**Discussion 2**

Part 1.

My Technology Risk Assurance internship at EY started in June this year; hence, the first few weeks back then would not be appropriate to be addressed within this discussion nor fit the period of this course. Therefore, I would like to focus only on the main topics of this week's discussion (i.e., the people, workplace, and means of communication).

     A. The People

The people in my ITRA (IT Risk Assurance) team can be described using the adjective below. It is important to note that these are just some characteristics of my team; they, of course, have a lot more to offer than meets the eye:

**Enthusiasm**: The people in this team are relatively young, so they live their lives to the fullest. When they work or play, they give it their all: in the office, my team would focus on ensuring their daily goals are reached before heading home. In team gatherings, they would chill and enjoy every moment with each other.

**Professionalism**: Going on fieldwork with clients or working within the team, ITRA's people use professionalism to deal with work-related matters. Their professional attitude is shown through their timeliness, attention to detail, and respect for one another.

**Helpful and caring**: Whenever there is a problem with one's work, others will gladly lend a helping hand until the problem is diminished. When the seniors help us interns or other staff with a particular task, the seniors will also teach us how to deal with problems that may arise or show us a more efficient method.

     B. The Workplace

Regarding the physical workplace, it is an honor to be working in one of Saigon's most iconic buildings, the Bitexco Financial Tower. My office is situated on the 29th floor of this building, it is designed with direct communication in mind, as walls of any kind do not separate every desk, and each team member sits close to each other, the desk is relatively spacious, so it is not cramped at all; even the team's higher-ups (managers and the associate partner) sit together in an open cubicle, not a separate room.

This office allows our team to conduct direct conversations (or even debate) with one another without having to travel a great distance, eliminating the risk of miscommunication. Another thing that really makes this office awesome is that we have a high ground overlooking the beautiful city. This scenery is fantastic at any time of the day and is also part of the reason that keeps me going to work every day.

     C. Means of communication

At EY, every team has a similar set-up of communication channels, and our team is no different. We used a variety of tools for different communication purposes:

**Microsoft Teams**: A cooperate classic used by major corporations around the globe. This messaging application allows members of EY (internally) to communicate efficiently. Even though our team's preferred communication method is verbal, we still use MS Teams whenever talking may break the office's silence.

**Outlook**: The official data sender and receiver, when communicating with clients and other external parties, we would utilize this tool to do our bidding. Thanks to the formal nature of email, this tool conveys messages with a sense of respect and urgency, suitable for communicating professionally.

**Telegram and Zalo**: These tools are used to communicate with the client informally; data can be received here, but these are generally used to check up on our client and, in some cases, clarify what the emails may have missed.

Part 2.

My internship Plan took some time to finish as there are multiple factors to consider when creating a plan, which is why I reached out to get help from a few places and resources. Hence, here are some of the tips and findings I gathered:

**Self-Assessment**: Having read the article on 21st century competencies, I have a better understanding of what I am capable of, and with that, I set up goals that can either reinforce my skills or teach myself something new. "The content in the curriculum serves the development of students' general capabilities as well as their knowledge, understanding and skills in the disciplines/learning areas" (McGaw, B., 2013)

**Applying SMART**: This abbreviation stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound. Using this principle, I am able to figure out what my goals should look like in detail, as well as how to keep track of and commit to them. "Consistently aligns with and supports organizational and individual professional goals" (O'Neill et al., 2011).

**Advice from senior**: My manager has been very helpful and patient when I asked for his advice on what I should expect and achieve after the internship. With his insight and experience, he helped me answer many of my questions regarding my future.

I found that these steps helped me configure realistic and achievable goals, as I have an internal and external perspective of myself and what I wanted to get out of this internship. The goals I set for myself will be one of the many steps I need to take to become a better and better person.

**References**

O'Neill, J., Conzemius, A., Commodore, C., Pulsfus, C. (2011). The power of SMART goals: Using goals to improve student learning, Chapter 1

McGaw, B., 2013, September. Developing 21st century competencies through disciplines of knowledge. In an International Symposium on Education and 21st Century Competencies, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman (pp. 22-24).

**Discussion 3**

**Definition of workplace culture and the 'surface' aspect of it.**

**Workplace culture**

We often view culture as an identity of a particular area; it is the "sum of shared ideas, practices and material objects that people create to make sense of, adapt to and thrive in their environments" (Furze et al. 2012, p. 54). This saying applies to every region of the world; however, it does not only stop there but also holds even when applied to a smaller arena, i.e., a company or a workplace. Just like how societal culture sets the identity of an area, the workplace culture (albeit it can be interpreted in many ways) still "refers to the shared values, beliefs, and behaviors by members of a given organization" (Kwantes, CT & Glazer, S 2017).

Culture exists because people use it to make sense of their world. In the workplace, culture is formed in the process of people following a pre-defined set of rules and/or procedures. This sort of rule can be flexible as it does not only include the actual rule the firm set up but also the social rules that exist within a collective (this can also be considered as the social norms). "The nature of a culture is found in its social norms and

customs, and that if one adheres to these rules of behaviour, one will be successful in

constructing an appropriate social reality" (Morgan 1986, p. 129).

* **The 'surface' aspect of culture**

The term' surface aspect' can be understood as physical, visibly seen elements of a workplace (LaConte, 2018). Some examples of this are:

* + Office layouts: The way the workplace is organized.
  + Dress code: How the employee dress
  + Symbolism: Logos, icons, slogans, etc.
  + Gathering: How the employees behave outside work hours

It is important to keep in mind that the surface aspect of an office can't tell the whole story, and we should not form a definitive idea without looking deeper into the "hidden" culture of the office.

**Observation of the 'surface' aspect of culture**

* **Individual behaviour**

Each and every person within my team always strives to do their best every day. Whenever working on a project, they try to use their time effectively; this is observed via the fact that everyone tries to create deadlines for themselves in order to complete a task promptly. Moreover, their professionalism shines even when they have tight deadlines, as they are always trying to present the best possible result and making sure little to no mistakes are made in their work.

* **Team dynamics.**

The description of my team was given in the 2nd discussion, and I want to add a few more things to that. The ITRA team values efficiency and synergy; in a team, they will support and cooperate with other people, and with clients, they try to find solutions that can benefit both parties. This also aligns with EY's value of bringing timely, tailor-made solutions to our clients.

* **Your relationship with team members.**

I like to think that I've built a strong connection with my team members during the time we have been working together. We have been through good and bad times, and I am starting to understand everyone more. It is an extraordinary experience every time I work or play with my team members. I do admit that sometimes I might have a lot of questions, but they are still eager to help me out when they are able to do so.

* **Interactions between your team and other teams/departments.**

To be frank. I have not interacted with other teams as much as my seniors, but as observed, they maintain a strictly professional attitude when dealing with the other teams. We work closely with the Financial Auditing team; their job is to provide us with IT systems to check up on, and our job is to support them in reconciling financial data. The EY ecosystem is a dynamic and packed one; we need to support other teams, and they need to support us, too, which also reinforces the teamwork ethic that the firm holds dearly.

* **Your team's performance track record.**

The EY firm has a centralized approach to evaluating the performance of an employee, and quarterly, every employee would be evaluated by the senior ups on their performance. I cannot give the exact criteria for evaluating, but it generally boils down to the following:

* + The hours you actually worked.
  + The engagement between you and other employees/ clients
  + The quality of your work. (measured by the time it took to do a task and the quality of documentation you did)

Every day, we try to do our best to reach these criteria, and in my opinion, it is a very effective and subjective form of evaluation.

* **People's approach to conflict resolution.**

Conflict and tension are inevitable in our field of work, whether within the team or when working with a client. However, my team, in particular, has some very interesting ways of dealing with conflict.

Within the team, I saw that when people conflict with a project, they would lay down their ideas one by one and then find a common ground to work on. Sometimes, people use the firm's resources to make sure that they are just working according to the policy.

When conflict arises with clients, our team wouldn't back down, but they instead stand their ground and try to find a solution that would benefit everyone. Sometimes, when the tension is too much, our team would offer a timeout to discuss internally on strategies to deal with the client.

**Reflection**

* **How clear are you about the organization's espoused values and how these are expected to reflect in staff behavior?**

"Every excellent company … is clear on what it stands for." (Peters, T. J., & Waterman, R. H., Jr. 1982). EY holds a lot of values and has high expectations that their staff will follow them. Out of every value that EY is built around, they take pride in their professionalism, client-centricity, and synergy, which are relatively well reflected in their staff. I would say that from clothing to work manners, every EY member of staff represents the firm in a professional and reliable sense.

* **What are the values/beliefs and assumptions which actually drive your team's behaviour?**

To be frank, I think the main benefactor that keeps the ITRA team afloat is each other; just like I've discussed in the last discussion, our motto is "We are family". No matter how tough it may get, we know that others are there for us, and when issues happen to someone, we are there to help them, too. Furthermore, the firm has also treated the employees well with their benefits (diner cards, team vacation, etc.). In a way, it is also a good driver. I think that those drivers help the team push through many busy seasons (which are known for being notorious)

* **How well do you believe the team your working with values/beliefs align with the corporate (or organization-wide) values?**

ITRA's and EY's values are very similar to one another, and I can confidently say that my team lives up to the firm's expectations; not only do we treat every work-related situation with a professional mindset, but we also exude an enthusiastic attitude when working. Not only that, but we are also eager to cooperate with clients and other teams to deliver the best possible outcomes for each project.

* **Intercultural Communication and Adaptation**

Thanks to EY, I have the opportunity to work abroad for a week in Cambodia (my project is related to an insurance company of that country), and it has opened my mind on many things. Some of the cultural aspect of Cambodia gives me a little culture shocks, but I did not understand then at that time. Thanks to the material that this course provided, I am able to make sense of some of the etiquette and behavior of Cambodian.

* + **Greetings**: I notice that the people here are very friendly, when they greet each other, they use a formal pre-fix to show everyone their respect.
  + **Clothing**: Their style of clothing is similar to us Vietnamese, at least in Phnom Penh. I haven’t had the opportunity to explore the rural area and see their fashion style.
  + **Conversations**: they are great listeners, whenever I communicate with them, they would listen carefully and would try to help me understand their answer also.
  + **Physical space**: they are just like Vietnamese, keeping the normal distance Vietnamese would, nothing special regarding this entry.
  + **Eating**: Cambodian don’t bring food into their office, not even snack as far as I am concerns.

The time working in Cambodia was not long enough for me to pick up any of the people’s cultural habit, however, it was still an eye-opening experience, and I would relish a chance of getting back there either for work or just holidays.

In any case, that was my sharing on this discussion topic. Thank you for reading this post, I hope you find your adventure on the intern ship (puns intended) smooth sailing. Best regards.

**References**

Furze et al. 2014, Sociology in Today's World, Cengage Learning, South Melbourne, Australia.

Kwantes, CT & Glazer, S 2017, Culture, Organizations, and Work, Springer International Publishing.

Morgan, G. (1986). Images of organization. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

LaConte, G. (2018, April 12). Understanding the Culture of a Company, Part 1: Surface Culture. LaConte Consulting. <https://laconteconsulting.com/2018/04/12/understanding-the-culture-part-1-surface/>

Peters, T. J., & Waterman, R. H., Jr. (1982). In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run companies, New York: Harper & Row.

**Discussion 4**

Hello there,

Another week passed, and another discussion occurred on the intern ship. This week, I will focus on articulating my professional identity. But before heading into the meat of the discussion, I would like to go over what is professional identity.

According to Neary, " Professional identity is the concept which describes how we perceive ourselves within our occupational context and how we communicate this to others."(Neary, S. 2014). With this in mind, it becomes evident that this concept is becoming progressively more significant as we advance through life. As we approach the age of employment, it is imperative to project a professional demeanor, enhancing our credibility and competence. And to express my professional identity effectively, I will tackle the questions provided in the discussion topic.

**How can I describe and articulate my professional identity to a wide audience?**

We must walk before we can run, and in this context, in order to convey my professional identity, I must first build one for myself.

**How can I do this in a short amount of time so that it is clear, engaging and straight to the point, meeting my audiences' needs?**

**How can I use reflective practice to help me document this journey?**

References

Neary, S. (2014). Professional identity: What I call myself defines who I am. Career Matters.