

Tools and concepts to construct your personal career strategy



Random House Dictionary defines success to be “ the favorable or prosperous termination of attempts or endeavors.” The ambiguity in this definition may be attributed to the fact that there is no universal meaning for the word “ success.” The meaning of the term depends entirely on the dreams and aspirations of the individual. Most people are given the opportunity to choose their own path, and use their choices to determine their idea of success. My life is a little bit different in that my idea of success has determined my career path. After much contemplation, I have realized that my personal definition of success is to make my father’s company internationally competitive.

Stella Cortell’s book describes several issues related to personality development, and outlines activities and reflections on topics such as: identifying how you perform your best, improving your performance, task-management, assertiveness, giving and receiving constructive criticism, among others. I have considered the results of these activities in the crafting of my career development plan.

The self-awareness of an individual should be taken into consideration when he or she is in search of a career. It should also be applied to enhance in the performance of one’s job or profession. According to Goleman, the most important variables in one’s career decisions are the level of self awareness and self-efficiency. (1996) Self-awareness will enable individuals to make the correct career decisions.

In order to achieve my personal career goal, I must strive to become a more self-aware individual. Garavan defined self-awareness as “ the individual’s

ability to assess other's evaluations of the self and to incorporate these assessments into one's self-evaluation." (1999) In developing my personal career strategy, I first considered my career goal, and the skills and qualifications needed to realize it. Afterward, I considered results of my MBTI model and Johari Window Model. I then integrated my self-realizations and the opinions of my peers and family members as a basis for my career development plan.

I first identified how I perform the best. As a child, my favourite sport was football. I played on both community and school teams, and would frequently volunteer to help my coaches organise transportation to and from games. When I reached high school, my football skills were not honed enough to qualify me to play for the team, but out of love for the game, I stayed on as a manager. During my tenure as team manager, I designed several activities for the team and fundraised more money for my school's soccer program than any other manager before. This money was used to purchase new training equipment and uniforms for the team. That year, we beat our rival school for the first time in 5 years. Looking back at this experience, I was able to realize how much I truly enjoyed being in a managerial position. Curious, I consulted my old report cards to see if any of my past teachers had mentioned my leadership skills. Much to my surprise, several of them had mentioned that I was quiet, yet I had the natural ability to lead my classmates in group activities.

In the future, I will inherit my father's company. When the day comes for my to assume a managerial position, my leadership skills will definitely be

useful. Despite this, my surprise at the discovery of my teachers' comments shows me that I have several blindspots.

Based on the comments of my friends and past teachers, I have come to realize that one of my personality traits that has the potential to negatively impact my future career plans is the fact that I am a shy person. While this shyness is not quite a liability, my fear of public speaking, and my reluctance to assert myself may serve to be a serious disadvantage when I assume a managerial position. In order to improve my performance as a manager, I have added relevant steps to my career development plan that will train me enhance my speaking skills and will teach me to be more assertive. I have also added steps and goals in my career development plan in an effort to expand my current knowledge and talents, and thereby improve my performance.

According to Monster. com, " Many employers are looking for candidates with a strong sense of self-awareness." Monster evens offers a quiz on their website to help determine how self aware you are now as you are looking for a job. (Christie) These skills will help an individual choose the right career and make the appropriate decisions in managerial development. Companies are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of self-awareness, and as such, they are also looking to hire employees who possess these qualities.

In order to become more self-aware, I examined my ability to manage and complete tasks. Through personal reflections and feedback from peers and academic advisors, I observed that many of my peers perceive me to be organised and responsive. As a result of this observation, I have realized that

I am reasonably efficient in the management of my personal tasks. Because of this, I have designed my career development plan to include a several activities. This will enable me to maximize my time.

I took the MBTI test to further my level of self-awareness. The results show that my personality is the ENFP (Extroversion, Intuition, Thinking and Perceiving). People with ENFP personalities tend to lead by creating a vision, and helping people see their potential. ENFP personalities also tend to influence by listening to and incorporating the ideas of others. Finally, ENFP personalities tend to focus on exploring all the possibilities. This personality type describes many characteristics that are in line with the steps I have outlined in my career development plan. One of the steps in my action plan is to obtain a Masters Degree in Business Administration. I hope my studies will supplement my personality and provide me with formal training to enable me to help people see their potential. This skill will be invaluable when I become a manager.

I have also used the results of my Johari Window model in the development of my career plan. I noticed that I do not consider myself, nor do others consider me, to possess certain characteristics that I believe are essential to good leadership. For example, I do not consider myself, nor was I described to be articulate. I believe that the ability to communicate with others effectively is an extremely important aspect of management. Considering this, I have modified my career development plan to develop my public speaking skills.

It was also interesting to note that I had an empty quadrant in the results of my Johari Window model. This quadrant was the “ hidden” one, which represents the things that the subject knows about his or her self but other people do not know at all (Luft and Ingham 1955). This panel contains all the information that the subject has not divulged to anyone or to the person with whom the interaction is taking place. It is during this step that the process of “ self-disclosure” takes place (Luft and Ingham 1955). Over time, as people begin to trust each other more and reveal more information about them, the items that are contained in the “ hidden” quadrant are moved to the “ open” quadrant. While I would like to believe that I am transparent to the point that there is nothing hidden about me, logically, I know this is impossible. The empty quadrant can likely be attributed to my reluctance to admit that I prefer to keep some things to myself. While this observation did not translate into a step in my career development plan, my awareness of this aspect of my personality will make me more conscious of such behaviour in the future.

Another thing I learned through the application of an activity performed during this class, is that I sometimes have difficulty receiving and giving constructive criticism. As I tend to be a very reserved person who tries to see the best in everyone, I have realized that I am not very good at criticizing my peers as I have a tendency to be too nice. This realization came as a shock. Because I consider myself to be a very honest person, I had previously assumed that I was able to provide candid evaluations. My self-awareness of this limitation will definitely help me in my future career. One of the fundamental parts of being a manager is the need to provide employees with constructive criticism. Managers who are unable to do so will be extremely

ineffective. As such, I have realized that I need to train myself to be less afraid of what people think, and more concerned with providing helpful evaluations. My awareness of my inability to provide constructive criticism further convinced me of the need to obtain a Master's Degree, which is a step on my career development plan. I hope that my study of Business Administration will teach me to be a more candid evaluator.

A similar activity taught me that I also have difficulty receiving constructive criticism. I attribute this personality deficiency to the fact that I have set a very high standard for myself, and because I am proud of my personal achievements. As such, criticism often embarrasses me. My awareness of this facet of my personality will not only help me in my future career, but I believe it will help me become a better person. In my opinion, it is extremely difficult to advance as an individual without the criticism of others. A person must be able to learn from his or her errors; otherwise he or she will probably continue to repeat the same mistakes. In order to be an effective manager, I will undoubtedly need the advice and guidance of my father, and those who have extensive experience in the field. If I am unable to receive criticism with an open mind, I will be greatly limiting myself. Although my awareness of this personal limitation cannot be translated into a phase on my career development plan, but I will always remember that this is something I need to work on.

Conclusion

The various concepts and theories in this course have allowed me to become a more self-aware individual. They have enabled me to discover of my

personal strengths, weakness and personality tendencies. There are several aspects of my personality and a few character traits of which I was previously unaware. Before being made of aware of these, I already had a career development plan, but it was very vague and general. Much of what I learned about my shortcomings and myself has translated into a phase in my career development plan. Some of the other things I learned about myself cannot be explicitly seen on the plan. Despite this, I will strive to remember these positive characteristics and use them to my advantage. With regard to my negative qualities, I am certain that my awareness of them will help me to ensure that they will not limit my career's progress.

Unlike most individuals who are able to use their self-awareness to select their career path, my professional future was determined at birth. As such, I have used my improved sense of self-awareness to identify what needs to be done in order for me to achieve my career goals. Thus, my present plan is much more direct, and focuses on skills and qualifications I need to attain in order to become a better manager.

Critically evaluate the role that your self-awareness will play in making your career a success

“ A manager who is unaware of his or her blind spots or of how he or she impacts others is a walking disaster in the workplace, a leader who may lead the troops over the cliff.” (Koonce, Richard) My lack of self-awareness could be a liability in the near future. As such, I will strive to be more aware of my blindspots, so as to be informed as to my strengths and weaknesses. This awareness will allow me improve my performance as a manager, as I will be able to better prevent my blindspots from negatively affecting those under

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my management. By being more self aware, I will be able to use my strengths and personality to create a more work conducive environment. I aspire to be able to use my self awareness to become a better leader, and a more efficient manager.

“ When trying to enhance leadership skills it is imperative for leaders to understand that their behaviour is interpreted differently according to a subordinate’s personality. Indeed, the same message that a leader is communicating (even if the content is the same) could be interpreted in several different ways depending on the personalities of the subordinates.” (Hautala) By being more aware of my behaviour, I will be able to modify my actions according to the personality of my subordinates. Because of this, as a manager, I will be able to communicate effectively with my staff. I believe that effective communication between managers and employees is paramount to the success of a business.

The results of my personality test have taught me a lot about myself. Because of the MBTI model, I learned that people who have an ENFP personality tend to influence by listening to and incorporating the ideas of others. As such, I plan to one day use this aspect of my personality in future management practices. I firmly believe that two heads (or more) are better than one. As such, I hope that this side of me will make me more responsive to the changing business conditions.

I also learned that ENFP personalities tend to focus on exploring all the possibilities. I have realized that this tendency could be either an asset or a liability. As a future manager, I understand the value of examining all

aspects of an issue before making a decision. A thorough consideration of all factors and conditions is more likely to result in a more prudent choice. However, people who are overly concerned with being able to predict the effects of decisions are sometimes unable to make choices quickly, which often results to their disadvantage. My awareness of this side of my personality will enable me to be a better manager, as I will be strive to ensure my desire to consider all possible angles will be an asset, not a liability.

Based on the results of my Johari Window model, I have learned that I perceive myself to be kind and shy, while others consider me to be clever, giving, happy, helpful and logical. Today the Johari Window model is especially relevant due to modern emphasis on, and influence of, 'soft' skills, behaviour, empathy, cooperation, inter-group development and interpersonal development. (Businessballs, 2008). This insight into my personality will be useful in my future career. As a manager, the perceptions of the people being management are of utmost importance. Subordinates must perceive their manager to be logical. If they believe otherwise it is unlikely that they will be able to perform their tasks effectively. I hope to maintain the way people view me, as I believe it will be useful in my future career. Self-awareness is necessary to my success as a manager. I truly believe that a deeper understanding of myself will allow me better understand others.

Action plan

Graduate

I am currently a college student

I study diligently and manage my tasks efficiently to ensure that I graduate on time

Before graduation, I plan to engage in more student activities that will help develop my leadership skills

Hone my Public Speaking Skills

I am a shy person. Due to the fact that I aspire to be the manager of an internationally competitive company, I need to develop my public speaking skills

I will enrol in classes that will train me to become a more articulate and confident speaker

Obtain a Master's Degree

Further study in the field of Business Administration will be useful in my future career

Concurrently, I hope to find a job in company in a similar line of business to my father's company

Work for my father's company

Given my educational training and work experience I hope to study the structure of my father's company and evaluate its performance and make the necessary changes to make the company internationally competitive