

Academic & Employability skills

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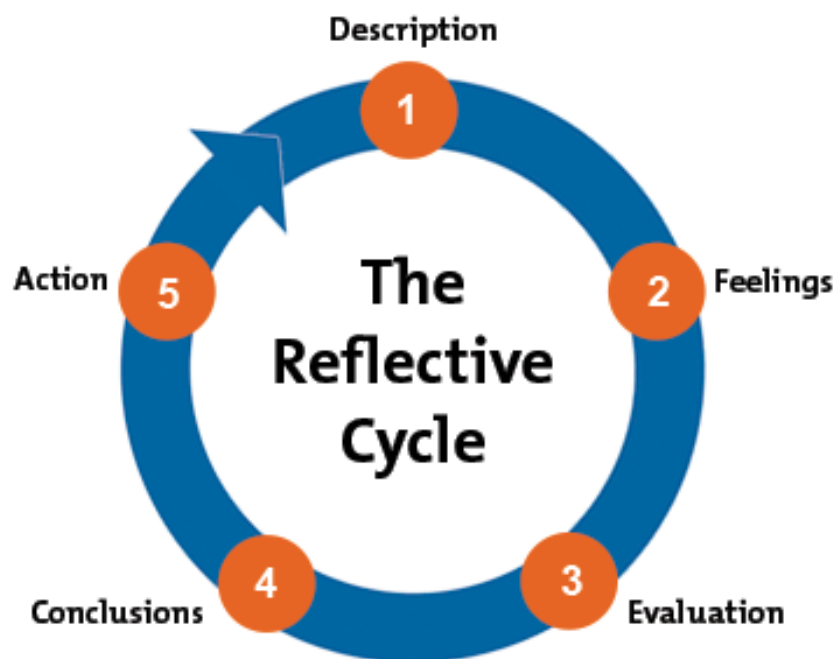
Write an appropriately structured academic report where you reflect on your learning in this module, using a recognised model of reflection (one). Discuss 3-4 topics from those covered during the term (listed below) and reflect on how useful they have been to you, taking into consideration what you already knew and any learning you undertook outside of the classroom. You will need to explain the chosen model of reflection and apply it to each topic. You will also need to analyse published literature relating to the specific topics you discuss and use the feedback you received on all in-class activities.

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Introduction

For as long as I can remember I've always wanted to be in a business role. Over the years I've done multiple amounts of research and have carefully looked into future roles and I ended up deciding that I wanted to be a Product Manager. As a product manager working in the finance industry, it's my responsibility to make sure that my customers, stakeholders and businesses in general are satisfied with my service. One of the things I read which caught my attention about wanting to be a Product Manager, is that I would be the person behind planning and creating future projects and products. As much as I love my future role of wanting to be a Product Manager, it also requires me to have specific experiences and skills. So this report is going to go into depth about how I had to learn about certain skills that could better me for my future role of being a Product Manager. I will be doing this by using the Gibbs reflective cycle to reflect and explain my learning process. I will also be talking about time management, my online learning experience, public speaking and delivering presentations.



Time management and Organisation

Prior to learning about time management, I thought that I was amazing at time keeping but I noticed that I would solely spend time on one task rather than equally delegating time to the other ones, which would mess up my schedule and cause me to either not have time for the other tasks or not put in as much effort. I also realised that I would get distracted a lot whilst doing tasks, which was due to me dividing my time between work and social media. I would spend one to two hours scrolling on Instagram, then another hour on YouTube, sometimes I would even spend around 4 hours watching two movies a day. After spending so much time on social media, I would have a demotivated attitude towards completing my tasks which made me procrastinate frequently, therefore resulting in delayed tasks. Brian Tracy said " your job is to deliberately procrastinate on tasks that are low value so that you have more time for tasks that can make a big difference in your life and work". One day I came to the realisation that the way I was going was not going to allow me to progress, so I decided to make a note of how I spend my time during the week and I realised that I spent a huge amount of hours a day on unnecessary things, but I was also able to see how bad it really was as I started to see how much time I've been wasting on a weekly and monthly basis. It showed me that I'm disorganised and that if I didn't fix it, eventually it would get worse and that's when I decided to do something about it.

I came across a book called 'Eat That Frog' by Brian Tracy which spoke about the 'rule of 80/20', which I never heard of before but decided to read up on. Brian Tracy mentions in his book that asking yourself " Is this task in the top 20 percent of my activities or in the bottom 80 percent?" Whilst reading about the 80/20 rule I grasped the idea of prioritizing my time better, on the most important task to the least important task. So I decided to apply this method to my daily schedule but I did notice that it wasn't as effective as I expected it to be because I realised that I didn't write down a physical list but rather it was a mental observation . After writing down a list and ticking off tasks that were completed , I started to apply the method again which made a huge difference because I learnt that visible progress encourages you to want to do more and helps you overcome procrastination. I can now definitely say that I am more organised which directly falls in line with my future responsibilities as a product manager. Being able to improve these skills brings me closer to the role as it consists of me of working on a time schedule, as well as meeting deadlines.

Online Experience

Just the thought of me taking part in an online learning experience would frighten me because it was something that was very much out of my comfort zone. I also never had the best computer skills, so it would make me feel nervous knowing that I had to do everything by myself, with the little knowledge I carried. Whilst doing research about my future job role, I came across a new and effective way to still maintain communication with customers, which was the online one to ones. As my role consists of having online ones to ones, I knew I had to challenge myself and push forward even though it was an area that I wasn't confident in. Due to the fact that I was afraid of trying new things. As I was reading 'No Excuses' by Brian Tracy he said that "By visualising yourself performing with confidence and competence in an area where you are fearful, your visual image will eventually be accepted by your subconscious mind as instructions for you performance". When online classes started, I was very much fearful in the beginning, so I had to force myself to speak up but it took a

while for me to be able to feel comfortable and get into my element. Research shows that it takes exactly 66 days to create a new habit and when comparing it to myself, I then realised that in fact it did take me around 2 months to interact online and with other people in my class. I came across another one of Brian Tracy's book called 'Believe it to Achieve it' and in his book he says " Instead of reacting to a difficulty as if it were a problem, or a personal attack on you or your business, say "We have an interesting challenge to deal with". What I understood from reading his book is that many times I would actually be the one to hold myself back because I would see the online learning experience as just an obstacle but instead I realised that I should have been seeing it as an obstacle that I can overcome. So I would challenge myself by asking questions whenever I needed clarity and started getting actively involved with discussions the class was having and the more I done that I started to see how confident I became as time went on. I know that as a product manager I would definitely face challenges at work and when dealing with people from all walks of life. So by being able to demonstrate confidence when dealing with people one-on-one, it will allow me to carry out my duties effectively.

Public speaking and Presentation

Speaking in public has always been an issue for me as far as I could remember. I would only speak in public if I had to but usually I would try my best to avoid it at all costs. Speaking in public would give me really bad anxiety because I would over think so much about messing up, not saying the right things or not being able to deliver it in the way I intended; therefore, causing frustration to also creep in. Research shows that 23.8% of people have suffered from anxiety, but from august 2020 to February 2021 its went up 2.8%. There are a lot of symptoms when it comes to anxiety, which I myself have experienced , such as nausea, insomnia and feel light headed. As many times as I practiced, I still never became courageous enough to make a speech or present anything because of the language barrier. Whilst doing my research I came across a book by Osho called 'Courage, The Joy of Living Dangerously' and he says that "Courage is not the absence of fear, It is, rather, the total presence of fear, with the courage to face it". As English isn't my first language I would have a shy approach to speaking up and instantly become afraid of mispronouncing a word or stuttering because I never wanted to be laughed at or made fun of. Dr Carol S. Dweck said 'shy people looked very nervous for the first five minutes of the interaction, after that the shy growth-minded people showed greater social skills , were more likeable, and created a more enjoyable interaction.'

Being a Product Manager requires me to have meetings with large groups of companies and stakeholders to present the outcome of their product to them. After doing research and reading books, I got the opportunity to learn about how to present and what is expected for an excellent presentation at work. I also had the chance to do a presentation and group work which really helped me to become bold just after 2 weeks, but for some people it will take them longer to become more comfortable and confident within themselves to present or make a speech. Another thing that also helped me with bettering my public speaking and presentation skills was receiving feedback from my manager and work colleagues which consisted of questions like 'what would I do different?', 'what I should keep doing?' and 'what should I do next time?'.

Conclusion

Overall I came to the conclusion that procrastination was holding me back from getting my tasks done on time. This would cause tasks I was yet to complete to pile up, causing me to be frustrated. But after spending quality time reading books by Brian Tracy, I learnt a lot about managing my time better, prioritizing the most important tasks and writing them down each week, as well as monthly. In addition to this, the virtual online experience was something I was never comfortable taking part in because I allowed anxiety to get to me but due to participating in activities and challenging myself to speak up and make suggestions, I was able to use the anxiety, which is seen as a weakness and turn it into a strength. Public speaking and doing presentations would cause me to become weary and self-conscious and because of that I would constantly overthink about people making fun of me and talking about me in a degrading way. Also, I learnt that creating a new habit is neither a quick nor easy process, it will take time, patience, endurance and perseverance, as well as unlearning old habits. These things are key in being an effective product manager as this role requires me to meet deadlines, be organised, exercise social skills, solve problems and last but not least, lead. As a leader, I would need to take into account everybody else when making certain decisions and constantly analyse myself to make sure I am a great example for the rest of my team, giving 100% so therefore I can also expect 100% in return.

Reference

(Brian Tracy, 2017) 'Eat That Frog'

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