

Professional Career Development

BMSW4005

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present a structured analysis of my professional development and to review the objectives I have set in my career and the steps I have designed for my professional development plan.

In order to conduct objective and relevant analyzes, I used some recognized tools such as SWOT Analysis and Johari Window and I set my career goals by setting SMART Objectives.

I will also present in this paper how I was impacted by the work on the role play and how experiential learning was installed as a result of the implementation of the job interview situation, referring to Kolb's theory.

Reflection on my role play

The role play in which each of us participated, once from the position of the employee, and another time from the position of the employer makes me think of the legend of the Trojan horse, with a very positive ending. What I initially thought was an easy task, even a trivial one, proved to be a challenge and was a method that came with a lot of skills and useful information for the future.

First, the research work behind preparing the interview questions has settled in my mind how important it is to learn to ask specific, comprehensive questions that will lead to getting the answer we are looking for.

Second, the indications received before and after the role play remained inscribed in my memory because they were applied on a concrete case in which I myself took part, and not just some theoretical information detached from the context that are just going through my head.

Third, the employee's experience gave me perhaps the unique opportunity in my life to try to describe myself as effectively as possible in accordance with the questions asked, but without being overwhelmed by the emotions of a real interview that would have been an enormous psychological pressure and which would not have allowed me to distinguish the need of the employer to do my professional radiography to see the degree of compatibility with the position I aspire for.

Kolb's perspective on learning styles proposes a four stage cycle to learning: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experience. These are built on two antitheses: abstract - concrete and active - reflective.

According to Kolb, we can highlight 4 basic learning styles: the diverging style, the assimilating style, the converging style and the accomodating style, as the preference goes for two combined stages from the learning cycle (Kolb, Boyatzis, Mainemelis, 1999, page 5-7).

I can say that it applies to me the Accomodating Learning Style, having the concrete experience and active experimentation stages combined. The reason is I prefer to experiment and I link everything I learn to the practice of each day. Learning is interesting to me when I can see the connection between what I learn and what I can apply in my everyday life and when it brings me a personal benefit or a concrete result. I do feel I have a very strong sense of reality and I like to solve problems and take practical decisions.

Kolb`s theory focuses on the learner`s internal cognitive processes and specifies that „because of one`s genetic makeup, particular life experiences and the demands of the present environment, a preffered way of choosing among these four learning modes is developed” (Kolb & Kolb, 2011).

Self Motivation

I consider that I have a satisfactory level of self-motivation, but which of course can make room for improvement.

What has determined me so far to take the steps I have taken in my career and what pushes me further in the same direction has always been fueled by my constant desire and pleasure to be surrounded by people, to socialize and to represent for them a person to turn to with confidence because I am capable to adapt and be able to help each one according to their needs and with no expectation of reward.

What also keeps me going is my interest in always learning a new skill, or in finding out about a specific product or service and ensuring that I know enough to pass it on.

Moreover, I have always believed that human interaction is the most convenient way to exchange information and when it pleases you to communicate, the information transmitted is stored as lessons, only that it is learned subtly and in an unofficial way.

Another way I manage to keep my motivation high is by pushing myself outside my confort zone by getting specialized on something, even if the information source is YouTube, or trying something new. As an example, now I intend to become a Sales Representative at an Apple Store. The field in which the store operates is of interest to me, as I am passionate about everything that involves technology, devices and the latest gadgets

Learning Styles

VAK learning styles allow us to discover our own learning style and to optimize it. Thus, we can learn how to learn faster and how the information should be presented to us so that it remains in the memory.

According to the VAK model, most people use a mix of the following three learning styles: visual learning, auditory learning and kinesthetic learning (Kakumanu, 2019).

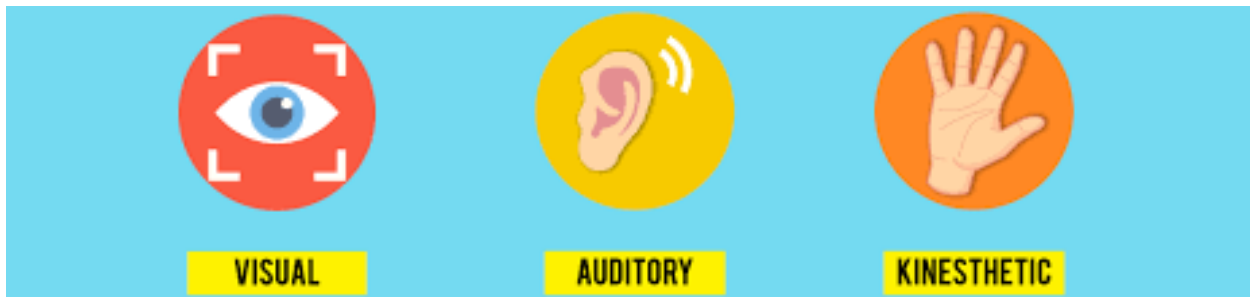


Fig. 1 VAK Learning Styles

As for me, I'm somewhere in between Auditory and Kinesthetic learning type. That's because I prefer to learn by listening to the teacher's voice, group discussion, play or even hear my own voice repeating something after the trainer or tutor as much as I also prefer sometimes to learn through tactile sense, experimenting, carrying out projects or experiments.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis is a strong tool in drawing guidelines for self-awareness regarding what are my employment potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.



Fig. 2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- long experience in sales

- excellent communication skills
- strong inner desire to help
- strong work ethic
- I feel at ease among people
- talkative

Weaknesses:

- lack of goal focus
- non-compliance with the deadlines imposed by me on my career
- the tendency to try to learn everything but to do it on a mediocre level

Opportunities:

- personal development
- meeting many people
- getting acquainted with the tech field
- evolution within the company
- specialized trainings offered by the employer for professional progress in another position
- international opportunities due to its reputation

Threats:

- lots of competitors in my area
- competitors who also have studies in the tech field may be preferred
- blocking the recruitment of new staff due to the pandemic

Conducting a complete SWOT Analysis it's easier to see what aspects are in the areas that need our maximum attention: the Weaknesses side, to work on them, or the Threats side, which we should try to remove or eclipse by emphasizing the Strengths and Opportunities.

Johari Window

Johari Window model is another useful tool that helps us illustrate and improve self-awareness (Ince, 2020).

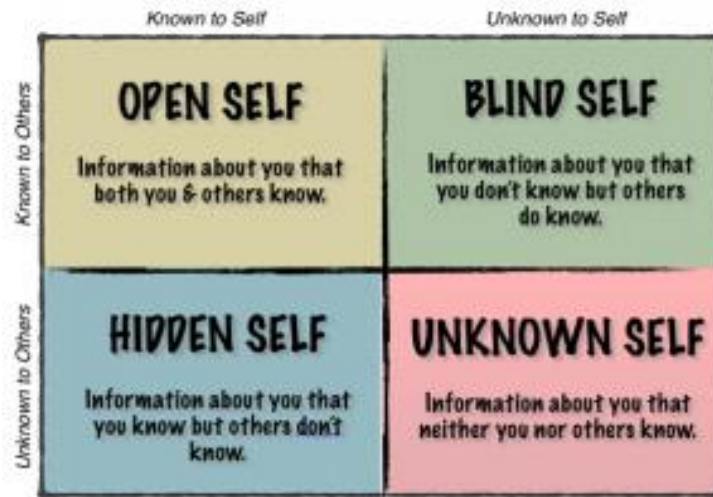


Fig. 3 Johari Window

My personal Johari window is structured as follows:

1. **Open self:** friendly, energetic, independent, kind, patient, organized, warm, helpful, trustworthy, confident, extroverted, spontaneous, adaptable, caring, cheerful, able
2. **Blind self:** logical, clever, happy, knowledgeable, intelligent, accepting, loving
3. **Hidden self:** calm, giving, modest, mature, nervous, empathetic, self-conscious
4. **Unknown self:** wise, idealistic, reflective, bold, brave, witty, complex, introverted, observant, proud, tense, shy, quiet

By using this technique to examine myself as others perceive me I can learn to influence how my behavior will be interpreted from outside. This way, expressing myself well, I will not be a victim of communication and misunderstandings will decrease. Managing myself and my communication style is seen as `an important leadership skill as it means managing others` and my life too (Ince, 2020).

SMART Objectives

Formulating SMART Objectives will allow me to create, track and hopefully accomplish my short and long term career goals.

SMART stands for the criteria that the objectives must meet: to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.



Fig. 4 SMART Objectives Criteria

My short term plan is to obtain as soon as possible a Sales Representative position in an Apple Store.

My longterm plan is to participate in technology training courses and to ensure the necessary qualification to work on another position in the same company, because there are a lot of offers.

My SMART career goals are, as it follows:

Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Time Bound
Working as a sales representative at Apple	Applying for a job at Apple Store	Obtaining the job	It would be a start for development within the company	In the next up to 3 months

Specializing in the technological field	Taking technology courses	Obtaining the certificate	It will stimulate career progression	During my time as a sales representative
Working as a junior technical specialist	Applying for a job as a junior technical specialist	Obtaining the job	It will achieve my long term goal	The next 5 years

What employers want

Most of the recruitment announcements on Apple's official website state that the company needs passionate people. They are looking for those who get great satisfaction by helping people and are focused on delivering great customer experience.

Working for Apple is about introducing people to the world of Apple, having lots of interactions, offering adapted solutions and transform curious visitors in loyal customers.

Employers do require a deep understanding of Apple products and services, besides a few key qualifications, such as minimal proficiency in technology, the ability and desire to quickly learn about new products, proven experience in sales, as well as in developing customer loyalty.

They also mention some additional requirements, such as to educate others about all that Apple has to offer, to set the standard for Apple's unique style of service through words and action, to demonstrate strong people skills (approachable, good listener, and empathetic).

Employment Goals

In addition to the goals I mentioned when I set my SMART career goals, my overall career goal, wherever I go is to continue to work with what brings me the greatest satisfaction: to represent the effective channel of help for clients, to interact with people of all categories

and types and to try to invest my knowledge in to propose the most suitable variants for their needs.

Professional Development Plan

My professional Development Plan has to follow some general steps and some have already have been done.

Step 1 – I conducted a SWOT analysis and I identified what could help or hinder me in achieving my goals.

Step 2 – Setting my goals by formulating SMART objectives

Step 3 – Creating my action plan

Step 4 – Detailing the strategies and resources

Step 5 – Assessing my progress

I will complete steps 3 and 4 by presenting the following strategies:

- In the next 2 months I will consult all the information about Apple products and services available on their site and I will follow on Youtube and other channels any other material related to them.
- In the next maximum 4 months I will apply for any job available within the company in the area that interests me, even if there are no sales representative positions, to make sure that I am registered in their database with applicants, until I will obtain the position I want.
- Once hired, I will participate in at least 2 trainings organized by the company for its own employees for the development of technological knowledge.
- After completing at least 2 trainings I will start the active search for job offers for a junior technical consultant in the same company and I will apply for them until I get one.

Conclusion

Gathering so much information about me, about my ambitions, about the world of work in this paper gave me a realistic and well thought-out goal to aim for. It helped me very much to understand how to define my career path and to stay motivated and focused on tracking my career progression.

In addition, this report will represent a useful tool for me in my career for the coming months, and as a model for the more distant future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Application form

Job application form

Application for Apple Store Sales Advisor

Your details

Name: Alexandra - Lavinia Ilie

Education and training

Please give details:

-Theoretical high school "Tudor Arghezi"- Craiova, Romania, graduate in July 2006.

-University of Wales Trinity Saint David - CERTHE Skills for the Work Place, still studying at the moment.

Qualifications

Please give details:

-I attended an online Sales course for companies at Sales Academy in June 2018, due to which I developed excellent interpersonal skills and strong customer oriented skills.

-Sales Representative with 5+ years of experience.

Employment history

Your current or most recent employer

Name of employer: SC ICO LIANORA'S PEN

Job title: Sales representative

Length of time with employer: November 2018-March 2020

Reason for leaving: Bankruptcy of the company

Duties:

-Serving customers by selling the company's products

-Meeting customer need by paying attention to the requirements

-Planning and organizing daily work schedule

-Submits orders by referring to price, lists and product literature

-Keeping management informed by providing activity and results reports,

-Submitting daily call reports, weekly work plans and monthly and annual territory analyses

Previous employers

Please tell us about other jobs you have done and about the skills you used or learned in those jobs.

I also worked at SC CHEMCOMEX SRL where I held the position of sales consultant.

The tasks I have undertaken on a daily basis have developed a number of skills for me, especially those related to customer relations. My communication skills have improved with each interaction I had with those who stepped on our doorstep.

Moreover, I have managed to lay the foundations of a work ethic that I am proud of.

The most used skills have been the organizational ones and working under pressure and on my own initiative, which helped me become a reliable employee, independent of the employer's guidelines on every move.

Supporting statement

Please tell us why you applied for this job and why you think you are the best person for the job.

I applied to this job out of my desire to continue to do in my career what brings me the greatest satisfaction: to represent the effective channel of help for clients, to interact with people of all categories and types and to try to invest my knowledge in to propose the most suitable variants for their needs.

I must add that the field in which the store operates is of interest to me, as I am passionate about everything that involves technology, devices and the latest gadgets and I consider that this would be a plus for the company, to have an employee who also has a passion for the products they sell.

I consider myself suitable for this position because I have a vast experience in the field of sales. Over the years I have been active in this position, encountering various situations from which I have learned and which have developed strong interpersonal skills and genuine entrepreneurial drive and spirit.

Right to work in the UK

Do you need a work permit to work in the UK? Yes / No

References

Please give the names and contact details of 2 people who we can ask to give you a reference. We may ask them before an employment offer is made. We will not ask your current employer until we get your permission.

SC ICO LIANORA'S PEN – Popescu Cornelia – popescu.cornelia@gmail.com

SC CHEMCOMEX SRL – Ionescu Irina - +40758775017

Declaration

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information I have provided on this form is correct and I accept that providing deliberately false information could result in my dismissal.

Name: Alexandra-Lavinia Ilie

Signature: A.-L. I.

Date: November 20th, 2021

Appendix 2: Interview questions

1. Tell me something about yourself, please.
2. I saw in your application form that you have excellent communication skills. Can you give details or present me a situation in which you demonstrated this?
3. How would you deal with an unhappy customer?
4. What are some of your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
5. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?