

Running Head: ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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Introduction

Every graduate looks forward to landing a job of his or her dream soon after graduation from college or university. However, the reality is that finding the job is a daunting task whose very thought scares many (Morgan, 2016). I have been thinking about whether I will land a good job soon after graduation and, most significantly, whether I possess the right skills to land and maintain the job. I decided that the thoughts and fears will not be a barrier to me and instead, focusing on my strengths and abilities, I am confident I have what is mostly required.

My skills

All along my life in the university, I have engaged in multiple activities outside the basic academics, including playing basketball, participating in debate competitions, and multiple community services. The participation in these activities has enabled me to learn many other things besides making me strong in extracurricular fields. Most significantly, my participation in debates and basketball activities has helped me learn and greatly improve my communication skills and become a better team player than I was initially. Teamwork is a core requirement in the job market and I know that having developed the skills to work in a team has prepared me for the job I will land since all employers want to have their employees working as a team to reach a common goal.

Besides communication and teamwork, these activities helped me develop leadership skills as I led my basketball team in our last year and I learned how to recognize the strengths of each player and how to combine all our strengths as a team to reach our goal. As a leader, I acquired the skills of self belief and building trust as well as being accountable and holding the members of the team accountable. During community work, being ethical was paramount at all

times and as every job requires ethical skills, I learned how to avoid collisions with individuals on religious, cultural, and even social differences and by learning the rights and wrongs in the society, I had the opportunity to strengthen my communication skills by sharing my views with the community members on what I thought was wrong and what would be right in that situation.

My needed qualities

Although these skills are important for me in any workplace, they were not enough to sufficiently pursue my career dreams (Maund, Schriek and Tinkler, 2017). For this reason, I have sought assistance from career guides who have helped me spot my weaknesses and strengths and who have shown me the path to not only limit my weaknesses and boost my strengths but also to keep improving and learning new skills that are needed every day. Digital and analytical skills emerged as my weaknesses and this became a concern to me because although I am good at basic computing, I know that the modern world is advancing in technology at a very fast rate and there is need to have digital and analytical skills to keep up. I also learned that I did not explore beyond my studies and that limited my creativity and much-needed general application knowledge. However, I have set up a plan which I am following to improve my computer and analytical skills as well as my creative aspects of life.

Practical experience, personal, attributes and abilities

College life is a time in people's lives that potentially contributes to their rise and fall in their career lives later (Maund, Schriek and Tinkler, 2017). For this reason, I tried my best to make the most out of every learning opportunity I got through participation in many business competitions and I have managed to win two prizes for that, and thereby I gained experience working under pressure and finding some creative solution to given competitive situations.

Competitions also gave me a chance to be competitive and to gain self-confidence as well as honor from my friends and colleagues. I am perfectly capable of communicating with people from different levels with ease and this helped me a lot in the competitions as I was able to make sales faster and easier. Competitiveness has also instilled in me the skills of time observation and working within deadlines as well as strong interpersonal skills gathered from multiple fields of work. I have also advanced my Microsoft Office skills and my performance on presentations has been commended by my tutors and the managers for whom I have worked.

Achievements of life, work, and education

Besides my community service and competitions I have taken part in while in the university, I have also worked as a part-time employee for a number of organizations where I have taken roles including restaurant manager, marketing relationship executive, sales executive, and a part-time teacher. In each of these jobs, I have gained practical knowledge that helps in communication with various types of people depending on the job and requirements. I have achieved various awards, including employee of the month on two occasions as a marketing executive and best leadership award as a restaurant manager. Each of these achievements has been a pushing force for me to make more efforts to achieve even more in future.

Soft and hard skills

Soft Skills

Soft skills are those that enable an individual to interact with others well and they involve social and communication skills. Soft skills are about building one's character and a good balance of intelligence and emotions (Balcar, 2016). These are necessary skills to work in any

occupation as they help create and maintain a good state of harmony at the workplace.

Individuals with proper soft skills are bound to have successful endeavors in the future (Balcar, 2016).



Figure 1: My soft skills

According to my self-evaluation, I have acquired adequate team working capabilities from my participation in basketball, community service, and from my various jobs that I have had before. I have also acquired motivational skills, although I have always been a motivated person. Whenever my team would be on the losing side, I often managed to rally them and motivate them to keep moving and many times this worked for the team. My belief is that a team can only achieve its targets when it is motivated. Combining motivation with leadership and teamwork skills made it easier for me to carry the responsibility of being a leader with lesser challenges than it would have been if I did not possess these skills.

As much as leadership is an important skill in the job market, listening skills are similarly essential for a team player. Listening to competition and complements from team members

allows the team to have an effective way of incorporating the efforts of each member and concentrating these towards a single objective (Maund, Schriek and Tinkler, 2017). Writing and presentation skills are part of communication skill sets that I am confident about myself, and with exposure to business-related roles I acquired business etiquette and executive presence. Initially, I was not great at public speaking and presentation, but during my period in the university I have learned to cope with stage fright and to overcome the shyness and fear of public speaking that I had before.

Hard Skills

Hard skills are those that can be taught and judged in a formally defined way. These include skills learned throughout an individual's life including such subjects as languages, reading, science, mathematics, management, and others (Balcar, 2016). The job market initially gauges the qualification of an individual on the basis of these hard skills since employers have defined sets of required qualification on specific skills. Some of my hard skills include foreign languages; as although I have used English since childhood, and the society around me uses it, I felt the need to learn other languages for purposes associated with diversity and the necessity globalization generates in that field (Balcar, 2016). Therefore, I have pursued the knowledge of German, French, and Spanish languages. I am yet to be as fluent in these languages as I am in English, but I hope to keep learning through practice in the field. Computer application, particularly the use of Microsoft Office for normal office operations and for analytical purposes, is a skill that the job market requires as a necessity for entrants and I have made significant efforts to ensure that I have all the abilities I need using these applications.

A degree certificate is by far the most sought after document in the field as it is the proof of completion of studies and qualification for a specific course (Alfeld, Smerdon & Kim, 2018). Mathematics is also an important skill regardless of the field of work and although the basic calculations are part of any occupation, I am strong in accounting and I have always enjoyed solving mathematical problems. Planning skills are also an essential requirement because most occupations involve multiple roles within defined timelines and there is need for prioritization and planning to get all of them done (Alfeld, Smerdon & Kim, 2018). However, although I have been using Microsoft Office for analytical purposes, I am yet to completely master the data analysis skills and my self-evaluation suggests the need for more practice.

Theoretical and practical knowledge

Learning really has no end in one's life and some of the things we learn go unused in our fields of work. However, I hope that the skills I learned for application in the field, including planning and planning tools such as the decision tree, SWOT analysis, Pestle analysis, Porter's five forces, and Radar chart. Other practical tools for use include tools for marketing such as social media, digital media, and traditional mainstream media; accounting tools and skills such as inventory tracking, invoicing, and payroll. Theoretical knowledge is not always what is needed in the job and exposure to situations in real-life where these skills are applied is essential makes the mastery of these skills stronger (Cohen et al., 2019).

Personal development plan

This is a self-development plan that involves planning in a step-wise way to achieve a desired set goal (Alfeld, Smerdon & Kim, 2018). I made myself a personal development plan that was aimed at improving my weaknesses that I found from my self-assessment. My primary

motive when making the PDP was to improve my data analysis skills, as well as continue strengthening my language skills in Spanish, French, and German. In effect to this, I committed myself to taking a diploma course in data analytics which is a training program that only takes half a year to complete and be certified. At the end of the course, I will have overcome one of my biggest weaknesses.

Conclusion

After graduation, getting a good job almost translates to a good life and that is what every person looks up for. However, landing a good job and developing it into a successful career requires many skills and abilities, some of which are not taught in college but have to be acquired through practice and exposure. Acquiring as many extracurricular skills besides the formal training in college and university prepares an individual not only for the specific career for which he or she has trained but also helps in their overall outlook of their future lives.

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