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Academic and employability skills

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1. Introduction

In this report I will analyze my academic and employability skills as well as explain my current goals of improving them and acquiring new skills beside the ones I currently have. I used a S.W.O.T. analysis and personal development plan (pdp) in order to better illustrate my plans to improve and what they are based on. Others that I described in the various skill sections are more continuous improvement rather than concrete goals with a deadline.

2. Skills

According to the dictionary a skill is the ability, coming from one's knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well. Thus, we can infer that everything we can do well is a skill.

3. Employability skills

Employability skills are skills that a prospective employer finds useful for an employee to have. There are 2 types of employability skills which are hard skills that relate to the job and soft skills or transferable skills which are more general skills which as the name implies can be used and different occupations.

Generally, both types of skills are looked for by employers and learned by employees in order to improve their hiring chances. (Andrews and Higson, 2010)

3.1. Hard skills

Hard skills are skills related to a specific education or training that are required for particular jobs.

As I have not had such training or education, I do not possess hard skills required for technical jobs, though if I would be interested in one, I believe I would be able to learn them.

3.2. Soft skills

Soft skills are general skills that are useful in a work environment. They are used and required even in some of the most technical fields and are actively looked for by employers. (Sharma, 2009)

They include time management skills, communication skills, organisational skills, teamwork, problem solving skills and more.

There are some skills that I am lacking in as well as some in which I believe I excel at.

3.2.1. Time management skills

Time management skills include making schedules and following them, making use of limited time to complete your task, having and following well-thought out priorities. This can be done through planning, diaries, and choosing what to do responsibly. (Morgan, 2017, p49-68)

I myself have found myself a bit lacking in this aspect as while I can and do follow already set out schedules, I find it much harder to set one out myself and follow it. Not only that I do not currently have a diary either which makes planning my time rather hard. Nevertheless, I do want to change this fact and have already started to change this fact, I have tried to make more plans leave specific times of day for specific tasks in order to raise my productivity, and so far it has yielded some positive results.

3.2.2. Communication skills

Communication skills are the ability to impart and receive information to and from others. They are highly important in finding employment and keeping up performance at a company. (Giri V. N. and Kumar B. P., 2010)

This is subject that I find myself weak in as well as I have a naturally introverted personality and a lot of the communication I do have with my close friends and family is in my native language, and though it still helps to improve my abilities it would be more useful to find more English communication partners.

As I have stated in my assessment for Effective team work and communication, I will use my new-found knowledge about communication theory to improve my skills.

3.2.3. Organisational skills

Organisational skills are related to planning and executing on the plans. They are related to time management skills, though organisational skills are mostly about thoroughly executing a plan and being able to quickly amend it and adapt to new situations.

I think that I possess good organisational skills, and I believe myself able to use them in order to plan and execute a task, though I do sometimes have problems and I am prone to spontaneity, but through effort and practice I will be able to be better organised. In order to improve I started from small things like arranging my workplace in a more logical and organised way.

3.2.4. Teamworking

Teamworking is the ability to divide your tasks between a group of people and help each other. It is useful in order to utilise each other's strengths and cover for each other's weaknesses. As most big companies and corporations rely on teams for most of their activities, it is essential to master this skill in order to find employment.

I think that I do have teamworking skills, as I have had a recent experience with teamworking in the Digital skills and research methods where I and my team have made a group presentation.

3.2.5. Problem solving skills

Problem solving skills are the ability to find solutions to problems, explain them and implement them. It is an ability looked for in managers and an important everyday skill as well. It consists of analysing the problem, finding the cause and a workable solution, as some solutions can be impossible to implement or too costly, so a good problem solver can find a solution that not only works but is also cost-effective to implement.

Problem solving skills are harder to assess as they are most often situational or relating to expertise in a specific field, but nonetheless I do think that I can find solutions to problems in the fields I am familiar in.

4. Academic skills

Academic skills are those required in order to achieve a high grade and learn in a learning institution. These skills used to be more specialised in the past but nowadays they are highly useful even outside the academic sphere.

They include critical thinking, writing, reading, numeracy skills, some of which like writing have subcategories like summarising and paraphrasing.

4.1 Critical thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to identify gaps and weaknesses in an idea, show evidence and argue for your point of view and give a thorough interpretation on different matters and events. (Morgan, 2017, p68-93)

I believe that I possess such skills, as I often challenge my belief with new knowledge and always try to see different situations objectively.

4.2. Writing

Writing is a key ability both in the academic and business world. It is incredibly important to learn which is why it is taught to young children. Writing allows for expression, explanation and communication without the need for speaking.

I think that I am proficient in English writing and that the in-class exercises demonstrate my ability to write, though I do not see them as an end to my learning.

4.2.1. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the ability to explain a concept or idea in different words from the original while retaining its' meaning. It is an important skill in the academic world, especially for referencing others' work and avoiding plagiarism.

I have done excellently on my paraphrasing in-class exercise, so I believe that I can do it relatively well. Obviously I can still improve it and I will.

4.2.2. Summarising

Summarising is the ability to condense an idea to its' most important parts while retaining most of the meaning, thus shortening the length of a text but still allowing for understanding of the idea.

4.3. Reading

Reading, like writing is an essential skill in the academic and business worlds. It is an ability that leads to greater ease of learning as it opens new sources of information.

5. S.W.O.T. analysis

Strengths • Critical thinking ability • Teamworking skills • Learning ability	Weaknesses • Lack of communication skills • Lack of time management skills • Lack of job experience
Opportunities • An interest in Informational Technologies which I could use to develop programming skills giving me an option to work in IT. • Ability to learn and retain information that I am interested in and a vast range of interests give me the opportunity to go in other fields as well.	Threats • Lack of motivation which makes choosing an area to specialize in hard • Due to my fear of failure I find it hard to commit to specific fields.

I have made this swot analysis with different abilities and future plans in mind as well as the possible problems that I might encounter. I rarely methodically think about my future and myself, so this was an interesting practice that helped me reflect on my abilities.

6. Personal development plan

Target	How to accomplish	Resources and support	Target date
Learn a programming language like Java.	Learning every day; Continuously practicing.	Books, online guide videos, help from friends.	September 2019
Finish “Skills for the workplace” course in UWTSD.	Attending all courses; Learning all the material; Submitting all the assessments;	Help from the university lecturers; Books from the library;	October 2019
Learn to drive and get a driver’s license.	Learn all traffic rules; Pass the driving examination;	Traffic rulebooks; Help from my family;	January 2020
Apply for further higher education.	Find a course I am interested in;	University sites;	October 2019
Find employment, at least short-term	Look for jobs; Go on interviews;	Job seeking sites; Job posters;	April 2019

For my personal development plan, I have thought about all of my short-term goals that I wish to accomplish currently, though I might add more to them as well. As I am interested in computer programming, I wish to learn a programming language like Java, which is currently one of the most popular one’s in use in the world, and knowing one programming language makes it easier to learn others as some of the new one’s are based on the old ones. I also wish to get a driver’s license as it is a document that can give me many opportunities and the ability to drive is otherwise useful in business life as well as my personal day-to-day life. The other two

goals I wrote have to do with finishing my current year of education and applying to continue it beyond. While I am not sure if I will continue my current path with education, I know for sure that I do want to continue studying.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion I think that while there are skills that I have a good grasp of, especially among the academic skills, there are still many ways in which I need to improve in order to enhance my employment chances and to further develop myself. Using a PDP and S.W.O.T. analysis has further helped me understand myself by making me question my concrete weaknesses and goals.

8. References

Andrews J.; Higson H. (2010), "Graduate Employability, 'Soft Skills' Versus 'Hard' Business Knowledge: A European Study", *Higher Education in Europe*, 33(4), pp 411-422;

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Sharma M. (2009)" How Important Are Soft Skills from the Recruiter's Perspective.

", *ICFAI Journal of Soft Skills*, 3(2), p19-28;

Giri V. N.; Kumar B. P. (2010) , "Assessing the impact of organizational communication on job satisfaction and job performance", *Psychological Studies*, 55, pp 137–143;



Academic and Employability Skills (ACE) – term 1
BMSW4001
In-class exercise 2: Summarising (Oct 2019)

Student Name: Lucian Scobioala Student ID/Group: 4809759/12
Time allocated: 1 hour. Please return your paper to the lecturer upon completion. It will be returned to you at the next session. You will need to include a scanned copy of this exercise in the form of an appendix together with your Task 1 (part of the Assignment for this module).

Ex.1

Read the following text and make notes on the main ideas. You can do this on a separate piece of paper which you do not have to hand in.

To be a great leader, you need to start by leading yourself

Most people go into top positions with good intentions, but those often crumble due to the demands — and perks — of the job. If you want to succeed, devote some time and energy to self-leadership, says consultant Lars Sudmann. Being a leader is a little like being a parent; beforehand, we have all these rosy visions of how we're going to do it, how incredible we're going to be, and how we'll sidestep the mistakes that we see other people make. But when it's our turn to assume the role, we find that reality doesn't match our expectations or imaginations. Sudmann, for example, believed that he would ace his first leadership role. Then, he held his first major staff meeting, an employee asked a question about the company's email signature, and the proceedings — and his command of them — completely fell apart.

After some months, Sudmann realized he was fighting against certain entrenched factors that keep all leaders from improving. Like many in the working world, leaders have too much to do and not enough time to do it; they don't clearly think through their priorities and strategies; and being in a position of power causes them to assume that the people beneath them will take care of a lot of problems.

Sudmann found a potential solution to these "classic leadership problems" in Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher. Rather than spending his time trying to learn to rally and guide others, Marcus Aurelius focused a surprising amount of his energy on mastering self-leadership. Sudmann has found this orientation tremendously helpful. Below he breaks down three actions that go into self-leadership.

First of all, you need to be aware of your shortcomings; leaders need to know all of their biases, predilections and weaknesses. Another idea is to take 5-10 minutes every day to think about the challenges you've recently handled and the ones you'll soon face. While Marcus Aurelius was fond of reflecting in the evening, Sudmann likes doing this over morning coffee. Questions to pose include: "How did my leadership go yesterday? How would the leader I'd like to be have faced the challenges I faced? What about my challenges today? What could I do differently?" Write down your thoughts so you can refer back to them and learn from them.

Also, regulate your feelings; no matter how much preparation and reflection you put in, there will be employees, colleagues, clients and associates who anger, frustrate or annoy you. That's where the practice of "reframing" comes in; stopping and asking yourself ... on a scale from 1 to 10, how important is this issue right now? Then, give yourself a moment to think: "How would the leader I aspire to be handle this situation?" The answer will come to you.

Lecturer's signature: _____ Date: _____

Ex. 2

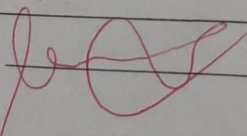
Re-read the text 'To be a great leader, you need to start by leading yourself' on the previous page.
Summarise main ideas from the text in your own words. Write about 175 words.

Most people can not handle leadership positions. They idealise themselves as perfect leaders only to repeat the same mistakes that they used to see in others. Sudman used to be one of them, and simple questions made him lose control of the situation. He later realised that he did not have a clear strategy and could not improve. A possible solution was revealed by the writings of Marcus Aurelius which advocate a leader need to learn and improve upon self-leadership. This is achieved by knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses, reflection upon past choices and future problems and changing based on them, as well as regulation one's negative emotions with the practice of reframing: asking yourself of the importance of the issue and how to ideally resolve it on the example of a perfect leader.

Lecturer's comments:

This is an excellent summary. It has all the main ideas and is to the point.

Lecturer's signature:



Date:

13/12/19





Student Name: Lucian Scobioala

Student ID: 1907758

Time allocated: 1 hour. Please return your paper to the lecturer upon completion. It will be returned to you at the next session. You will need to include a scanned copy of this exercise in the form of an appendix together with you Task 1 (part of the Assignment for this module).

Ex.1 Write a paraphrase of the following passage.

Chocolate has always been considered an affordable little luxury, associated with romance and celebrations. Therefore in 2001, revelations that the production of cocoa in Ivory Coast involved child slave labour deeply shocked chocolate companies, consumers and governments alike. The USA passed legislation mandating that standards be created to permit companies who could prove that their chocolate was produced without forced labour to label their chocolate "slave-labour free." The chocolate industry agreed to an international protocol that would give chocolate producers four years to limit abusive practices.

chocolate has long been thought of as a luxury available to all, especial to those celebrating or struck by love. It was a shock to governments, companies and consumers when in 2001, it was revealed that the production process of cocoa in Ivory Coast used child slave labour. The US mandated new standards that would allow companies to label their chocolate "slave-labour free", though only if they could prove that the production did not involve forced labour. The chocolate producers agreed to curb abusive practices by 2005 by signing an international protocol.

Lecturer's comments:

Very good except for the repetition of certain key words

Lecturer's signature:

Date:

15/11/19



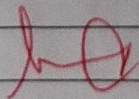
Ex.2. Complete the blanks in such a way that the meaning of the second sentence is as close to the original sentence as possible, using the word in brackets where given. Pay attention to grammar and make sure what you write matches what is already given.

- 1) There will be a few changes around in the office. (announce)
The boss announced that a few changes will be made in the office. ✓
- 2) He doesn't write to me as frequently as I wanted.
I wish he would write more frequently to me. ✓
- 3) We were concerned about her health.
We had some concerns about her health. ✓
- 4) You weren't careful, so you made so many mistakes. (had)
If you had been more careful you would not have made so many mistakes. ✓
- 5) The council cut funding so we could not provide free parking.
Because of cut funding from the council, we could not provide free parking. ✓
funding cuts
- 6) His proposal was a failure as it was too theoretical. (relied)
His proposal relied on too much theory, so it was a failure. ✓
- 7) It was Mary who stole money.
He accused Mary of stealing the money. ✓
- 8) He seems well-educated. However, he's not very bright. (although)
Although he seems well-educated, he is not very bright. ✓
- 9) Universities place the burden of understanding plagiarism and attribution conventions on students.
The responsibility for understanding plagiarism and attribution conventions is placed on the students. ✓
- 10) 33% of adolescents who have one baby, have a second baby within two years of the first baby's birth. (third)
A third of adolescents who have one baby, have a second baby within two years of the first baby's birth. ✓

Lecturer's comments:

Excellent!

Lecturer's signature:



Date:

15/11/19

