking to understand how things work. As teenager, I have done activities that made me develop analytical and critical skills, for example, playing basketball in a team or study groups. Now, as an adult I feel myself applying those skills in almost every occasion, either at everyday activities or work.

Feelings

Every time watching a film or reading a book I do it with analytical or critical thinking, witch sometimes is annoying as being outside the box will not let me enjoy it. Vice versa, there are times where I truly enjoy the experience as I completely understand the meaning.

I also use critical thinking when talking with people as there are expressions that people use without noticing to corroborate what they are saying or feelings, or, just show the opposite. Haber (2020) in his book “*critical*

thinking” mention that this also implies interpret individual communication into organized language.

Evaluation

I have never tested my skills to proof its level but apart from applying those on a daily basis, I remember to be using it from my first job as a linen porter. The amount of work was considerably high, I was responsible for the stock in my area, office and guests requests plus other daily duties. It definitely worked because I could feel how my shifts were always smooth, very short waiting times and finished all my tasks according to the rota.

On my second job, despite I was a public area cleaner for a short period, I analysed the place from the first moment to finally suggest a change in the organization being leaded by a porter to benefit of every housekeeping staff. The manager reviewed it and accepted.

I finally carried all the work by myself and shortly after I was awarded employee of the month.

For my current position I felt more confident with my knowledge and skills and was able to get promote from cleaner to sandwich artist, then team leader/manager witch I tried for three months. It required different professional skills along with the ones being seen now, so I was not able to perform my job at its best.

For that reason, I stepped back and was offered a supervisor position.

Analysis

Until now I been using those skills without realizing it. It was about how I could do more and better in my workplace as I am always aiming for long period positions.

Only during this academic year, I started to be aware about my skills as it was an habit.

Since I was child, I liked maths, logic, problem solving and everything number related; now, I am interested in economy and administration.

Having said that, according to my desired career, a study published in their article “*Do economics courses improve students’ analytical skills?*” Dendir; Orlov and Roufagalas (2019) shows that there is a strong link between analytical skills improvement and economic students.

Conclusion

Despite that I was using my skills on a natural way, I still must research and improve it. It should require a high level to perform my intended career and not mix feelings with professional work or development as it could potentially make you struggle.

Personal opinion

At the beginning of the term, my thoughts about the language, knowledge, online learning and development were making me nervous. After some virtual classes it seems I got used to it, I even saw the benefits of it, as a father of two working full time, my partner also studying, my available time is very short.

When assignments started, I got frustrated as I had no idea how or where to start and I was just avoiding it, filling myself with of incapable thinking and failing fear. I was used to examination by topics with traditional questions and answers.

Finally, after the first work I lost the fear and changed my way of thinking, making it a something positive to try to get the best experience possible.

Right now, I am very happy as I have done things that never done before and gave me a challenge, for example this report, I thought I was not able to do it, but it showed myself that with some wild I could this and with some time and experience, could do big things.

References

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