

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY
SAINT DAVID

Academic and
Employability Skills
(BMSW4001)

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Introduction

In this reflective report I will reflect on how this module has helped me to develop or improve my employability skills, as well as analyse how my learning experience was in this module. The skills that I will predominantly speak about are Time Management, Presentation Skills, Curriculum Vitae and Cover Letter writing. After reflecting on these skills, I will reflect on other things I improved during this module as well, but also about how these skills put together will help me direct my future in the way I consider fit for myself. In order to do all this, most of the time I will use Borton's Reflective Model (Asking the questions What? So what? Now what?)(Borton, 1970).

Skills

In this section of my reflective report I will talk about the main skills that I have developed during the year in this module.

Time Management

In regard to time management my expectations were to already know most of the theories that we would be given, and I did not expect them to be useful since my problem was not the lack of information but the lack of discipline to apply them. I was partially right, I knew about Pareto's 80-20 rule, how to set SMART goals, I knew about the Eisenhower method from Stephen R. Covey's book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People", although I didn't know it was called Eisenhower's Method or Matrix and so on. What I did not know about was a method called RAC (Record, Analyse, Change).

The RAC method consists in Recording what one does during an entire day, from the moment he or she wakes up until going to sleep, Analysing everything that person did and identifying time wasters, to later Change them. This method made me realise what my biggest time wasters were and I still regularly use it. It seems that most of the time I waste is on Facebook, YouTube, Messenger, Gmail and some other Apps, all of them on my phone, so what I decided is trying to keep the phone as far away from me as possible when I try to work on something.

Another thing that is worth mentioning is that it is proven that we are more productive when we are observed (Kandel and Lazear, 1992), what the RAC method helped me realise is that I was more productive when I applied this method also because it was like observing myself and trying to behave in a better way than I usually did. This made me feel good because I have a

way of being more productive but also somehow sad because I know that when I don't apply this method, I waste even more time.

What I want to do from now on is keeping using what I already said I knew, but especially use the RAC method every week to track my progress regarding my time wasters and replace those with more productive habits.

CV and Cover Letter Writing

CV and Cover Letter Writing were the things that I was most interested about because here in the United Kingdom the rules regarding both CV and Cover Letters are somehow different from what I was used to back in Romania. I was also interested about these skills because I consider them very important when it comes to getting a good job, and it seems like recruiters consider them important as well and they take them into consideration more than I considered before this module.

Being able to write good cover letters and CVs gave me the courage of hoping for better jobs that could get me to build the career I always dream about, it boosted my self-esteem and made me realise that some of the things I've done are quite impressive, but also that I have to constantly work and improve myself in order to stay relevant, and update my CV to reflect that.

I plan on using the ability to write good CVs and Cover Letters to apply for jobs that I thought are too nice for me to have them, and use the other skills I talked about, but also the skills acquired in other modules and from my personal experience to be promoted to higher positions on which I can further develop existing skills and acquire new ones.

Presentation Skills

The fact that we learned about presentation skills in this module helped me prepare better for the two presentations we had as assessments this second term. I learned multiple things such as how to create a PowerPoint presentation, how to prepare for it, how important body language is and what makes the difference between a good and a bad presentation.

I have applied the things learned in this module in only one of the presentations in this term and I was very happy about how that presentation was altogether. I am convinced that the mark I will get on that presentation is the highest out of the three presentations I had this academic year so far since I have been more prepared and confident than I was for the other ones, but also the information was better structured.

This term I also had to present a business plan I have been working on together with my team in the first semester, and even knowing and having worked on creating that business plan, since I didn't use the advice given in this module and didn't prepare enough, my performance

was way worse than the one in the other presentation. Even if this was a bitter experience, I understood how important it is to practice before giving a presentation, and how important it is to know the structure of my presentation from the beginning to the end.

In the next presentations I will have, I will make sure that I have a good and clean PowerPoint, that I know the structure of it without needing to look at the screen and that I practice enough. I am sure that if I do this my presentations will be much better, and the good thing about it is that if I implement this, in my next presentation, I will also be able to focus on little mistakes that need polishing in order to deliver high quality presentations.

If I manage to do what I wrote above I think this will also help me at job interviews and to advance quicker in my career since presentation skills, according to Morgan (2017) are what make people able to lead, inspire and sell their products or themselves.

Other skills

Other important employability skills I learned about during the year are gathering relevant information, helpful at university, at the job and in the day to day life, but also reflective writing and how to reflect about the things at the workplace is another skill that I found interesting and that I did not consider before.

I consider that reflective thinking is something that can make me improve in most aspects of my life since it is the ability to take informed and rational decisions and after that assessing how those decisions influenced the outcome or to what consequences they led to. (Taggart and Wilson, 2005).

The learning experience.

During the year this module improved my ability to prepare for the academic life, but also for the professional and personal life.

Academically, this module gave me the information of how to prepare my assessments, such as structured academic reports, reflective reports, and presentations. This was a great source of information, in some cases information that I didn't know anything about before and without it my academic performance would have been not as good.

Even though in the first term I couldn't really relate to the teacher's teaching style and methods and didn't find the module enjoyable, I couldn't deny the importance of the topics we studied, it was clear that without understanding this module I would have difficulties doing my assignments or even boosting my productivity, my attitude making the module pointless to me. What I had to learn was to accept and work on myself in order to put the attention and extra work onto learning as much as I can, realising that I will not always work with people I enjoy working with or learning from, but it does not mean I cannot learn from them or work in the same team.

In terms of employability skills, the learning process was very interesting, mostly in the second term where we had a lot of theory, but also many applied exercises such as the presentations and the cover letter writing. We also had some opened discussions that I considered very beneficial since it allowed the students to collaborate, say what they do or do not understand and give personal examples or ask questions. For me opened discussions are a great way of learning since I learn better when I work with a theory or discuss and analyse it.

What I think I could have done better is studying more at home, both previous to having a lecture, but also after it, that way I am certain that I would have retained more information and understood more, but it would also have given me the opportunity to ask questions for which there was not an answer on Moodle or the two books we received from the university, this way I would have found new resources and ideas.

Another thing that I could have done better is reading more of the recommended books, that way I would understand better the theories discussed in class. Although I think I understood enough of the theories to be able to apply them, having read the books recommended and the books in which those theories were first published would have made me understand everything at a deeper level and in the way that the original authors thought about them or in ways that some other experts understood them. I think the information becomes more concrete when one sees it from different perspectives.

The actions that I will take in the future in order to have a better learning experience, retain more information, improve my grades and find out how to apply that information in my personal or professional life is studying more at home, read the books or journals where the theories I study were first introduced, read other materials that include them, pay attention to lecturers and ask them questions, all this things should help me retain and be able to apply the information that each module is supposed to transmit, because if I use only one source the percentage that I will retain will probably be somewhere between 25 and 50% and it will most probably decrease in time (Maund, Schriek and Tinkler, 2017).

Conclusion

In this reflective report I talked about skills that I improved during the year thanks to this module and analysed what went well, bad and what I needed to improve, about how my learning experience was and how I will take the information forward and what will I do differently in other modules, and most importantly how this should positively influence my personal and professional life if I apply this methods regularly.

References

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3. Morgan, P. (2017) *The business student's guide to study and employability*. London: SAGE.
4. Taggart, G. T. and Wilson, A. P. (2005) *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
5. Borton, T. (1970) *Reach, Touch and Teach*. London: Hutchinson.

Appendix

In-class exercise 1



Academic and Employability Skills (ACE) – term 2 BMSW4001

In-class exercise 1: Cover letter writing

Student Name: DANIEL MANEA

Student ID: 1817398

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

Choose of the jobs provided by the lecturer. Read the chosen job description carefully. Write a cover letter as if you were going to apply for the job.

[Your Name] DANIEL MANEA
1 Any Street, Anytown

[Hiring manager's name] Mrs Rachael Wells

[Hiring manager's company name] Jones Investment Ltd

[Today's Date] 04.11.2019

Dear Mrs Rachael Wells

I wish to apply for the role of administrator advertised on reed.co.uk

As you can see in the first page of my CV, I have vast experience working in an office and also with office tools such as MS Office, especially Outlook, Excel, Word and PowerPoint

Being an experienced PC and Internet user helps me with my most complex activities and with problem solving. I consider myself a technology lover and this can be noticed in my ability of using new software with ease and having a good learning curve when it comes to any piece of equipment.

I consider myself a good communicator and a team player, which I think are essential skills for success in a company.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I am looking forward to meeting you and discuss how I can help your company grow even more.

Yours truly, → inappropriate

Daniel Manea
Lecturer's signature: _____

Date: 4.11.2019

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