

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY
SAINT DAVID

Personal Career Development (BMSW4005)

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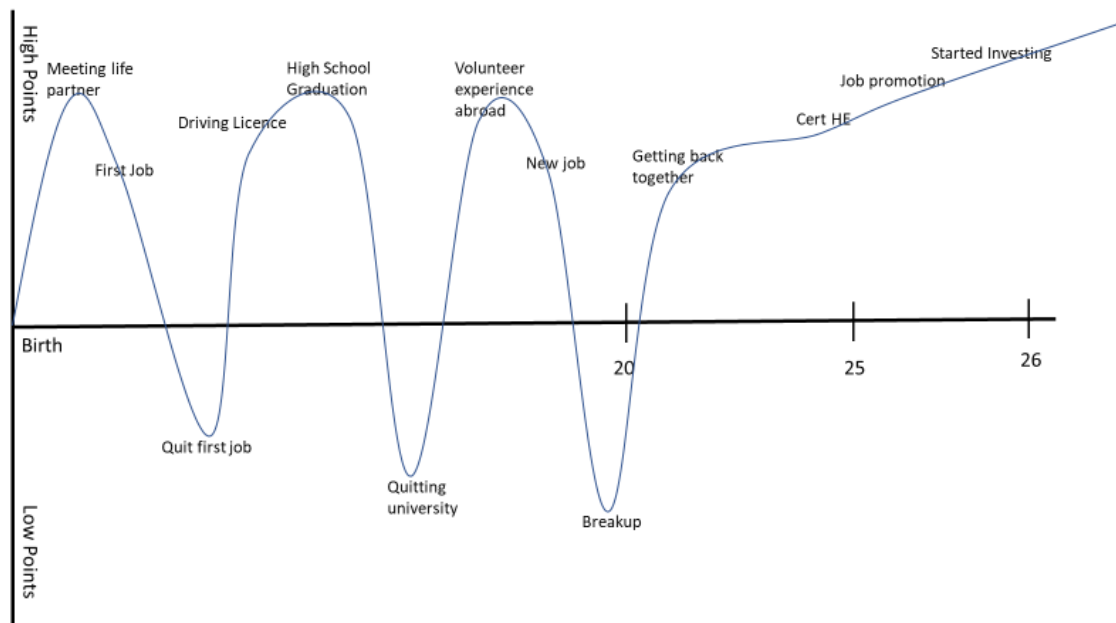
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Introduction

My name is Daniel Manea, I was born in Romania and lived there until I was 12 years old. At that age I moved to Spain and lived there for five more years. I went back to Romania at 18 years old and my next stop now is The United Kingdom.

Even though I did different things in all these countries, there is a constant. Learning. I studied different things in all these countries and in different languages. This helped me speak three languages and understand three different cultures, but also became more adaptable to change, more eager to learn new things, and developed a sense of self-improvement in me.

Every time I moved, I started at a lower level than where I left. This happened because of language barriers, cultural barriers and many other things, but I made it my challenge to balance this with learning more and gaining more skills, wisdom and money over the medium to long run.



Meeting my girlfriend and life partner was a high point because the relation helped me desire to be better, to learn more things, overcome my weaknesses and achieve more than I thought before.

My first job was at a church that we helped restore. I don't remember learning much from that, but that's how I first earned money by myself, so at least I learned to appreciate it more.

Quitting the first job was not something pleasant, but I had to do it since exams were close and I also had to start preparing for the national Baccalaureate exam, an exam we have after finishing high school.

Another high point was getting my driving licence. From that experience I learned that I need to stay focused on the task at hand, since I could have failed it because I have seen a friend, I tried to say hi to him, but in that moment I killed the engine, and a few more errors would have made me fail.

A huge high point for me was the high school graduation as one of the best students in my high school, and the university admission. From this experience I learned that hard work pays off.

Due to family issues and bad self-management I had to quit university, an experience from which I learned that everything is more difficult without higher education and made me want to try again when the opportunity came.

I had a volunteering experience in Izmir, Turkey, where I had to help high-school students improve their English, communication skills and global perspective. This helped me improve my English, widened my understanding of the world and made me a bit more adaptable to new situations.

After this experience I was selected as a project manager in the NGO that helped me go to the project previously mentioned, after several months I was selected as vice-president, and one and a half years later I applied for the position of president against two other people and I got elected with more than 70% of votes going to me. From this experience I learned that one needs to prepare as much as possible, and results will follow, but also that the way one speaks and dresses is very important to make a good impression. One more important thing that I learned is that people will always like someone that has a vision and a plan, but also cares about the people he or she will lead.

One of the worse experiences was going through a break-up, but from that I learned how to appreciate more someone that was always close and had good intentions.

Getting back together was one of the most important high points and it led to more good decision.

Some time later I made my first step onto starting university again.

About eight months after starting Skills for the workplace I have been offered a better job as a team leader in a fruit packing company, which is a step forward because I have to lead a team, do paperwork and overall it requires more responsibility, which is something I have been looking for, and that could help to land a better job in the future.

Some of the most important things are towards the end of the timeline, closer to the present, but I am optimistic that there are more things to come, and if at least part of where I see myself in the future will happen to come true, I will consider myself fulfilled.

Reflection

For this report I will use Burton's model of reflection. I chose this reflective model because it is simple and efficient. The fact that it is simple makes it more applicable in the day to day life, without having to spend vast amount of resources such as time and energy, and it can be done everywhere, having access to a pen and paper or a mobile phone. Anything works as far as notes can be taken on it, or in their absence, its simplicity makes one able to apply it even mentally and go to a conclusion and plan.

Burton's (1970) reflective model consists on 3 parts or questions. What? So What? Now What?

1. What?

The first part of the model is the question "what?", which should provide a description of what has happened. A more complete description leads to a better understanding of the problem or event. Some questions that can help to have a more complete description are: "What happened? What did I do? What was I feeling? What did others do? What were the consequences of these actions?" (Jasper, 2006)

2. So what?

This side of the model tries to answer why the event previously described is important, what is now clearer. The questions that could clarify this side are: "So what was I trying to achieve? So what were my decision processes at the time? So what knowledge or evidence was I using to inform my decisions? So what don't I know and need to find out? So what could I have done differently?" (Jasper, 2006)

3. Now what?

This last part is about what we gained from this, what would be done differently if one went through the same, what insights were gained, what does one need to learn or do in order to avoid a similar problem or capitalise on a similar event. Some questions that could lead to the answer are: "Now what more do I need to know? Now what needs to change? Now what action do I need to take?" (Jasper, 2006)

Learning styles

In order to identify my learning styles I used two tools, the Honey and Mumford learning styles and VAK (Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic) learning styles.

According to Gray et al. (2004), Honey and Mumford learning styles theory describes four main learning styles. The approaches to learning are the following: Activists, Reflectors, Theorists and Pragmatists. The means through which one can identify which type of learning is most

appropriate to you is by using a questionnaire. To better understand this model, it is important to understand the four styles:

- Activists: they get fully involved in new experiences
- Reflectors: They stand back and contemplate about experiences and observe from different perspectives
- Theorists: they integrate observations into complex but logical, comprehensive theories
- Pragmatists: they like trying out new theories, techniques, and ideas to see if they work in practice.

According to the Honey and Mumford learning styles theory, I am predominantly a reflector, closely followed by theorists. This, means that I am somewhat cautious, I stand back and observe, I like collecting and analysing data, use information from past and present to maintain the bigger picture of things, I solve problems in a logical manner, value rationality and objectivity, assimilate facts into coherent theories, aim to fit things into rational order, keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and systems thinking. (Butler and Rose, 2011)

The VAK model was first introduced in the 1920s by psychologists and teaching specialist. Experts found that people have different ways of learning. If learning in one way seems difficult, it might be easier trying it in another way. According to the VAK model, most people have a preferred learning style, but some people have a blend of the three styles. (Mackay, 2011).

In relation to the VAK learning styles test provided on Moodle, my learning styles are somewhat balanced, with an accent on auditory. The result of the test was Auditory, 12 points, and visual and kinaesthetic with 9 each.

The fact that there is a blend of all three learning styles can be both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength because this means that I don't find it particularly difficult to learn in any of these three ways, but I don't have a clear way in which I can learn extremely easy. This can mean that in order to understand something well I will need to learn it auditorily way and one of the other two as well.

A way in which I capitalise on my auditory learning style is by listening to audiobooks and podcast while travelling or driving. This way I managed to listen to many books in the fields of self-improvement, financial, career planning, nutrition and others.

What employers want

According to LinkedIn (2019), the most in demand soft skills for 2020 are creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability and emotional intelligence.

Creativity

“Creativity is a personal quality shown through the production of innovative ideas” (Morgan, 2017). In problem solving, it refers to the ability of seeing a problem in a new way. According to Amabile (1998), creativity has three components: technical knowledge, creative abilities and motivation.

Persuasion

Persuasion, although sometimes confused with manipulation, is the ability to coming to a mutually beneficial solution between several entities or people. The main difference between persuasion and manipulation are the intentions of the person trying to persuade. (Lakhani, 2005).

I am somewhat persuasive, depending on the people I am communicating to. The moments I am not persuasive are when I am new into an environment. I tend to need my time to get used to the place and people and understand most of the things that happen in order to effectively be persuasive.

Collaboration

Collaborations, as I understand it, is the ability of two or more entities (people, companies, organisations) to work together in order to achieve a common goal.

I think of myself as being collaborative and supportive to other people in the teams I worked with or in which I still work. There are some little exceptions and there is room for improvement, but I most of the times I have the ability and intention to work efficiently and with as little friction as possible in order to hit the results that the teams I’m in are supposed to hit.

Adaptability

Adaptability is the capacity of being able to adapt to new conditions, change the course of action, or simply do things differently when the circumstances change. Although this can be stressful, it is a very important skill, since the only constant in life is change.

I think I am an adaptable person, I developed this skill because I lived in three different countries with different languages and fairly different cultures, I worked in very different organisations and positions, from leader of a whole NGO to warehouse operative, recruiter, team leader and many others.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, use and manage one's own emotions and feeling as they occur to a positive purpose, such as empathize with others, deal with conflict, communicate efficiently etc. (Goleman, 1995).

I think my emotional intelligence is good, but I wanted to check it with an online test as well. Here is the result of the test. Each quadrant has a maximum of 10 points.

Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social-Awareness	Relationship Management
5	6	8	9

It seems that what I am best at is relationship management, this appears to be because I pay attention to details and emotional cues in others, making sure that I don't make people feel bad and that they feel appreciated and understood. Some other reasons for which relationship management is my biggest emotional intelligence strength is because I am a visionary, I try to help others develop through feedback and guidance, and I build and maintain relationships with others

The second best is social awareness. This is because I am empathetic, I am able to understand organisations and I try to meet customers and stakeholders needs.

The part of Emotional Intelligence that is least developed is Self-Awareness. This appears to be because, even though I am able to understand my own emotions, I don't always accurately assess myself, and my self-confidence and self-worth sometimes depend on what others think about me.

My self-management, although is a 6 out of 10, is affected because I am not always transparent in conversations when I think that I could offend people, so I avoid it.

Hard skills

Other than the skills discussed before, everyone needs a set of skills that are specific, such as design, business analysis, software development and so on. The soft skills discussed previously are important in every job, but in order to make a difference, or have a fairly big wage, one needs a very strong hard skill or set of hard skills.

Self-motivation

"Self-motivation is the force that keeps pushing us to go on – it's our internal drive to achieve, produce, develop, and keep moving forward. When you think you're ready to quit something, or you just don't know how to start, your self-motivation is what pushes you to go on." (Mind Tools, 2020)

In order to assess my self-motivation I used an online quiz provided by MindTools, the quiz shows that my self-motivation is at 40 out of 60. This is not bad, but it can defiantly be improved, which would result in a better achievement of goals.

The things that motivate me are the following:

One of the things that actively motivate me is seeing that I am doing progress. In order to feel that progress I need to have a way to quantify it, that is why I keep track of the books I read, the audiobooks I listened to, my return on investments, diplomas and certificates I get, career progress and my net worth. The benefit of this things is that I can always influence them, some easier than others. These are small victories that motivate me to do bigger things.

Another thing that motivate me is when I feel that I have an impact on someone's life, doesn't matter if it is my life partner, one of my friends, a work colleague or someone I barely know.

Personal development

In order to better understand my strengths and weaknesses (internal), but my personal opportunities and threats (external) as well, I will use the SWOT analysis tool.

Strengths

- I speak three languages, Romanian, English and Spanish.
- Management experience. Given the fact that I managed several teams and project in the past, and a whole organisation for one year, I can say that I have a solid understanding of management, leading people and achieving results.
- Soft skills. As discussed previously, I fit mostly well on the soft skills employers look for.

Weaknesses

- Lack of hard skills. The fact that I don't have some hard skills in a specific domain makes it hard to lend a good job, even having management and project management experience
- Inconsistent experience. My experience so far is not consistent to an industry or field, so I am not fully specialised on something, but I rather know a bit of many things. This can give me a wide understanding of things, but not a deep one, and I think a deep understanding should come first.
- Not an English native. This affects gives me a disadvantage when it comes to lending a job, since a native speaker will have a better communication.

Opportunities

- Finishing a degree. One of the opportunities I want to capitalise on is finishing a computing degree. This degree would give me the hard skills needed to lend better jobs that are better paid.
- Find better job. Since I recently changed my job to something I enjoy more, now I don't have to rush onto finding something else, but I can focus more on researching and building the set of skills needed for the things that call my attention.

- Moving closer to London would represent an opportunity because the job market is way bigger than where I live at this moment, and there are many learning opportunities and networking events that I could participate.
- Investing during this Covid-19 stock crash. Given the fact that the stock market is hurt due to the novel Coronavirus, I can invest part of the saved money and the following income. Although there is a fairly decent risk, the reward can be huge on the long term.

Threats

- Economical situation due to the Covid-19 crisis. If the economy doesn't start recovering soon, experts consider that there is a possibility of a bigger crisis, so it will be harder to find a good job, change careers or have a stable job.
- Brexit. Legislation for EU citizens could change after the United Kingdom leaves the EU. This could make things harder to apply for a job, stay and so on.

Career Plans and Employment goals

In this section I will discuss what I will do in order to get to the place I want in my career, focusing mostly on education.

The first thing I will do is getting my Certificate of Higher Education in Skills for the Workplace, this will give me the tools to better plan and review my career, as well as preparing for the job applications and interviews, as well as for what will happen after getting employed in a new industry. The fact that this module also includes business concepts will also help me on the long term.

The next step in my career will be joining a Cloud Computing or Computer Science (BSc). Working as a developer is one of my long term ambitions, and one of the things I have been individually preparing for in the last two years whenever I had available time. The main reason for which I want to join computing is the fact that it allows me to create things, such as applications, websites, networks and so on. The steps to do this are the following:

- Applying for Cloud Computing, probably at UWTSD, but not before considering other universities that are closer to where I live and offer a Computer Science degree instead. Both of them are good, but some of the modules on Computer Science are better applied to my needs.
- Studying the basics of the modules I will do in order to be prepared and to ask relevant questions for which is harder to find answers by myself
- Start looking for a job in the industry in the first and second year, as far as it adapts to my learning schedule, but the priority will be studying.
- In the 3rd year, focus on finding a job in the industry, assuming that I don't find one before.

After finishing Cloud Computing I will start a Master's degree. For now there are multiple options, but, since the main reason for which I want to join computing in the first place is to create things, I am considering to move next to Engineering. The reason for doing this is that it widens the amount of things I can create and that I can bring a bigger impact to industries that focus on transportation, robotics, energy and others. Moving from computing to engineering

will come with different challenges, some of them being improving my understanding of physics (fluid dynamics and thermodynamics) and mathematics.

Some industries interested in, as I mentioned before are Information technology, Energy, Transportation, and Engineering.

Action plan

Although I presented a brief action plan in the career plan and employment goals section, in this section I will expose the way I will keep track of these goals and how I will overcome my weaknesses.

Management principles can be implemented on one's life as well, not just in business. That's why, in order to have a very good overview of every action I need to take and every goal I have to achieve, I will implement an MBO for myself.

MBO stands for Management by objectives, and it is usually used by managers to track teams and employers achievement of objectives. The benefits of an MBO tool is that it is easy to see how much time is left before having to achieve a goal, big goals can be split on smaller parts and the percentage for goal achievement can be calculated, as well as productivity.

Personal budgeting. In order to make sure that everything I planned will happen, I will need to be financially safe, so I will continue using a personal budget to track income and expenses and to try to reduce unnecessary spending of money that could otherwise be used to buy tools, such as courses, a better computer or coaching and guidance from professionals that could get me closer to achieving my goals.

Every goal set will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. This will increase even more the chances of achieving my goals.

In order to overcome my weaknesses, I will be sure to focus on getting small results in order to keep myself self-motivated, I will keep improving my English and testing my results monthly, and I will focus on learning more about computing, in order to deepen my understanding, and have a solid hard skill.

Conclusion

In this report, I presented my lifeline, described the reflection model used, analysed my learning styles and how I can capitalise on this, I presented what employers want from their employees and how I fit in their wants, I analysed and talked about the things that motivate me, and I largely presented my plans for the future.

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