

Reflective Commentary

IMM Creation M1L

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Methodology: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Description

For my final project, I was tasked with researching and delivering a three-year marketing campaign that established both academic and industrial importance. As I had worked with an artist on my previous project, I had this time intended to work with a business or brand. This was, in part, due to me wanting to improve upon the ideas I had demonstrated in my first project but with the additional skills I had developed over the remainder of my course. As such, I began working on a marketing campaign in collaboration with Voices, an internet radio station based in King's Cross and specialising in leftfield music. My primary motivation for working with Voices was to widen my network of contacts and gain confidence working with a business outside of the Tileyard network, thus setting me up for applying for internships and employment after my Master's.

In August, however, I undertook a week-long placement at Tileyard Music. As the Marketing Manager (Peter Tsatsamis-Cooper) was impressed with my work and can-do attitude, my placement was extended for a further week. Upon having my placement extended, I saw an opportunity to add value to the label and deepen my relationship with them while displaying my capabilities in a focused, practical way. Thus, following a discussion with Peter, I decided to change my project and work with joe unknown, an alternative punk-inspired rap artist from the Tileyard Music roster.

In my previous assignment, in which I worked with fellow student Darcy Blu, we established a hypothetical budget that stretched the parameters of what would be realistic. This was done in order to have enough funds to do something interesting for the purposes of my assignment while also including affordable elements, primarily derived from guerilla marketing, that would be easily actionable for an unsigned artist. At this stage in my academic career, however, I wanted to work more closely with a brand so as to push myself and design a campaign that had feasibility. It was important for my development to select a company where I could discuss my ideas and make an impact. Thus, pivoting from Voices to Tileyard

Music made sense as I could have more involvement with the label and receive real-time feedback on my work.

But it was still important that I considered the risks associated with changing my project - whether I would have enough time, would changing my project at the last minute put me under too much pressure, and what if the work I created was not up to the standard that Tileyard Music would have expected and would therefore be detrimental to the impression I had fostered. As I want to work at an independent label or marketing agency in the future, however, I made the decision to shift to working with Tileyard Music. This was also spurred by the realisation that my portfolio would be an invaluable reference point during interviews and submitted to future employers as an example of applied work. This will be effective in combination with the placement extension as it shows that I have initiative and have taken an active role within a company in such a short timeframe. Recognising that the purpose of my assignment could be two-fold inspired me, reinvigorating both my desire to produce high-quality work and to prioritise allocating time in order to update my CV. As a result, my CV now successfully highlights my skills to future employers via the inclusion of my work experience and hyperlinks. *(Figure 1)*

Following this, I was able to apply for various internships and jobs during my time at Tileyard Music while also working on my project. This increased my workload as it required me to balance applications, interviews and any subsequent onboarding tasks as required to further in the interview process - some of which were highly time-consuming in terms of research and completion. As such, I found myself prioritising these preliminary tasks and work I had been assigned during my placement, seeking additional opportunities to create a good impression with Tileyard Music. Subsequently, my final project was sidelined.

Admittedly, I organised my time in this way as I had hoped that there would be further, long-term opportunities at the label. I was unable to request to extend my placement longer, however, as I would have been unable to work on my assignments and at Tileyard Music concurrently. As such, suggesting a collaborative project was a

great excuse to stay in touch with the team, who assured me they would make me aware of any future job openings. Despite my work placement only lasting a fortnight, as I had not banked on restarting my project or being offered an additional week at the label into my schedule, it dawned on me that I would require extra time to complete the proposal to a high standard. Therefore, I requested an additional.

Feelings

The offer of a placement extension at Tileyard Music made me feel elated. Having worked hard throughout the year, it was the first tangible instance in which I was beginning to see my efforts pay off. Around this time, I was also starting to develop a good level of self-worth and sincerely believed that I was deserving of the opportunity. Truthfully, I enjoyed my placement at Tileyard Music so much that I didn't want to leave. I especially found working with a diverse group of largely-female creatives refreshing and inspiring, so I was excited about the prospect of collaborating with the label further. I was also happy that the team was so impressed with my proactivity and willingness to take on whatever additional tasks they gave me.

Conversely, the thought of changing my entire project after carrying out weeks of research and preparation made me feel uneasy and suddenly stressed. I was especially anxious and intimidated by the thought of having to put myself and my work out there for review in a professional capacity. As Tileyard Music fostered a supportive environment, however, these feelings were quickly dispelled. The team made me feel entirely comfortable and as though I was capable. In addition, I realised that placing a limited time frame on my work may not have been a bad thing. This is because I am in the habit of continuously editing my work, looking for small and largely inconsequential ways to 'improve' things. In terms of my self-development, this is something I knew needed improvement. There comes a time to realise that it is better to submit a 'good' piece of work and take advantage of

other opportunities that present themselves, than being too focused on an element of a project and miss out on the chance for extracurricular development.

Instead of using this as a point on which to ruminate, I decided to use this as a point of reflection on my development over the last ten months. When making the decision to move from Sheffield to London to pursue my dream of working in the music industry I knew it wouldn't be an easy feat. Overcoming the anxiety I had around moving to a large city where I knew only a handful of people, I have frequently struggled with my confidence due to fear of failure, but a large factor in taking this course was combating those fears. Therefore, I viewed restarting my project as another hurdle that I needed to overcome. This time, with the confidence I had gained from the support of Tileyard Music and Tileyard Education, I decided to take the risk and seize the opportunity. I was hugely proud of myself for making this decision, and prioritising my development over the perfectionism that often accompanies my work.

Evaluation

Despite my scheduling challenges, I felt invigorated by my experience at Tileyard Music and started working on my new project immediately. In addition to scrapping and re-researching ideas, as I was now working with an alternative rap artist - a genre that I was not familiar with, much deeper research and analysis were required than before.

In my previous project I was inclined to do the 'fun' elements, such as the graphic design first, but I recognised that in order to create an impactful and cohesive three-year campaign I needed to immediately delve into the details. For example, establishing a budget first. In my previous assignment I placed too much emphasis on the visual elements, whereas here I realised that these needed to enhance my project but could not form the basis. Having said that, my release campaign with Darcy Blu provided me with demonstrable experience and a

framework on which to base my portfolio, but now, working with a “developing artist” (Chartmetric, 2022) brought new challenges.

First of all, I faced the challenge of contextualising and re-aligning joe unknown’s goals with the data. As per my proposal, one of joe unknown’s goals for 2023 was to undertake a US headline tour, however my findings - that the artist had a total US listenership of 701 (Chartmetric, 2022) strongly suggested that this was not advisable at this point in his career. Initially, these findings caused me to experience anxiety and imposter syndrome. At first, I doubted my results and believed that the data may have been wrong. Once I confirmed the data was correct, I felt that I did not have the experience or the right to inform the artist that their goals for the year were overly ambitious. However, due to my extensive research and corroboration from Peter, I was able to suggest alternative short-term goals and convinced the artist that we would use this campaign to position him for a future US tour. Given the current climate surrounding touring, with 26% of live shows being canceled in the first quarter of 2022 (Record of the Day, 2022) it was vital to inform the artist that undertaking this tour wasn’t recommendable.

I felt empathy towards joe, and it helped me to understand his perspective. I realised that it’s natural to want to succeed as quickly as possible, however the benefits in this instance did not outweigh the costs, both in terms of label resources and the artist’s resources, including money, as well as their physical and mental health. As such, I was able to confidently advise the artist not to tour the US and instead we would focus on developing their Top Listener cities and territories with developing listenership - Australia and Europe. Ultimately, I was grateful for this experience because I was able to develop my managerial skill and practice navigating a potentially awkward conversation, translating and articulating the data into positive terms to inspire the artist instead of alienating them.

Prior to my research, I thought joe unknown’s music may be considered too experimental to gain sync and licensing deals but my reading indicated that these revenue streams are available to artists of all genres and size, and are key in

developing an artist's audience (Horsburgh, 2019b) Furthermore, opportunities are becoming more easily accessible as brands are increasingly opting to align themselves with alternative music. As Holt (2002, p86) details, "Now that ad agencies have mined the most accessible music, they are forced to search out more esoteric tracks that are still perceived as pristine. Leading creative agencies now use music from the distant past, from obscure genres, and from independent fans that have only a few thousand fans..." Today's brands are far more willing to use independent music as it appeals to consumers, who "feel they are discovering something that they believe to be cool and gaining admittance to a more refined social clique". (Sisario, 2010) for example, BMW's inclusion of Bicep's 'Glue' in a recent advert. (This Is Music, 2019) This led me to consider the types of brands that would feel like natural affiliations for Joe Unknown. I decided we would target brands that adhere to the artist's values, and that both the artist and his target market consume. This ensures maximum cross-promotion as well as the likelihood of a good partnership deal.

Next, I conducted research into release strategies. As Joe Unknown's music is digital only and relies heavily on DSPs, particularly Spotify, I decided to adopt a Waterfall Release Strategy. As denoted by Ditto Music (2022) the benefits of a waterfall release strategy are that the songs receive a higher number of impressions and encourage fan growth through increased algorithmic support. As two of the objectives for Year One of the campaign were brand awareness and audience acquisition, it made sense to adopt this strategy to promote a cohesive image, provide the opportunity to pitch multiple tracks to Spotify, and develop the artist's streaming figures. In addition, this release strategy is one already favoured by Tileyard Music. As EmuBands (2022) writes, one reason for this may be that, "the stream counts will transfer over to each new version of your release as it appears on Spotify, meaning your play-counts across all versions count towards your overall stream count."

In order to fully utilise the Waterfall Release Strategy, I decided to alter the release schedule from the one in the proposal. This change was made following my research in order to maintain the campaign's momentum following the release of

the mixtape. As such, I made the decision to bring the pop-up shows forward, moving them from March 2023 to November 2022. I also added an additional single for release in December 2022 to generate a continued buzz among joe's fanbase.

One thing that made the project successful was the collaborative effort between myself and Tileyard Music. Throughout my project, I received feedback and praise from the label, ensuring the endeavour was a collaborative one. This regular back and forth helped build my confidence and assure the practicality of my ideas. Off the back of some feedback I received, I decided to change the artist we would approach for joe's Remix Single in Year Two of the campaign. In my proposal, I suggested working with the experimental electronic producer Hudson Mohawke in order to gain traction in the US market. However, after a conversation with Peter, we decided that although strategically this move made sense it didn't align with the artist sonically. As such, it may not feel authentic to the artist and could become a point of contention among his fans. Subsequently, I researched other artists on the drum and bass spectrum with a sizeable US listenership and shortlisted those we would approach instead. Input from industry professionals was particularly important here, it provided me with perspective. As a result, I was able to think on my feet and made an amendment that would ensure the marketing campaign was representative of the artist's brand.

Though unavoidable, one thing that I found challenging was that Tileyard Music was unable to provide me with some of the details surrounding the release that I deemed paramount. For example, release narratives as well as track and song titles. The omission of this information meant that for the purpose of the assignment, I had to invent these by drawing from the artist's existing music and themes. This will have undoubtedly affected my project, meaning that it cannot be considered entirely 'successful' as my campaign cannot directly translate to joe's real campaign. But in terms of scope, viability and adaptability, I still deem my project to be a success.

Even with this drawback, the project gave me invaluable insight into how Tileyard Music, and potentially other independent record labels, operate. I was still able to build upon the skills I learnt throughout my time at Tileyard Education and use these to create a variety of artifacts that demonstrate what the campaign will look like - from artwork, Instagram Story ads and tour admats. I think my quality of work has vastly improved throughout my final project, with feedback from my lecturers and peers spurring me on. I also believe that my willingness to take risks has enabled me to form new and innovative creative ideas.

Analysis

In regards to the academic success of my work, I do think I have met the necessary criteria due to my use of a wide range of reference material that comprises scholarly and real-world references. I have also displayed a systemic understanding of the processes required to build a marketing campaign across all aspects of the campaign, including but not limited to audience research and data analysis, smart goals and digital advertising.

One thing that may have affected the academic success of my project, however, is a lack of academic collaboration. This is partly due to the marks and feedback from my proposal not being returned prior to the deadline of the portfolio. But, admittedly, I could have sought feedback through an alternative avenue - such as an academic tutorial. Overall, however, I am confident in the viability of my project as it is heavily backed by research and input from industry professionals. Throughout my project the artist, his manager and the wider Tileyard Music team were very open to my suggestions and regularly provided positive and constructive feedback, which helped build my confidence in both my ideas and my abilities.

In terms of feasibility, I would deem the project to be highly successful as I have analysed a number of existing music marketing campaigns. Although it was quite difficult to draw direct comparison to other artists, due to joe unknown

producing music that is a hybrid of genres, this consequently meant that my findings had more breadth. The competitor campaigns I researched included Slowthai (Piskorz, 2019) and Sleaford Mods (Millar, 2021). These campaigns highlighted how important a narrative can be. For example, in these campaigns, both artists leant heavily into the political sphere in order to engage their fans - via an exclusive YouTube mini-series, 'SMtv' (Millar, 2021) that featured other notable artists, and a billboard campaign calling out failings of the Tory government. (Piskorz, 2019) This research inspired me to embrace the English undercurrent present in joe's music, as can be seen in the references to pubs in the artwork I designed for the releases. (*Figure 2*) In addition, I took inspiration from Slowthai's 'Bet Ya A £5er' tour, deciding to price the pop-up show tickets at £5 (Krol, 2019) in order to target joe's younger fanbase, 18-25-year-olds. This undertaking of various research early on in the process meant I developed my knowledge of industry trends, while evaluating and making necessary amendments to my work in the planning stages. Overall, this research provided proof that my ideas were of equal quality to joe unknown's contemporaries, as well as being 'on brand' for the artist and the genre.

On the other hand, because my project spans three years, much of the campaign is still very hypothetical. The plan itself is heavily reliant on the Deming Cycle (1993) for various elements. As noted in my proposal, the implementation of the Plan, Do, Check and Act framework allows the opportunity for reflection, re-focusing and any tactical changes for each stage of the campaign; done through the comparison of projected and accrued data on a monthly basis. These monthly reviews ensure we can track the artist's development against the Key Performance Indicators, allowing for adjustments to be made to ensure delivery of the campaign goals. Examples of where the Deming Cycle (1993) will be used include targeted ad campaigns, such as an Instagram Story Teaser Campaign and Spotify Marquees, testing their engagement and reach to ensure we're increasing listenership in our Target Cities.

Another potential pitfall of a three-year campaign is that my 'scaling up' of the artist and the campaign's trajectory was based on competitors. This means that

there is no guarantee that Joe Unknown's career will follow the same timeline. Thus, the marketing campaign needed to be adaptive and flexible. The plan is therefore open to interpretation and leaves space for necessary adaptations which could affect its 'success' levels in an academic sense, but is required to be professionally practical.

As for the budget, this was estimated at the very top end of what the project could cost, this is because some of the budget was malleable and dependent on a release's traction and urgency. In addition, I included a 5% contingency buffer to account for differing prices over the course of the campaign. The budget was formed in accordance with Tileyard Music as well as with reference to Amber Horsburgh's 'Fan First Budgeting Tool' (2017) to verify through multiple sources funds were being allocated in order to see growth.

The campaign is successful in terms of being 'on brand' for the artist, and this remains consistent throughout the campaign, from the proposed brand partnerships to the artwork, merchandise and website design. The social media strategy was created focusing on the platforms that the artist enjoys using but also have the highest concentration of his audience. (Chartmetric, 2022) In addition, the social media trends are adaptable for the artist, his target market and the genre of music.

Analysis

Fundamentally, I believe my project went well as I felt supported and that my contributions mattered, in terms of my personal development as well as in the artist's career.

With this assignment, I was determined not to get as stressed and fixated on the outcome but trust the process. Through use of the Eisenhower Matrix (*Figure 4*), I was able to schedule all of my assignment and personal tasks to better prioritise my times and workload.

I also increased my number of breaks, ensuring I took time off to exercise, see friends and continue with my hobbies. Previously, I have worked on projects continuously but I felt a lot more productive, rested and positive by ensuring I still had time for myself during this project. I also believe that this project went well simply because I believed that it would. At this point in the course, I have developed enough confidence to trust in my abilities and that I would devise a successful campaign. Furthermore, starting work on the project early, even though most of my initial work couldn't be used, still positively impacted my overall project. I have learnt to trust myself to be disciplined with work, and I know that despite having days off I will still be driven to complete my work on time.

Conclusion

Something I learnt from working with Tileyard Music were the areas in my knowledge that required development as well as the need to gain experience in applying these to a campaign - such as sync, licensing, publishing and live. Following conversations with Peter, my lecturer Karma, and independent reading (Horsburgh, A. 2019b), I realised how lucrative licensing and brand partnerships could be in expanding an artist's audience. Thus, I decided to implement Isync, licensing and brand partnerships over the entirety of the campaign rather than Year Three exclusively. In accordance with this, I also increased the goal for the number of brand partnerships we will attain - from three over the course of the campaign to three for each year. A byproduct of this situation was learning to be more ambitious in my goal-settings and not to be embarrassed to ask for help from your peers and colleagues.

I would have liked to implement some of the steps in this campaign in real life, such as a photoshoot or commissioning artwork, however, due to restrictions with the label and time constraints with the artist, I was not able to undertake these. However, in order to make my project more three-dimensional, I could have created

an example piece of merchandise - such as the Zine featured in Year Three of the campaign. Perhaps, if I had created a product and pitched it to Tileyard Music, it may have inspired its inclusion in a future campaign.

When reflecting upon the project overall, I am pleased with my decision to restart my project. Undertaking this challenge forced me to work within a musical genre I wouldn't have immediately chosen, thus broadening my musical horizons and this, in turn, increased my confidence. I now feel as though I could be given an artist of any genre and I could adapt my research skills and knowledge to draw up an industry-level marketing campaign.

Looking back on the project, I feel proud of what I have been able to achieve, the research I have carried out and the impact I have been able to have on the trajectory of a real campaign. Creating my project adjacent to a campaign in real-time gave me a unique perspective - with the artist even drawing inspiration from my work and creating similar artwork for his latest single.

One thing I would like to take away from this experience is to continue to push myself out of my comfort zone. A common theme throughout my personal and professional life thus far has been doubting my abilities and underplaying my contributions and the positive impact I can have on other people and the projects I am working on.

Action Plan

If I were to re-do the project, I would have spent more time exploring the logistics behind the proposed live shows and touring more as I still feel this is an area in which I am lacking practical knowledge.

I would also think ahead more and determine my goals for the project more clearly. For example, I have undertaken this course in order to gain experience and a

job in the music industry. Therefore, even though I was proactive in contacting Voices, had I contacted Tileyard Music prior to my placement, introduced myself, and asked if there was an artist to work on immediately I would have saved time and gotten a head start on developing a relationship with Tileyard Music. In turn, I may have been able to request to undertake a longer placement as my scheduler would have been freer.

As this was my first time undertaking an industry placement, despite my professional experience, however, I'm grateful to be able to use this as a learning curve. I will instead prioritise proactively in my job searches, researching out to prospective employers.

The realisation that I still have some negative beliefs around my capabilities inspired me to conduct a SWOT analysis on my current skills to enable further personal development. (*Figure 5*) This exercise revealed the following Weaknesses:

- Limited experience with Adobe Suite
- Networking abilities
- Fluctuating levels of confidence and imposter syndrome
- Avoidance and self-sabotage
- Time management

While I feel as though this assignment has helped me begin to develop most of these Weaknesses, I want to build upon this exercise and develop SMART Goals that will continue to encourage me beyond my studies. As my overarching goal is to achieve a Marketing job or internship by the close of 2022, I will adhere to the following weekly goals:

- Apply for a minimum of 10 jobs per week.
- Apply for a job within 48 hours of seeing it advertised.
- Attend at least 1 industry networking event every month.
- Write blog posts for the following week by 12pm every Friday.

Appendix

Figure 1 CV - [Kristy Britt CV \(October 2022\)](#)

Figure 2 Release Artwork

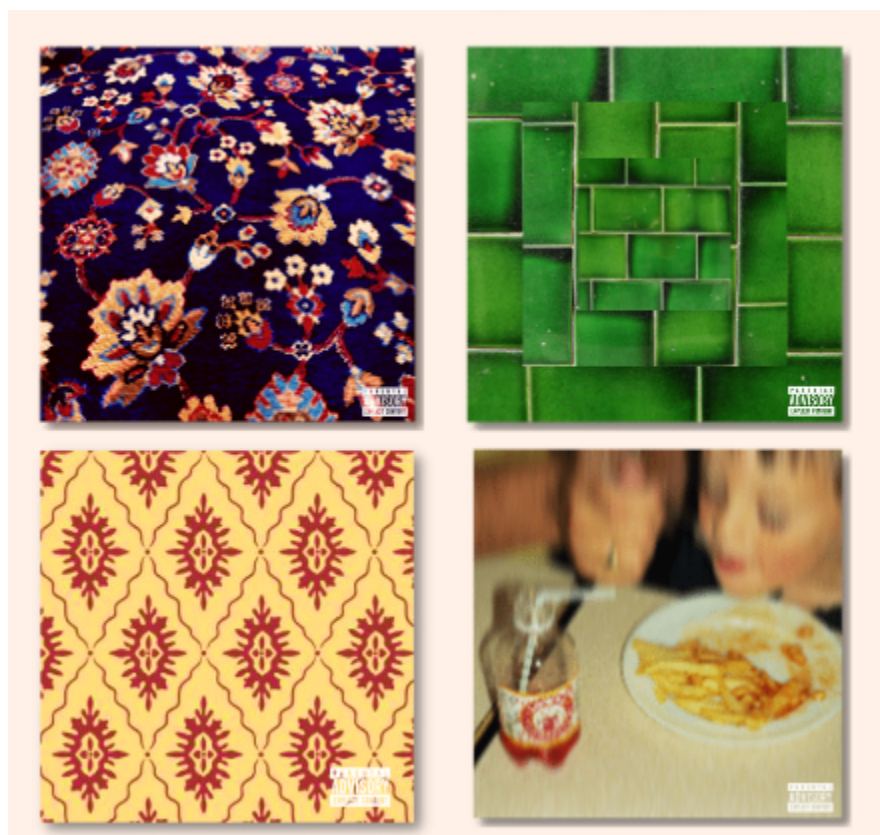


Figure 3 Deming Cycle (1993)

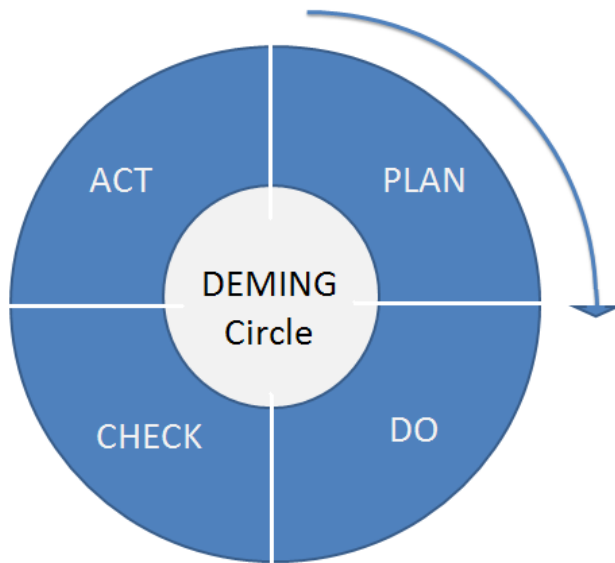


Figure 4 Eisenhower Matrix

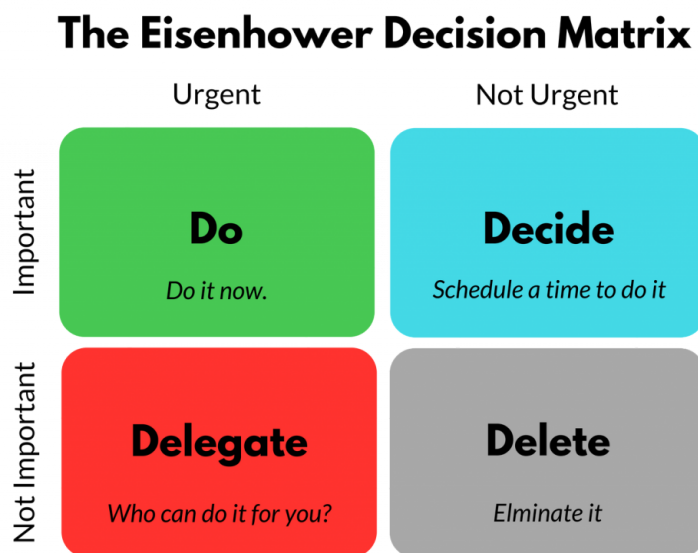


Figure 5 SWOT analysis

Strengths • Proficient on Canva • Creative with an eye for design • Growing network within the industry, especially related to underground dance music • Varied work experience both within and outside of the music industry	Weaknesses • Limited experience with Adobe Suite • Networking • Fluctuating confidence levels and imposter syndrome • Avoidance and self-sabotage • Time management
Opportunities • Expand my blog • Freelance work with artists • Develop public speaking skills • Further research into publishing, licensing and sync	Threats • Other graduates who have all-round skillsets and higher confidence levels • Cost of Living crisis may hinder opportunities or ability to make certain jobs attainable

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