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BMSW 4001 Academic and Employment Skills

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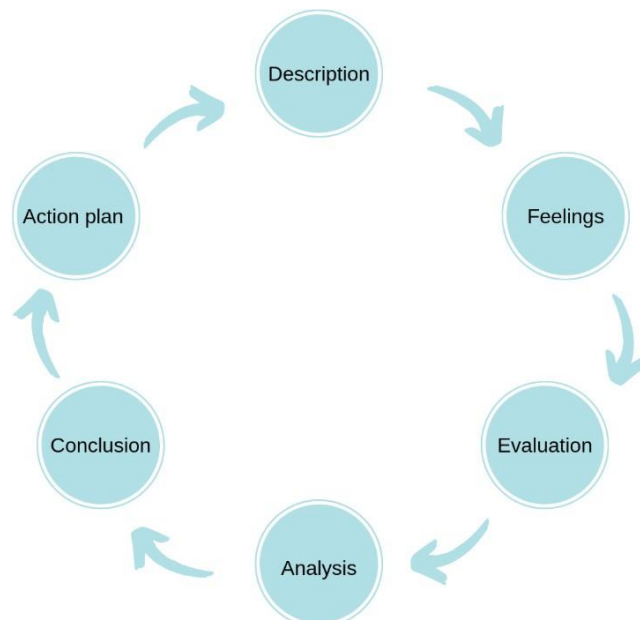
Assignment title: REPORT

Introduction:

The following report studies the academic and employability skills of the students both in the process of acquiring new knowledge and work-related in a real business case environment. There are four academic and employability skills presented - time management, academic writing, using the library and gathering information and public speaking and giving presentations that the report focuses on. The report frames the theoretical background with practical advice on how to obtain these qualities and gives specific examples of situations when the researcher needed to use these skills. The report also presents the Gibb`s Reflective cycle used for the practical examples.

Main body:

Gibb's Reflective Cycle¹²



The model is one of the more complex models. Gibb's cycle contains six stages:

- Description;
- Feelings;
- Evaluation;
- Analysis;

¹ Gibbs, G. (1998) Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.

² [Models of reflection - Reflective Practice Toolkit - LibGuides at University of Cambridge Subject Libraries](#), 07.08.2022

- Conclusion;
- Action plan;

Gibb's begins with an outline of the experience being reflected on. It then encourages focusing on one's feelings about the experience. The next step is evaluating the experience - from one's point of view. The person can use this evaluation in order to analyze the situation. This analysis then focuses on actions (if any) that could have been taken to achieve a different result. The final stage includes outlining an action plan to reach the goals or the tasks given.

Time management skills

Time management is a very important skill both academically and work-related. Learning how to better manage time can help a person achieve their goals and increase productivity and it helps the person save time as well. On the contrary, poor work organization and time management can result in always staying behind one's tasks, being late and never finishing on time. Given below are several key strategies for time management.

1. Priorities

Preparing a to-do list in advance and learning how to prioritize one's tasks is essential in time management. The tasks could be divided into three groups depending on their urgency.

2. Arrow Method³

Entrepreneur Nicholas Sonnenberg, who came up with this method, believes that the weekly calendar should be designed like an arrowhead — most of the tasks at the beginning of the week and less towards the end. The author of the method plans all important things on Monday and Tuesday in order to have a less busy schedule during the rest of the week. This leaves enough room for new opportunities and unexpected, but interesting offers.

3. Time Management Matrix⁴

Divided in four components: important, unimportant, urgent, non-urgent. After filling out the matrix for the day or the week and after leaving out the non-urgent and unimportant affairs, achieving one's goals seems like a more achievable task.

³<https://www.inc.com/nicholas-sonnenberg/5-tips-to-make-your-calendar-work-for-you-not-other-way-around.html>, 26.08.2022

⁴ Covey, S. (1989), 7 Skills of Highly Effective People

4. Finish the most unpleasant task in the morning/ beginning

Doing the most unpleasant or difficult thing as soon as the day starts could be a very successful strategy in time management. Do first what you most want to put aside because negative thoughts and tasks occupy our attention similar to unnecessary tabs in the browser.

5. 80–20 Rule

According to Pareto's Law, named after the author Vilfredo Pareto, 20% of efforts produce 80% of the result, and the remaining 80% of efforts produce only 20% of the result. This rule turns out to be applicable in any given field.

6. Delegation

If a task is not profitable or it is time consuming, it is probably better if you delegate it to another person.

7. Use tools for time management. Combining paper and electronic calendars

For example, Shane Snow uses a paper calendar to plan a week and a Google calendar for conferences and meetings. Using group planning software such as Trello⁵, Pinterest⁶ (graphic design projects) and Canva⁷ is also very convenient in terms of saving time.

8. The Pomodoro technique

The Pomodoro technique can be used for academic purposes less efficiently compared to other tasks as they are more time consuming but the essence of the method is to finish each single task in 25 minutes and have a 5-minute-break afterwards. Overall, making a list with goals and defining a time frame for every single one is a successful time management strategy, especially if it is broken down into smaller steps. It is recommended to have a weekly or a monthly plan and one that is visualized so that you can scratch out the tasks completed once they are done.

9. Organize days by themes⁸

Twitter founder Jack Dorsey divides days by themes. For example, he devotes Monday to management, Tuesday to products, engineering and design, Wednesday to marketing and

⁵https://trello.com/?&aceid=&adposition=&adgroup=123271908682&campaign=12908494697&creative=518286097190&device=c&keyword=trello&matchtype=e&network=g&placement=&ds_kids=p63368163341&ds_e=GOOGLE&ds_eid=700000001557344&ds_e1=GOOGLE&gclid=CjwKCAjwga eYBhBAEiwAvMgp2of2eTD0uh1cQ3vVmrk6sL1gy3E-NP9nZykbh7iT9gqDTxEn0QHWhoCbFMQAvD_BwE&gclid=aw.ds, 07.08.2022

⁶ <https://www.pinterest.com/>, 07.08.2022

⁷ <https://out.websitedesigncompare.com/canva00012>, 07.08.2022

⁸ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2015/10/12/jack-dorsey-productivity->

communications, Thursday to partnerships and development and Friday to company and culture.

In order not to miss important daily activities and tasks, it is very convenient to use a checklist. A good professional can try different methods of time management, choose one or several and even invent new ways that allow them to work less but more efficiently and therefore rest more..

Example situation:

One summer when working in a hotel, we had a very busy week. We had important guests checking-in, a lot of other potential guests calling on the phone and other mundane tasks to do such as rooming-lists, managing the housekeeping etc. I was very stressed and thought that I could not manage on my own with so many tasks and so little time. I decided to come to work earlier and prepare the administrative documents in advance. My colleague and I gave instructions to the housekeeping by 7:30 am. We decided that I would be the one that would mostly pick up the phone and pass and take keys from the guests at the front desk and she would be the one mostly checking them in. In the times that I was free I was checking them in as well. We found a group leader in a larger group we were checking in to translate and better organize the group details for us. At the end, we managed all the tasks on time because we delegated and prioritized them.

Academic writing

The ability to correctly write scientific texts both in terms of grammar and structure is essential for colleague professors and executives who have formal communication. It is also very important for college students to obtain this skill and the sooner this happens, the more successful they will be in their academic studies. The ability to express one's thoughts on paper both coherently and in a grammatically correct manner is also crucial for highly paid executives and employees. But today, academic writing is not limited to national, institutional and even other types of frameworks, which is especially noticeable in the social sciences.

Example situation:

During my course of studies I had many reports for writing. Being a foreigner, academic writing was harder for me compared to native English students so in order to feel better and write a better report that meets all the criteria I decided I needed extra courses as my current level was B2-C1. I enrolled in additional free online language classes and started speaking more with English native students. I felt better and decided to start reading academic journals.

At the end my English improved and after writing several reports I felt that I had achieved my original goal.

Using the library and gathering information

This is another crucial skill related to academic writing. In real life business practices a young professional is highly unlikely to know everything. They usually need to run background investigations and gather information from different sources. University tasks help them prepare for their future career since using the library and gathering information from it resembles a real business case when you have limited time to prepare and deliver a task. A good practice that college professors give young students is giving them a task that requires conducting one's own investigation.

The student needs to read through and filter information fast, searching and finding the correct solution from a wide variety of sources. They need to figure out which are reliable ones and which are not. Using the library and gathering information is a very important skill which can teach you a lot. Also, the ability to learn how to read and be curious in finding solutions in a fast manner is something their employers appreciate a lot. Investing time in studying and researching is never a waste of time..

Example situation:

Similar to the last example, during the course of studies I did not feel knowledgeable on certain topics such as academic writing so I decided to read more and search some titles in the university library. The experience made me feel calmer and more prepared. Had I not done this, I might have not made any progress with my current report. Using the library and gathering information also made me a more curious reader and researcher. In the end I managed to write my report on time.

Public speaking and giving presentation

A lot of recruiters know that soft skills are probably as important as technical ones when applying for a job. University can develop the ability for public speaking and delivering skillful presentations which is especially important in sales, marketing and customer related positions when you need to negotiate and convince the other party they need your services. Several techniques are presented below on delivering a good presentation in front of a client or an audience:

1. Using infographics

Using infographics in one`s presentation shows that the person presenting it has put the necessary amount of effort in it. Reading directly from a presentation is never a good sign as the presentation is supposed to show only the bullet points. The presenter has room to shine and capture the audience's attention with graphic diagrams while they coherently deliver their main message at the same time.

It is recommended to build a presentation in the form of easily memorable and logically understandable theses without overloading it with text information.

During a public speech, the audience should listen to the presenter and in order to do this it is not recommended to read from the slides on the screen.

Making a presentation interesting and pleasant to watch is important but at the same time a good presenter knows how to use gestures and keep the attention on themselves while presenting. The audience must not be distracted by visual content but needs to listen to the words said.

Overloading the slides with images also distracts the audience from the information presented and contributes to the dissipation of public attention, which negatively affects the speaker.

The presenter should also avoid unnecessary animation of elements. The same rule applies for the number of slides which should not be excessive.

The optimal time for the presentation is 30 minutes after that the audience will eventually lose interest. During this 30-minute presentation of one`s main ideas, the human brain is able to perceive the information without getting distracted in the process. The total number of slides should be preferably no more than ten. Accordingly, the presentation of each one should take around three minutes. In this way, the presenter will be able to maintain the interest of the audience and is more likely to convey the original message as the text should match the slides.

Preparation in advance is also the key to success. The best improvisation is the one that is planned.

Example situation:

A week or two ago we needed to prepare a presentation regarding employability skills for the school university. At first I did not know what to write and felt very nervous. But after preparing an action plan and assessing I have all the skills needed to prepare the presentation

I started doing it. I put all the graphic images needed and divided the paragraphs. I studied my presentation and practiced in front of the mirror. I watched some videos (including Steve Jobs as he is known for delivering convincing presentations). I put my presentation on a USB memory stick and prepared a back-up plan (Google Slides presentation). In the end, I felt prepared enough.

Conclusion:

The current report presents four important academic and employability skills - time management, academic writing, using the library and gathering information and public speaking and giving presentations. The report starts by presenting the theoretical framework and explaining the essence of these skills and then provides real examples based on the researcher's reflection on their own experience through the Gibb's Reflective Cycle. Based on the current analyses the researcher deduces that following these academic and employability skills will ensure better academic and work performance, should the skills be acquired and followed thoroughly.

References:

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