

Professional Career Development

BMSW4005_LON

Lecturer: Rita Ukachi-Lois

Student: Andreea Filip -1817999

Table of Contents

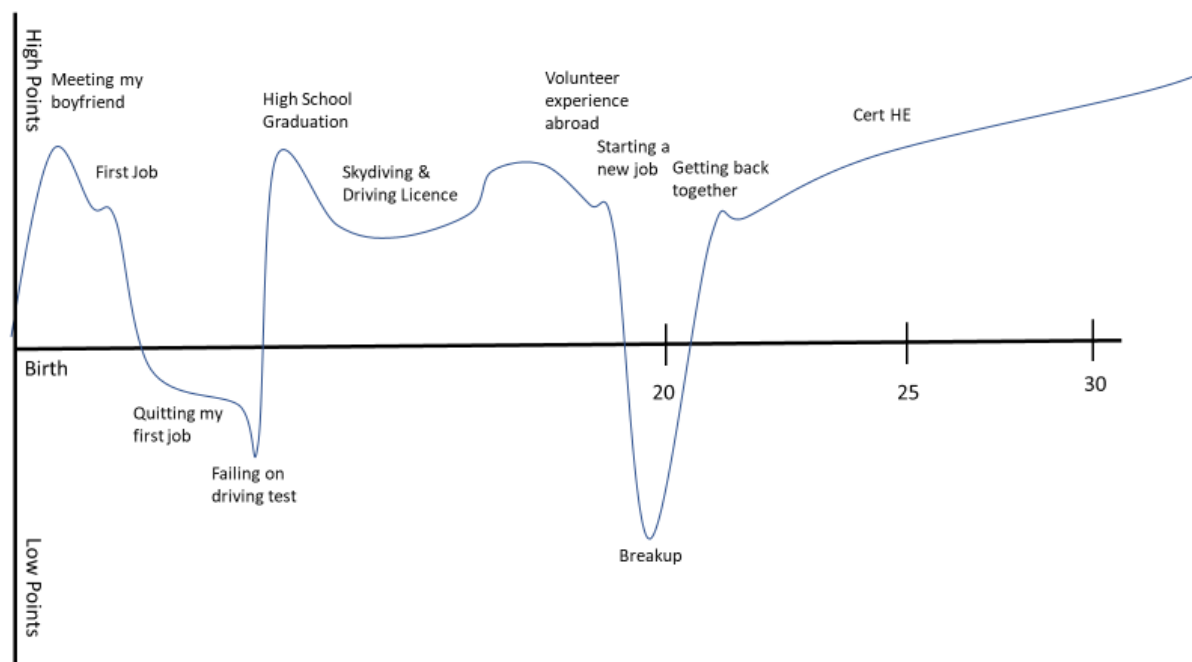
Introduction	3
My lifeline	3
Reflection	5
Learning Styles	6
Self-Motivation.....	6
Personal Development	7
My SWOT analysis	7
Strengths	7
Weaknesses.....	7
Opportunities	7
Threats	8
Career plans & employment goals	9
Action plan	9
Conclusion.....	10
References	11

Introduction

I am Andreea Filip, I was born in Romania, lived for most of my life there, but after 16 I have decided that I want to develop more and even to leave Romania and start a new life. Later I have realised the importance of continuous learning and the fact that I should prioritize my education. I will present some important events from my life and what I learned from each experience using the lifeline diagram. In this report, I will also speak about the importance of reflection, as a skill that I have mostly develop by attending this course. Moreover, I am presenting my learning style, what motivates me, and which are my employment goals, finishing the report with a personal action plan for the next journey of becoming my best version.

My lifeline

Fig. 1 My Lifeline



I always liked drawing and painting and my first job was a part-time job on an old church rehabilitation site. I was working within a team on seven people and we had to help with the conservation and restoration of wall paintings. It was a nice and relaxing job, that I was able to do after classes and helped me develop team working skills and be more responsible. Moreover, I have started to make my first financial planning. One of the most important aspects is that I was enjoying a lot what I was doing, and reflecting upon that from where I am now, I can say that I wasn't aware of how important that factor is and the importance of having a relaxing and stressful free environment.

Unfortunately, my high school graduation was approaching, and I had to quit the job and focus more on the study. In that period, I have faced another disappointment by failing my driving test.

After four years in high school, I had one of the most important exams of my life, the baccalaureate exam. It is an exam that all Romanian high school students must achieve in order to successfully

graduate from high school. I have successfully passed all the results requirements and graduate Economic High School.

Later that summer, I had two other impactful achievements. Two years prior, I started attending a skydiving class. In Romania, young people up to 23 years old can attend with no cost to skydiving and gliding classes. I started just because I wanted to have the experience of one jump, by the end of this experience I had 49 jumps, all by myself, without an instructor, a skydiver official licence issued by Romanian Aeroclub. Furthermore, I was on my way of being part of the local skydivers' team that can perform at national and international contests. However, in the third year, I had an incident. My parachute did not open in time, due to Foucault's currents, which is an incident that can happen if the falling position is too horizontal. I have resolved the issue, but those seconds in which I have seen the earth approaching and I have thought of all the incidents that could happen in a skydiving jump, made me realise that it is probably a good time to move over and start focusing in developing other skills as well.

This experience has taught me how to handle extremely stressful situations, to develop a solution-oriented mindset, and to solve problems in the most efficient way.

The second impactful achievement that I had that summer was successfully passing the driving licence exams. I had failed a few times and it was very discouraging for me. The main issue was that I was panicking that I would fail again, and I was showing a lack of self-confidence, in consequence, I have failed two times. Even so, that summer I was more confident. I started my driving test by attending as a witness for two other girls before me. I could see that they were both very scared and insecure, precisely how I used to be in my previous attempts. After seeing them, I knew what I had to do and I have should a hight self-confidence level, I only made one small mistake, but I successfully pass the exam. This experience taught me the importance of self-confidence.

Furthermore, I was approached by a student-run organization that offered me the opportunity of having a teaching volunteer experience abroad. After consulting my family, I have accepted the opportunity and applied for an eight weeks volunteer project in Izmir, Turkey with my boyfriend. It was an amazing experience, my accommodation and food were covered, I stayed at some Turkish families and had the chance to learn a lot about their culture. It was the biggest volunteering project in Izmir at that time, with volunteers from about 40 different countries. Our job was to help high school and middle school student to develop their speaking English level through non-formal education techniques and discussions regarding the current issues around the world by comparing the known information from media and the information from native people. Some important topics that I remember were Russian Federation annexation of Crimea, Syria's refugees were on the street of Izmir when I was there, before traveling to European Union's countries and some terrorist attacks that happened in Turkey that summer, and taught me the importance of living in a safe country.

Therefore, it was a great chance for me as well to develop a much clear overview regarding multiculturalism, political incidents, media manipulation, and, of course, my English-speaking skills.

Later that year I started a new job as a financial advisor at in worldwide known Insurance company. I had enjoyed it, I had even helped with the recruitment process and after several months I have been promoted as a Unit Manager and had my own team of just three people. The job offered significant experience, training and developing opportunities. However, I felt that sometimes the high responsibility was overwhelming, I haven't had any experience in leading people before and it was hard to make all the team members achieve their monthly target in order to get paid.

After almost a year a friend called me and asked if I wanted to work in a local start-up called HelloScience. I was at the interview, and even if the salary was almost half of what I was gaining from the insurance company I have accepted the job because it was all I even wanted to do at that time. My main responsibility was to do research and create 2-3 minutes long videos on different scientific topics, and to administrate an homeopatie.ro website.

This experience helped me develop some hard skills like video editing, by using Adobe Premiere Pro and Adobe After Effect, I have learned Photoshop and Illustrator and even some basic HTML programming, by administrating the website. Moreover, I start learning Microsoft Office programs at a better level.

In the meantime, my boyfriend and I broke up and this led me to depression, later after, I decided to move to Spain with my mother. However, Spain's economy was still recovering from the recession and had a high unemployment rate, thus I was not able to find any job in my field. Eventually, we got back together and decided to move to the United Kingdom, being supported by some friends that were already there.

In the United Kingdom, I have done a lot of different jobs over the years, from warehouse operative to packhouse planning and performance analyst. Equally important, last year I have realised that I want to continue my studies and develop my skills and I have enrolled as a student at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, in order to obtain a level 4 Certificate of Higher Education in Skills for the Workplace. I sometimes regret the decision because I would have been able to apply for a 3-year course without this certificate. Even so, now I am happy for applying, as it had taught me more than I had hoped for and made me realise what I want to do in the future, what are my skills and what are employers want.

I have enjoyed a lot this exercise because it made me realise my achievements, failings and how I developed my current skills. My future career plans will be presented in the following chapters.

Reflection

According to Bolton (2010), reflection is a contemplation of events or circumstances in which one will consider experiences, people that have been involved, and their feeling regarding the situation. Recreating and revising the experience, in order to take it into focus and analyse it from different perspectives. In this way, being able to discover small details that might have been vital and some important details that might have been rather insignificant.

“Knowing how to reflect on different situations has allowed me to be able to learn from every situation encountered. During this course, I have learned that there are some models that one can use in order to reflect upon events or actions. From all the models I remember Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and Schon's Model of Reflection. Schon's Model of Reflection presents two concepts reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action means reflecting during a situation and reflection on actions refers to reflecting after an activity or event. This model is very useful for me at the workplace because it is making me more aware during activities and remind me to reflect after the activity has been completed as well. On the other hand, Gibbs' reflective cycle is formed by six cyclic elements: description, feeling, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. In order to be able to reflect upon an event, we must have a clear view, for this a detailed description of what happened, when, where and who was involved is required. The second element of Gibbs' reflective cycle is referring to feelings. At this stage is important to understand what feelings were involved for all the participants during,

before and after the event. The third and fourth components are evaluation and analysis. Here we can reflect on both the negative and positive characteristics, evaluate what worked and what went wrong. Moreover, during analysis, we have the chance to make sense of what happened and see why things went in a particular way. In conclusion, all the above can be summarized and learn how to improve and do better next time. The last element is the action plan, in this section, we can come with a concrete plan for what to do differently in a similar situation.” (Filip, 2020)

Learning Styles

Learning styles refer to a variety of theories that are suggesting the fact that each individual accumulates and comprehend information in different ways, depending on many factors that could influence the learning capability, the notion becomes very popular in the 1970s.

There are many learning styles and theories that have been developed and improved over time, I will mention some of these and focus on the VAK model. Experiential Learning is a model developed by David Kolb (2015) and states that learning is a continuous process that develops specific strengths. Kolb’s model includes the following learning styles Accommodating, Converging, Diverging, and Assimilating. In addition, Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles states that by developing Kolb’s theory, concentrating on the way learning is applied in work practice, thus, the following learning styles have been established Activist, Pragmatist, Reflector, and Theorist.

VAK model states that are three main types of learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic. The first category are visual learners, they are absorbing information through visual content such as graphs, charts, power points, illustrations, written information and are easily recognising body language cues and facial expression. On the contrary, they have difficulties in following verbal instructions. Auditory learners have the capacity to recognize the tone of voice, pitch and rhythm, they learn from spoken works such as discourses and deliberations. Kinaesthetic learners are assimilating information by practicing.

Using the VAK test provided on Moodle, I have discovered that my main learning style is visual, having around 16 points (54%), the second-best way of learning is through practice, as I have 9 points on kinaesthetic style and only 5 points for auditory style. I believe that this result is very accurate as I have always preferred graphs and diagrams to understand raw data and I believe I have a good visual memory. Moreover, I also enjoy a lot practicing and I believe is the quickest way of learning something new. On the other hand, I always had trouble remembering people’s names or even the song’s lyrics.

However, nowadays many researchers challenge what the mentioned learning styles are claiming. They state that the science behind the affirmations is not strong enough, not sustained by modern scientific research. The models do not reflect a precise understanding of how the brain works.

Self-Motivation

Self-motivation is the strength that drives one into doing things. There are intrinsic and extrinsic factors that could influence self-motivation such as rank, recognition, or financial gains. The intrinsic factors are related to honestly wanted to accomplish and eager the inherent benefit related to it.

As mentioned before, I have left my old job as a Unit Manager to work in a start-up for half of the salary. Reflecting on that action, I knew that financial reward is not the decisive factor regarding my

job. In addition, as I was reflecting “in action” I have realised that the start-up presented similar values as mine, furthermore, I truly believed that I can contribute to the development of the company and my career can grow at the same time. Now, reflecting “on action” I know that I have made a good choice, as I have gained a new set of skills, that helped me far along. Moreover, I can understand that not immediate financial gain motivated me, but the long-term reward, much higher than the immediate one. Additionally, the purpose of the company and the values represent an important factor, as I have strong personal values that are driving my decision like continuous learning, honesty and acting sustainably. I am also motivated by being impactful in what I am doing, but as well as being rewarded and recognized by my superiors.

Personal Development

One of the best ways of examining my skills and experience, as well as my future career options is the SWOT analysis, as I can evaluate my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

My SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Soft skills such as continuous learning, open-mindedness, creativity, teamwork, adaptability, flexibility, solution-oriented, self-awareness, empathy, problem-solving, time management, organization, presentation skills, public speaking, work ethic.
- Hard Skills like basic HTML programming, social media marketing, video, and photo editing skills Adobe After Effects, Premiere Pro, Photoshop, Illustrator, Microsoft Office Excel, Word and PowerPoint, search engine marketing, sales skills, data analysis.
- Languages. I speak three languages Romanian- native level, Spanish – advanced, English advanced.
- Experience as a financial advisor, unit manager, in sales, self-employment experience, system administrator, social media management, teaching experience, warehouse operative, packhouse operative, team leader, planning and performance analyst.

Weaknesses

- Lack of some essential soft skills like attention to detail, patience, effective communication, conflict resolution, active listening, confidence, consistency, persistence. Additionally, I am trying to combat laziness and procrastination.
- Furthermore, I believe that my experience is not consistent, and this represents a minus from a recruiter perspective, as I have jumped from one field to another. I have no long-term experience, as my longest experience is for one and a half years at the same job. Moreover, I have not been practicing some of the hard skills for a very long time.
- Also, a big minus represents the fact that I let my personal life interfere with my career development and sometimes I make emotional decisions rather than rational decisions.

Opportunities

- I have a great opportunity of continuing my studying in the United Kingdom and achieve new professional qualifications.
- New job opportunities, as I am achieving more qualifications and experience, I am expanding my job opportunities. In addition, the unemployment rate is low in the United Kingdom, especially in London, I have the possibility of relocation.
- I am also thinking to start working as a self-employed photographer, in my free time, to attend events in weekends.

- Leaving close to London I have the chance to participate at many free business seminars and have the possibility of networking.

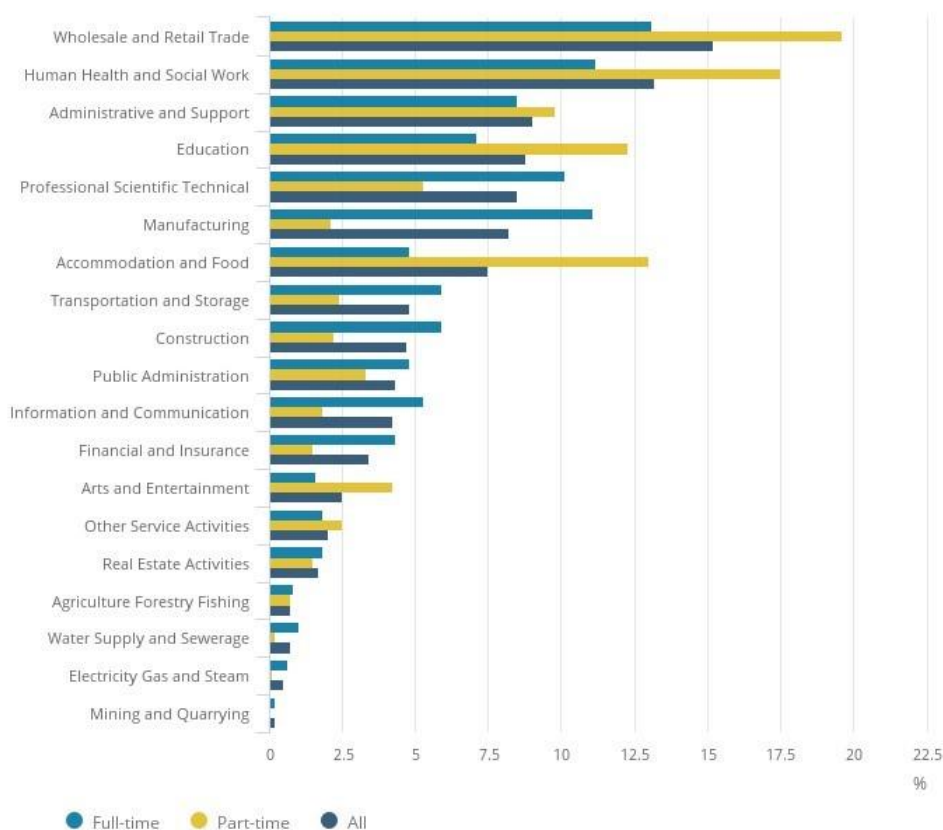
Threats

- 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic, this situation is affecting my wellbeing as well as my professional career development.
- Economic environment, the new social distancing regulation are directly affecting the economic environment leading to an inevitable increase in the unemployment rate. Moreover, the International Monetary Fund (2020) is advising that the global economy will decrease by 3% in 2020, thus this will lead to a new global recession.

Employment demand

Office for National Statistics (2018) states that “in 2018, 85% of the UK’s employees worked in service industries. The two industries with the largest share of the UK’s employees were: wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (15.2%); followed by human health and social work activities (13.2%).”

Fig. 2 The UK's employees by industry, 2018



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey. Office for National Statistics

According to LinkedIn (2020) “the skills that companies need most in 2020 are creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability and emotional intelligence” as top soft skills, in addition, “the top ten hard skills are blockchain, cloud computing, analytical reasoning, artificial intelligence, UX design, business analysis, affiliate marketing, sales, scientific computing and video production.”

The first most important soft skill is creativity, the ability to find useful solutions is an incredible appreciated skill for all employees in all industries. I believe that I possess this skill, however, I would like to develop it more.

Persuasion is the ability to change the ideas, beliefs or behaviour of a person or a group of people. I do not present this skill and I am planning on developing it in the future.

Collaboration is important for any company, as having employees that can work effectively to accomplish a common goal is an essential factor. I have developed this skill by being part of many teams in my previous jobs and volunteer experience.

“In terms of biological survival, seemingly inconsequential random differences in genetic makeup may very well explain why some organisms successfully adapt to changes in the environment and why others fail. In the social sciences, we also consider adaptability to be a key determinant of whether an individual successfully adjusts to change in the social or work environment.” Ployhart and Bliese (2006), Adaptability is a key skill that I have developed over time and I am continuing to improve it, being aware of its importance.

Emotional intelligence is the aptitude to realize, evaluate and respond to your own feelings and other people's feelings in an aware and rational way. I have not thought about this until now, but I have to develop it.

In terms of hard skills, I possess some of the skills that companies need in 2020 such as sales, video production and some basic knowledge and experience in analytical reasoning, and affiliate marketing. I am also planning in developing cloud computing skills through continuing my studying at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David by applying for BSc Cloud Computing programme.

Career plans & employment goals

In this section, I will write about my career plan development. As presented in the previous section, there are some skills and experience that must be improved. As mentioned, I have to focus on developing the following soft skills: persuasion, effective communication, conflict resolution, active listening, and emotional intelligence. In addition, I have to improve my video editing skills, learn the basics of a new programming language and to practice and revised online marketing techniques.

Regarding education and qualifications, I am planning on graduating from the current program and applying for Cloud Computing at the same University.

In terms of jobs, I will stay two more years at the current workplace, because the shift rota is allowing me to have a lot of free time that I can use to develop new abilities. Moreover, provides relevant experience and I can further develop analytical reasoning, as I have to evaluate and plan the activities by analysing the data provided by the system. After this time, I will apply for jobs relevant to my new set of hard skills.

Action plan

In order to make sure that my career development goals are SMART, I have developed the below action plan.

Skills to improve. Persuasion, effective communication, conflict resolution, active listening, and emotional intelligence. Deadline May 2021. I will improve these skills by attending online personal development webinars, start using the Duo lingo app for the English language, 30 minutes daily. In order to improve some hard skills, I will start online classes on Coursera, Skillshare and Mindtools. To

be more specific, I will start the following classes for 6 months period. Programming: Python for beginners, Video editing in Adobe Premiere Pro and Affiliate Marketing Strategies. I will study around 8 hours every week, and I will evaluate my progress through the final exams that are at the end of the classes.

In the next four weeks, I have to graduate and get Certificate of level 4 Certificate of Higher Education in Skills for the Workplace, in order to do this, I must finish and submit all the assessment in time. The next step will be applying for a new student finance loan, on the 25th of May, and for BSc Cloud Computing program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this report, I have written about some important events in my life, that are relevant in my soft and hard skills development and my career planning, also, about different types of reflection and learning styles, moreover, I have presented my learning styles and the factors that motivate me. I have also analysed my skills and what I still have to improve through SWOT analysis. Furthermore, I have presented the United Kingdom employment demand, and what the most important skills for companies this year. At the end of the report, I have written about my future career plan and I have developed an action plan in order to achieve the goals.

References

1. Bolton, G. (2010) *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*, London: SAGE.
2. Filip, A (2020) *Academic and Employability Skills*, term 2 assessment. (My own assessment)
3. Garbis, K. (2016) *Presentation skills for managers*. 2nd Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
4. International Monetary Fund (2020) [Online] Available from: <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/04/14/the-great-lockdown-worst-economic-downturn-since-the-great-depression/> (Accessed: 7 May 2020)
5. Kolb, D. (2015) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, New Jersey: Pearson Education
6. LinkedIn (2020) [Online] Available from <https://learning.linkedin.com/blog/learning-thought-leadership/most-in-demand-skills-2020> (Accessed: 8 May 2020)
7. Maund, R. Schriek, M. and Tinkler, P.K. (2017) *Certificate in higher education: skills for the workplace student yearbook*. London: SAGE.
8. Morgan, P. (2017) *The business student's guide to study and employability*. London: SAGE.
9. Office for National Statistics (2018) [Online] Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employeesintheukbyindustry/2018> (Accessed: 8 May 2020)
10. Ployhart, E. and Bliese, P. (2006) *Understanding Adaptability: A Prerequisite for Effective Performance within Complex Environments*, London: Elsevier.
11. Sternberg, R. Zhang, L. and Rayner, S. (2012) *Handbook of Intellectual Styles: Preferences in Cognition, Learning, and Thinking*, New York: Springer Publishing Company