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Lucy Miles

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A top-down photograph of a dark wooden surface. In the center-right is a black bowl filled with white popcorn. Several popcorn kernels are scattered around the bowl. In the top right corner, a black remote control is partially visible. In the top left corner, there is a semi-transparent orange circle containing the text 'Best Seller' in white.

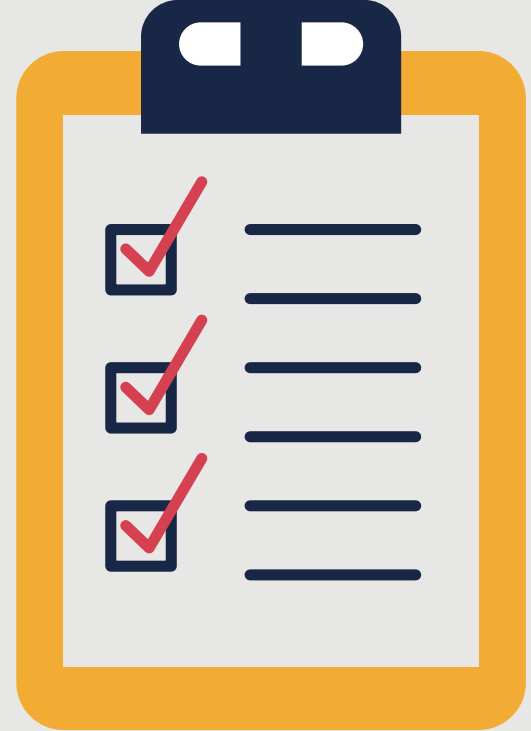
**Best
Seller**

Background

This magazine highlights the authors varied learning outcomes from 4 different scenarios. Gibbs (1998) reflective model has been used in its discussion, ensuring that the author has reflected upon own experience, and has identified description, feelings, evaluation, conclusions and actions in each instance.

Reports don't have to cause you a headache!

One of the modules in my postgraduate diploma was to undertake an investigation of a business issue (IBI) and produce a report on its findings. I was to complete an IBI report exploring the lack of diversity at my organisation, and prior to this I had never produced such a report. I'm a junior member of staff and therefore was never given the opportunity to produce such a significant document. I felt comfortable in producing policies and general HR advice but not so confident in putting together such a lengthy piece of work. Positioning myself on the impact levels CIPD provided, I was at foundation level in report writing and postgraduate skills highlighting my lack of evidence based practice on the CIPD profession map (CIPD, 2022d).





I was feeling apprehensive about completing the report as I had to use analytical skills to evaluate the data received, and then make suitable recommendations. I was worried I would get this completely wrong and my recommendations would be worthless. I think this feeling is normal and many people feel daunted when faced with a new challenge.

On a positive note I did show my postgraduate skills by using critical thinking when analysing vast amounts of academic resources on tackling ethical diversity (Google, 2022). When I say there were thousands of articles I'm not lying! If I were more particular with the sources used, my critical analysis skills could have been informed.

With all the resources available to me, I felt like a kid in a sweet shop. It was so difficult to choose what was most relevant to my report and findings. I felt I used too many resources and perhaps failed to critically analyse all of them. Some of my evaluations may have been too descriptive rather than analytical.

The report really helped me in developing my people management skill set as I got to practise my interviewing skills. I was able to bag an interview with Uzo Iwobi, the most inspiring person when it comes to tackling racial equality in Wales (Pendell & Vander Helm, 2022). Uzo made me feel at ease, making the interview run smoothly, and highlighting my competence in an essential people management skill. Top tip when interviewing is ensure the interviewee is engaged, and the questions are relevant. This ensures you are on track to get the most out of the situation (Linkedin, 2022)! The free flowing nature of the selection interview helped me gain rich data which in turn helped to achieve sound recommendations appropriate for my organisation (CIPD, 2021).

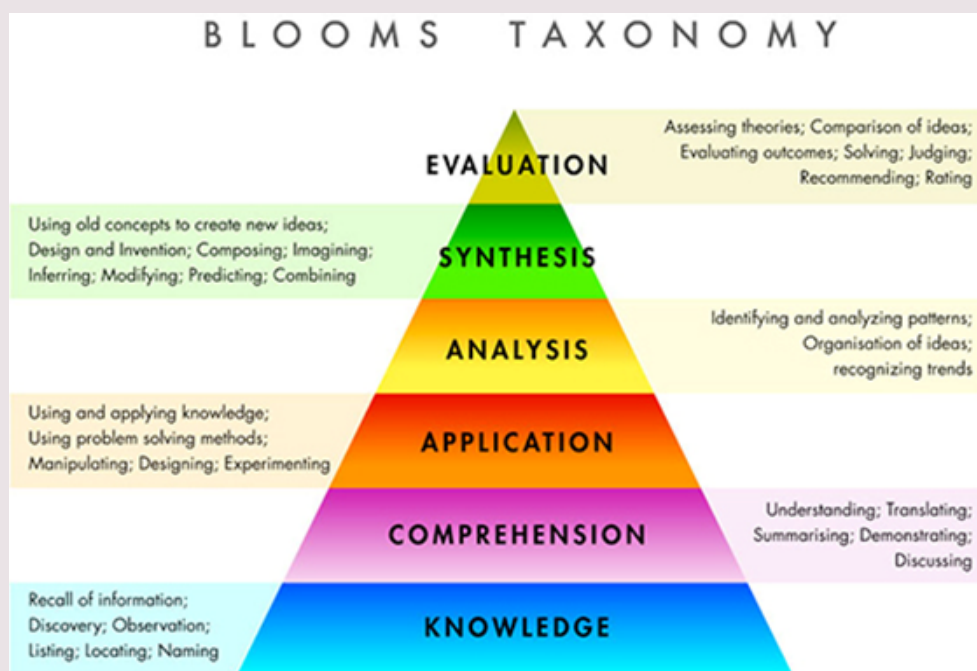
In looking back, a real downfall in the report was the participant's engagement levels. This however, may be no fault of my own but the timing of the module. My questionnaire went out during the summer break, when students were relaxing and recharging rather than looking at their university emails.

I think overall the experience could have been more positive if I had understood how much the process of writing a report would help in my career. I think a lot of students including myself think an assignment is sometimes just a writing exercise. However this assignment really helped me become more analytical in creating solutions when faced with a problem. This highlighted a core behaviour I demonstrated from the CIPD map which is situational decision making (CIPD, 2022d).



Thinking Triangle & Six Honest Men Theory

Even though a high score showed I was capable, with hindsight, perhaps I would have felt more confident in my critical analysis had I used a model to make sure I was on track. After completing the report I found an excellent diagram which would have helped me in analysing sources and getting my head around being more critical.



The thinking triangle helps students to understand how multiple resources could create a syntheses resulting in sound recommendations. Benjamin Bloom (1950) created the model to help university students develop appropriate skills in line with critical thinking. This diagram is a life saver if like me you find critically analysing hard work! Another really useful tool to have used would have been the Six Honest Men. Here you ask what, why, when, how, where and who. This technique would help anyone struggling with credible sources as it ensures all six points are met before using (Anon., 2020).

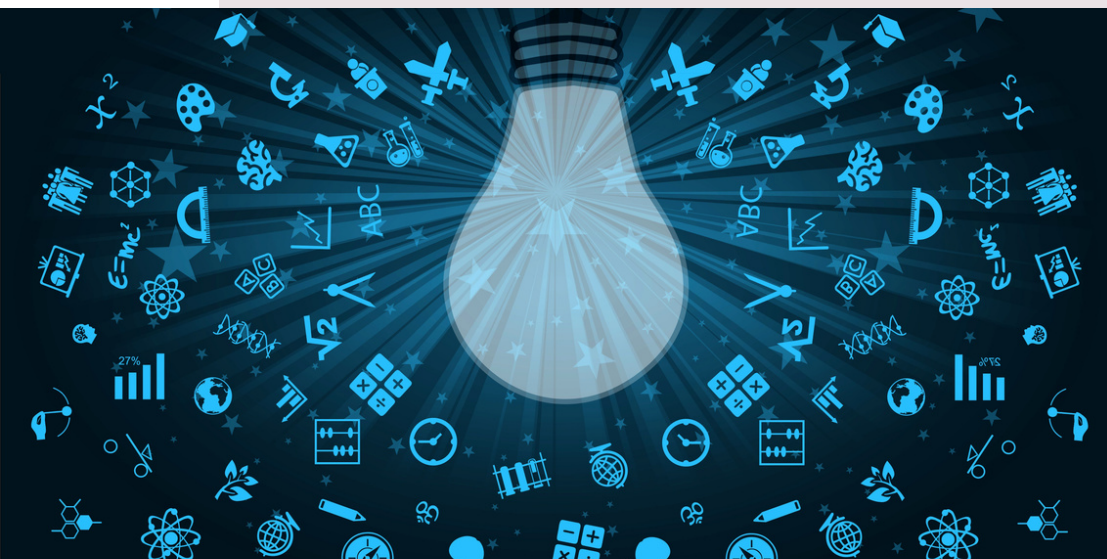
Reflecting on the progress made I can see a vast improvement in my report writing skills. I can make links between different sources enabling me to reach a solution and judgement. I would suggest to reach associate level, I should develop my skills on justifying my reason, and also undertake further people management skill set projects (CIPD, 2022d).

How many areas of HR are there?

It is only when you start working in the field of HR that you become aware of how vast the industry is, which was a huge surprise to me. Initially I thought HR was just answering questions on grievances and disciplinary issues. However within my generalist role I have been able to adopt aspects of Learning and Development (L&D) into my role (Mason, 2019). Reflecting back to the start of my HR career 3 years ago, I was very much at foundation level in both passion for learning within the core behaviours of the profession map and specialist behaviour of leaning and development (CIPD, 2022b).

I think many people entering the world of HR would be at this level for passion for learning. As previously mentioned HR has many fields that like myself, people may not be entirely familiar with. It's therefore difficult to determine which branch of HR you're most interested in and wish to further explore.

A learning gap highlighted in my organisation, was a lack of understanding by line managers of the appraisal process. I knew I had to evaluate the options and evidence presented to me and make justifiable decisions on what course of action to take. As mentioned, I was at a foundation level when it came to learning and development, and felt out of my depth in an area of HR I wasn't too confident with.





Adult Learning Theory

I decided with the help from Nick Shackleton-Jones' (2019) book, (which was by my side 24/7 in the delivering, designing and evaluation model) to produce a resource to highlight Jones's idea of resources not courses. I believed this was best fitting for my organisation and the business, as line managers were dealing with their own case load and could access the resource at a time convenient to them. The resource created was a visual PowerPoint with voiceover explaining steps to line managers on how to complete an appraisal form with an employee. This highlighted my IT proficiency.

The Adult learning Theory (1978) developed by Malcolm Knowles was the theory I used to help create this resource and considers the ways adults learn differently. The concept of adult readiness to learn steered me to use this theory as there was a clear reason for line managers own personal development to develop these skills (LearnUpon, 2020). Within the resource, I ensured the text was big enough for anyone who had sight issues and also considered the colours used if there were any line managers who were dyslexic and struggled reading with specific background text (BDA, 2022).

Including the voiceover also demonstrated I was aware of any reading difficulties line managers may have. I was blown away with how many considerations there were in developing a resource to address a learning gap. It was certainly not as easy as creating a simple PowerPoint! There were so many options to weigh up to ensure the resource was both beneficial and utilised effectively.

A positive from this resource was its accessibility to all line managers. The resource really did help cut down simple questions on the process which spared up more of HR's time, allowing line managers to carry out roles efficiently. An additional positive from this resource resulted in me having a better understanding of L&D and also a greater passion for learning. I was now much more aware of how a successful resource impacted on peoples learning.

Reflecting on the process my resource may have been too big to be a quick accessible resource. The information included was quite wordy. Therefore the resource itself may have lost sight of being a grab and go tool, which could have been down to the software I used.

If I were to address a learning gap again by creating a resource I think I would make sure the information I gave was bitesize therefore evaluating my options even further. To achieve this leading further training sessions may help me pin point relevant information needed for employees in specific roles. This would enable me to reach associate level in having a passion for learning and also L&D where I would be able to support others with their CPD and identify different competencies. Learning can sometimes be seen as being more beneficial as a resource compared to a traditional course. However I think it's important to remember the difference between a resources and course (Shakleton-Jones, 2019). A resource would usually hold more condensed information than a course and therefore I should take this on board when creating another such resource (Greany, 2017). As they say less is more!





**The
dreaded
ACAS**

My first time dealing with ACAS

I remember when I came to work and realised everyone was out of the office apart from me. Usually this wouldn't phase me, but that day was no ordinary day. It was the day early conciliation started with an employee who had claimed racial discrimination in the workplace. I felt out of my depth and looking back I was definitely at the foundation level of the core behaviour of commercial drive. I lacked the demonstration of a commercial mind-set as I had never dealt with an ACAS conciliation before (CIPD, 2022a).

The only positive from being thrown in at the deep end, which I didn't think at the time, was that I just had to get on with it. This wasn't something that could wait until next week. This was an immediate problem. I quickly learnt this was how I developed. Don't get me wrong it is helpful when someone just gives you the answer, but the only way you can learn sometimes is by doing it yourself. This supports John Dewey's philosophy of 'learning by doing', and Gibbs's reflective cycle (Reese, 2011, Gibbs, 1998).

Learning Outcome 1 & 5

Luckily I had just completed my employment law module within my CIPD course where I had to draft a response to a business in relation to receiving an ET1 form. So, I had a rough idea of how the process worked and the consequences if not responded to in the correct timeframe (Gov.uk, 2022). However theory felt completely different to doing the real thing. My first thoughts were timings.

I had to ensure I was responding to ACAS in a timely manner to ensure the process was dealt with smoothly and swiftly, demonstrating I could manage myself effectively within my current position (ACAS, 2022). The time frame set by the business was to have a settlement agreed by the end of the day. In no way did this mean the company was liable for the claims raised.

However from a commercial sense this would save the business a lot of money. I think from the experience I can definitely see I have good communication skills as I was able to discuss any concerns and offer figures for settlement clearly through both telephone and via email. I was congratulated by a team member after the conciliation ended on my communication with both parties and keeping to the agreed time frame. Communication is particularly important when it comes to dealing with finance as its paramount for both the business and employee that the agreed amounts are accurate.



As this was at settlement stage it was my job to negotiate the correct agreed settlement. This involved me calculating statutory redundancy for the employee using the government tool, gaining an understanding of a fair amount for both the employee and business, and interpreting financial information (Gov.uk, 2022). I was comfortable at doing this as I have had to calculate redundancy packages a number of times. However, it was about getting the balance right for both parties and examining the Equality Act (2010) to understand the underpin of the claim made to again offer a fair amount.



For my first time dealing with ACAS I would say I'm more confident when it comes to having a commercial drive ensuring fairness for both parties and demonstrating personal responsibility. From my initial dealings with ACAS to now, and having dealt with them a number of times I would say I'm now at associate level when it comes to this core behaviour of the profession map (CIPD, 2022a).

Even though it went well for my first time there are things I could still improve upon. To have confidence in my decisions on complex issues, would help achieve in becoming an associate CIPD professional in situational decision making (CIPD, 2022d). I felt that I went back and forth to ACAS too many times and the process may have been quicker had I trusted my opinions and avoided doubting myself. However, I do think this helped me ensure I was following the process professionally. It ensured I did not miss any aspect of the conciliation and that I was working to a set time. I believe understanding the financial state of the business would also help me become more confident in dealing with financial resources and aid in my move to associate level when it comes to having a commercial drive. I now know exactly what the business deems acceptable.

“

**And just
remember
ACAS aren't
against you!**



How to upskill line managers

It can be tricky to understand a learning gap within your organisation. You're so used to the day to day running of the business it's sometimes hard to see what is missing. Everything seemed to be running smoothly until I took a closer look.

By closer look I mean using the PESTLE tool. This tool is really beneficial when it comes to understanding the external environment of a business (CIPD, 2021). I felt confident using this tool because of my experience using it in both my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. However, it's what you do with that information that makes me question my decisions.

Learning Outcome 2 & 4



P	E	S	T	E	L
- Government policy - Political stability - Corruption - Foreign trade policy - Tax policy - Labour law - Trade restrictions	- Economic growth - Exchange rates - Interest rates - Inflation rates - Disposable income - Unemployment rates	- Population growth rate - Age distribution - Career attitudes - Safety emphasis - Health consciousness - Lifestyle attitudes - Cultural barriers	- Technology incentives - Level of innovation - Automation - R&D activity - Technological change - Technological awareness	- Weather - Climate - Environmental policies - Climate change - Pressures from NGO's	- Discrimination laws - Antitrust laws - Employment laws - Consumer protection laws - Copyright and patent laws - Health and safety laws

From the PESTLE analysis undertaken by myself for the leading, managing and developing people module, the pandemic appeared to open a can of worms as to what was going wrong in organisations. In my case it was the lack of communication from line managers to their team, especially those on furlough. This wasn't just an issue my organisation had as it was found that 43% of employees thought their leaders should improve on communication (Hays, 2022).

I can only imagine the loneliness and isolation employees must have felt whilst on furlough, or working from home, with little or no communication from line managers. It almost felt as if HR was letting its employees down. I felt a sense of responsibility for perhaps not emphasising enough the need to talk during the pandemic. I knew something had to change to maintain a happy workforce in these unprecedented times.

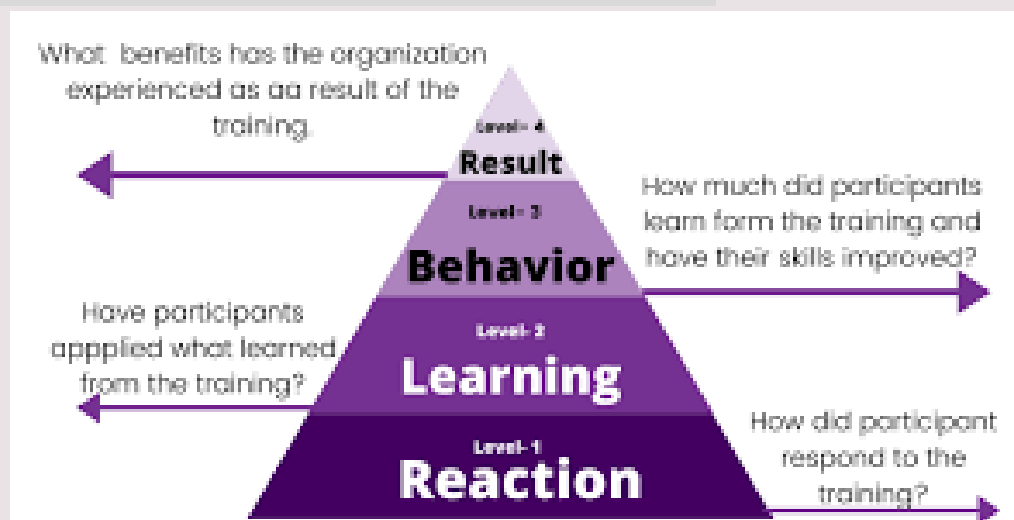
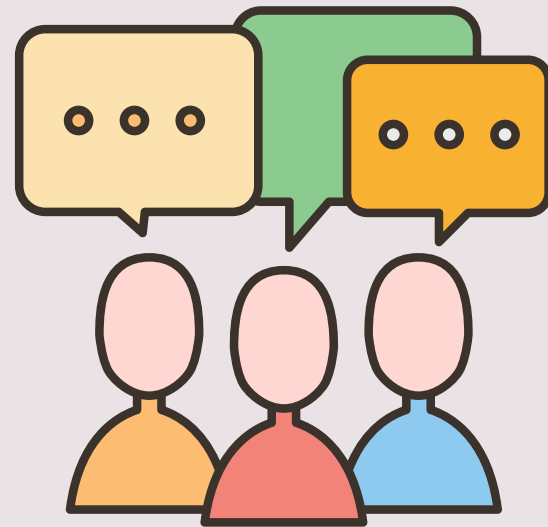
Alongside PESTLE, the concept of Lewin's (1940) change model where change needs to be detected, implemented and then stabilised within the business was considered. It was clear from the PESTLE analysis and a further learning needs analysis, when an engagement survey sent to all, showed that employees felt a disconnection with line managers. Communication is one of the main skills a line manager should have to effectively inform. Therefore it was my aim to improve line manager's people management skills, including communication and decision making skills thus creating strong relationships between employees and line managers (People, 2020). This highlighted how I could lead and influence line managers by raising their level of performance.

To increase participation it was decided that team building was a technique used to unite line managers to achieve a common goal, and allowed me to manage interpersonal relationships at work more effectively. I decided that a line manager forum would help line managers discuss concerns and help answer questions under the supervision of HR and experienced line managers in the team, highlighting interpersonal relationships. This was crucial in the height of the pandemic when restrictions were tight and morale was low. I knew I had to be proactive in creating a team environment to avoid the disappointment of the initial results received from the engagement survey (Gov.uk, 2020).



Kirkpatrick's Theory

The forum also helped highlight communication amongst managers who were faced with similar issues they did not know how to approach. The forum allowed HR to influence line managers with experiences and views from other managers, making them more effective leaders and motivating them to learn from others. The forum created a community for managers and allowed them to discuss concerns leading to many managers feeling more confident in their management approach.



It was clear this wasn't a one off training exercise. These lessons of working as a team and communicating needed to be routine with managers and therefore Kirkpatrick's (1954) evaluation tool would help assess the success of the learning experience.

During the line manager training it was clear I was at foundation level for people practise where I was able to understand how the business monitors people's skills and capability (CIPD, 2022c). The forum appeared to help line managers who were confident in using technology. However some managers did struggle with navigating their way around the forum, leading to a decrease in participation from some of them. To resume leading and influencing others, and moving to an associate level within people practise, I think it would be beneficial to increase my training skills and undertake a formal qualification. This would enable me to continue influencing employees having learnt new techniques to engage all participants under a formal qualification.

Considering the use of the technology, it may have also been beneficial to hold a number of face to face meetings to help those managers struggling in this area. However it was highlighted that the sense of a community even virtually did assist in increasing line manager performance, with many stating this in the evaluation process. As this was a success, I think it's important for me to develop my interpersonal relationships further at work to achieve associate level in people practice and interpersonal skills (CIPD, 2022c).



Training can sometimes be seen as helping only the party you're training. However this experience really helped me improve my skills of leading and also managing relationships at work more effectively. Creating a community meant people could openly discuss issues. I just hope I don't have to manage people within a pandemic ever again, all I can say was...it was challenging!

Action Plan

What do I want/need to learn	What will I do to achieve this?	What resources or support will I need?	What will my success criteria be?	Targets dates for review and completion
Learning Outcome				
1 Advise on more complex HR issues to become more confident in my decision making	Volunteer to advise on new challenges such as complicated grievances and redundancies	My mentor will be able to help me achieve this goal by proof reading advice on complex matters	A record will be kept on what advice was given and a review by my mentor on areas to improve and what went well	A complex issue could arise in the next 3-6 months and therefore varied advice on complex issues will be given by December 2022
2 Organise team events for each department to highlight interpersonal skills and effective teams	Group employees with a variety of other employees in different roles but same offices. Contact team events such as escape rooms in Swansea and Cardiff.	As the teams are across East to West Wales, it would be beneficial to group teams by the offices they are in. Team building activities would vary depending on where the office is located. Ideally employees would not have to travel more than 1 hour away from their office. E.g the escape room in Swansea has 5 rooms with 6 people maximum allowed in each. 30 employees for one hour, with a 4hour slot each day,	A survey will be sent with questions from the original survey including line manager communication. SPSS will be used to analyse the data from the responses.	As each office will be offered this, it will take a lengthy period of time. Ideally all team events will be completed within 6-12 months of planning. Starting from July 2022.
3	Unconscious bias is a training exercise	I will need the time of line managers	A survey monkey link will be sent to	November 2022

Help develop training with the organisation to make more justifiable decisions	yet to take place within the business.	The training should take around 1 hour to present and 2-3 hours to put together.	attendees to rate their experience including how informative it was and top tips they took away.	
4 Undertake a level 3 award in education and training to further my skills on leading and influencing others	Undertake a 6 month training course via an online training company	Online training course via training provider CTC Training. £199 including VAT.	To receive the level 3 award allowing me to run HR training with a relevant and appropriate qualification	June 2023
5 Understand the business's budget to manage financial resources more effectively	Shadow the finance department to understand each teams budget and also the budget for the business if any claims were to arise	The accounts team time. There are 5 people in the time which I could shadow to ensure the team can still run effectively	To have a clear understanding of the business budgets and what they are used for	July 2022
6 Use other software for resources such as an infographic to increase my IT proficiency and only include relevant information.	Use a free account on canva to produce a resource on an infographic that is needed next based on an identified learning gap.	Canva a free resource. The time of the businesses digital marketing officer to understand what is needed to make an infographic appealing and informative.	To display a number of resources on the internal portal using a variety of platforms	October 2022 as another review of line management practices will take place
7 Undertake an appraisal interview to increase my skills set on people management skills	Volunteer to hold appraisals with secretarial staff at the firm	The appraisal form and resource will guide me through the process and also allow conversation with the employee	Actions raised within the meeting to be dealt with in a timely manner	May 2022-August 2022
8 Develop my understanding of credible sources to further my postgraduate study skills	Use a database software that allows to search for peer review sources when identifying sources. Google scholar will also help find credible sources.	I will be able to use the university's database whilst I am still studying. However after my studies end, I will be able to use google scholar or online libraries.	To personally examine business reports and training published. To determine if sources are credible by checking databases for sources used.	I will still develop my postgraduate skills after graduating and will review quarterly until December 2023.

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