

Reflective Essay

Reflection on career journey to date and future professional development



MODULE NAME: PROFESSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT
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I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE NOT PRESENTED ANY AI GENERATED MATERIALS AS MY OWN WORK.

I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE COPIES OF MY DRAFTS, NOTES, AND OTHER RESOURCES I USED, WHICH I MAY BE ASKED TO PROVIDE IN EVIDENCE.

1. Introduction

Joining university can become a dream, as can also working in a corporate business environment. Both dreams have come true, building an amazing journey for me, however the life purpose can still feel unknown. Therefore, I continue to build my journey while maintaining a reflective journal that describes the positive and negative challenges of everyday life. Reflective writing supports the self-development process and the discovery of life purpose (Adams, 2024) which I am motivated to explore.

Following several career experiences as a leader, project manager and entrepreneur I experienced a moment of doubt during which every new job opportunity felt uncomfortable. Unclear expectations and personal needs led me to become a student and explore tools that could help me better understand myself and my potential for use in a professional environment. This essay is based on Gibbs' Reflective Cycle model given by Graham Gibbs (1988), through which I reflect on my personal career development journey to date and provide action plan for further improvement. The key aspect is to enhance my self-awareness using this reflective writing method (Galli and New, 2022). This method is based on six steps: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusions and personal action plan (Holder, et al., 2019).

2. Experience One

The first important moment in my career was my first job in the UK, which I was fortunate to secure just three weeks after moving to Bristol. It was very stressful time and required for me to step out of my comfort zone due to poor understanding of the English language at the time. Despite not speaking the language fluently and having no previous experience, I was hired to work in a restaurant. I worked as a waitress, kitchen assistant and manager's assistant.

Initially, it was relatively easy for me to feel comfortable and begin improving the service because being the only waitress gave me the opportunity to feel powerful and independent, as I was allowed to oversee most of decisions in the business. However, my experience started to change after nine months when I realised that I was working over sixty hours a week and every weekend, which did not allow me to maintain the

social life I needed at the age of twenty. I felt exhausted and undervalued, so I decided to leave.

A main aspect of this role was the development of management and organisational skills that I had never imagined I possessed, which surprised me as well as strong communication skills and the ability to build relationships with others. Heretofore this experience, I had never considered becoming a leader. The feeling of making a difference and improving the customer experience was highly satisfying. However, I also realised that my own needs are important and that this was not a workplace in which I wanted to remain long term.

Completing Holland's Career Test supported the view that as a persuader, I felt fulfilled in organizing and leading a business (Gurres, 2021). An unexpected aspect was that the results of my career test indicated multiple dominant career types. Research shows that such outcomes are influenced not only by individual interests but also by culturally endorsed roles (Windyana, et al., 2025) which explains my unstable job satisfaction at that time and later experiences.

3. Experience Two

The second reflection is based on my involvement in the construction industry. It began in a corporate organisation, which led me to work with and collaborate with smaller private businesses and eventually to become the owner of my own business. I initially started as a project coordinator and progressed within this role across different departments. I have always been very loyal, therefore, when the time came and my team left I decided to move on and join another company that offered me a position as a project manager.

This experience can be divided into two parts. On the positive side, I felt fulfilled as a leader and planner. I also appreciated the flexibility of working remotely and the opportunity to travel abroad to visit my family wherever possible. At worst, the dominant male environment made me feel uncomfortable and caused my professional boundaries within the boss-employee relationship to become unclear. Increasing responsibilities and my bosses' expectations began to override my own needs, which, made me feel disappointed in myself.

There are five recognised ways to wellbeing, including connecting with others, being active, taking notice and slowing down, continuing to learn and giving to others

(Gallagher, 2022). Although I demonstrated some self-awareness and followed several of these principles, I neglected others, particularly taking notice and slowing down. By the end of this experience, I felt betrayed, lonely and disrespected due to the lack of communication from my employer.

To analyze the reasons and possible solutions, I completed Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis during a Personal Career Development module at the university. Ultimately this exercise highlighted my weaknesses and provided guidance on how these could be converted into strengths (Khuder, Ibrahim and Faihan, 2025).

4. Experience Three

In 2021, I decided to move on, as I felt that I would gain more satisfaction by becoming my own boss. I quickly established my own limited company while living in Poland with my family. This venture was formed in partnership with a good friend. I believed there was strong potential in the market, however, fundamentally every business must consider how the potential customers can find them (Cottrell, 2021) and this was something I did not fully consider.

The main reason for this was lack of a clear development plan for both the company and myself as an individual. I also lacked clearly defined goals. While I was abroad, it was challenging for me to meet new clients, and I had to rely heavily on my business partner. At times, I felt frustrated about lack of new clients, and occasionally I experienced burnout and lack of motivation to explore new opportunities.

Following this experience, I completed the Mayers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) for the first time back in 2023. The insight suggested that although my personality type is oriented on social interaction, one of my weaker areas is sales and negotiation. The MBTI framework helps individuals understand their personality and align work roles with their strengths (Nosheen and Sana, 2024). In truth, generating new business was not one of my strengths, and when reviewing my test results, I felt disappointed in myself. However, observing slightly different results in 2026 supported the view that personality traits can evolve over time (Beck and Jackson, 2022).

5. Experience Four

In contrast to my other experiences, I decided to change my professional career as every new job opportunity felt uncomfortable. This led me to join university in September 2025 to study Business Management and Leadership. As noted, “management and business degrees typically aim to inform and help students to be more effective in the workplace.” (Gallagher, 2022, p.152).

Initially, I planned to complete online courses, some of which I had already completed in the past. However, online training was not the most suitable option for my learning style. As a theorist, I learn best through participation in complex exercises and systematic training (Krisvani, Harivani and Suwanti, 2024). In this respect, the course aligns well with my needs, and I felt very excited from the beginning. I believed it would improve my confidence and fill my knowledge gaps, as well as help me clarify my life purpose, particularly as I had begun to doubt whether I could be a leader again.

So far, I have not fully clarified my purpose, and a surprising realisation has been that I can practise and improve any skill I choose to develop (Dweck, 2017). Overall, university study is supporting both my personal and professional development.

6. Conclusion

Recently, I realised that I had felt disappointed with many of the employers and colleagues I worked with due to how I believed I have been treated. However, through reflection I have recognized that I am also partly responsible for the situations I experienced. In fact, this realisation has provided an important lesson: I can build and manage a business independently, as I have demonstrated these abilities while working for others over the years. My lack of self-confidence, self-respect and personal boundaries became a weakness.

The SWOT analysis helped me to identify those weaknesses and showed how they can be developed into strengths. As a result, my next step is to remain persistent and continue building my discipline. Dweck (2017) explains that intelligence and capability can develop through effective strategics and support from others when individual maintain a commitment to learning. This perspective supports my decision to continue as a student.

Furthermore, the range of career development tools available to me, such as the Mayers-Briggs Type Indicator and Holland's Career Theory, demonstrates that I possess multiple dominant traits and may benefit from more culturally sensitive career guidance (Windyana, et al., 2025). My plan is to continue following my Personal Development Plan (PDP) and to update it along the way as the PDP can enhance academic performance as also support better understanding of strengths and weaknesses (Cottrell, 2021).

To conclude, I am beginning to gain clarity about my direction in professional career. Although I recognize that this development journey will continue for some time, I feel motivated by the progress I made. I intend to use my previous experiences to inform better decisions in the future and to build new experiences that align with my needs and ambitions as either an employee or a business owner, as outlined in the attached action plan.

Action Plan

My goal is
to improve my sales and negotiation skills to confidently generate at least five new client leads
within next nine months.

Date to finish	How will I measure my success?
26/11/2026	By generating at least five new client leads

Steps to Achieving my Goal

Description	Time Estimate	Completion date
Complete certified sales course	Two months	26/04/2026
Complete certified negotiation course	Four months	26/06/2026
Gather feedback from peers regarding my communication style	One month	26/03/2026
Networking twice per month to apply learnt content	9 months	26/11/2026
Reflect in writing monthly using Gibb's cycle	One month	26/11/2026
Read at least 4 books about sales and negotiations	Five months	26/07/2026

Obstacles that may arise	How I will respond
Time management	Implement time blocking
Lack of confidence	Complete short courses about assertiveness
Fear of rejection	Convert rejection to learning experience
Maintaining discipline	Set monthly Personal Development Plan review

Helpful Tools	Helpful Resources
Mayers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)	LinkedIn Learning
SWOT Analysis	Networking events
Gibbs' Reflective Cycle	University careers service

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