David Basil Akang A251AE Report.pdf

by David Akang

DEVELOPING BUSINESS NETWORKING AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

A251IAE

Reflective report

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Introduction:

This report reflects my practical experience of networking and building future social and business networks. I will outline my personal development plans and objectives. In addition, the role of digital and face to face networking will be scrutinized in relation to how they operate, the benefits and differences. An important step in self-assessment is honesty; an individual should be able to admit a wrong and not try to push it off and find a justification Lenz (n.d). Self-assessment is key for personal development; to grow one must be able to critically analyse and learn from mistakes. I have used the Gibbs reflection cycle to scrutinize past experiences and interactions. In order to achieve results; smart goals which are smart, measurable, achievable, realistic and time constrained must be set. One must prioritize and set methods for achieving these goals;

What is Networking?

According to the founder and chairman of Business Network International (BNI) Ivan Misner networking is 'The process of developing and activating your relationships to increase your business, enhance your knowledge and expand your sphere of influence' (Misner 2018). Townsend (2014) also stated that business networking is the process of building up and preserving a mutually beneficial relationship. The keyword in both definitions given is *relationships*; networking is all about relationships. It is about cultivating relationships with other individuals for it grow and flourish.

Guest (2017) stated in a Chartered Management Institute blog that 'Networking is a two-way street'; for networking to work, one must be ready to give more than one might receive. Digital networking is vital as most corporations now operate digitally; online networking enables individuals and companies network all day and night, despite geographical distances. All that is needed is an internet connection. On the other hand, face to face networking is correspondingly a vital trait, as at grass-root level, human interaction is unparalleled by digital networking.

Digital networking is beneficial due to its speed and accessibility; information can be passed across the globe at fast speeds due to technological advancements. The advent of social networking is rapidly changing lives as millions of people spend most of their time on social media sites. In June of 2010, Facebook logged its 500 millionth

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user, which at that time was roughly estimated to be eight percent of the world population (Barnett, 2010)

In terms of physical interactions face to face networking outweighs digital networking as there is a human factor, the popular expression 'you just had to be there!', comes to mind; there is no exact alternative to 'being there': physical interactions and correspondence in any generation will hold strong.

A way in which a network can be maintained and cultivated is depicted in figure 1, where one would have to give in order to build and initialise a relationship; in giving trust is acquired. We live in a knowledge economy where no single person is smart enough by themselves to succeed. We need to give and share. Thereafter after a network is built, we can then ask for help and asking for help should not be a weakness but rather a strength. In addition, when help is given, we need to be grateful.

Figure 1: The Golden Triangle of Networking (Vermeiren, 2009)

There are various reasons why people network. According to Augustine (2019), most connected people are successful people; they have been able to invest in interpersonal relationships, be it personal or business which have paid dividends in the long run. Individuals also network to improve self-esteem as this is a vital trait for career development.

Critically reflect on the role of digital and face to face networking?

Hypothetically, there is a six degree of separation rule which implies that individuals can be connected through acquittance chains of no more than 5 connections. However recent studies by Facebook researchers have found that the separation length for members is now 3 and a half degrees of separation Bhagat et al. (2016) due to advancement in technology.

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It is popularly said that whom you know is more important than what you know; this is because, in this economy, one's network is one's net worth, and most people use **digital mediums** for communication. Social media is now the vogue; it enables individuals communicate seamlessly, despite geographical distances. In addition, digital networking aids businesses attract customers by giving them an avenue to demonstrate their products. Social media sites like LinkedIn and Facebook enables both small and large-scale industries have online presences and reach a larger audience. In 2018, an estimated 2.65 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number predicted to increase to roughly 3.1 billion in 2021 as seen in Figure 2 (Clement, 2019).

Number of social network users worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (in billions)
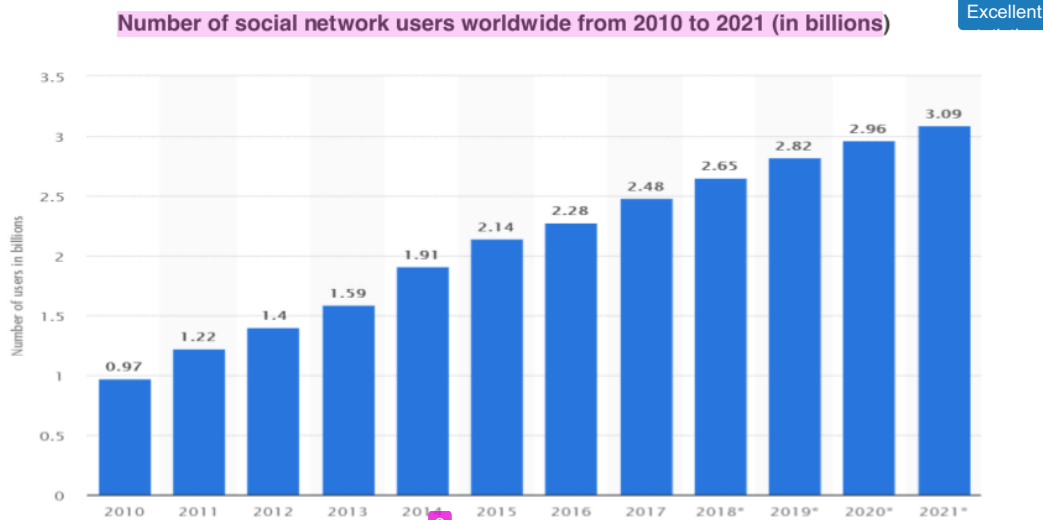
Excellent

Figure 3: Social Network Users from 2010 to 2021 (Statista 2019)

It must be said digital networking has its disadvantages as; one of the cons of digital networking is insecurity, while networking at times, private and confidential data is shared between customers and businesses. It can be difficult to keep this data safe and secure. A single hack or breach of personal information could lead to sensitive data falling into the hands of terrorists and cyber thieves. The breeched data can be used to unlawfully take advantage of an individual. Therefore, at times, face to face networking is a better option than digital networking.

Face to face networking is all about connecting; author Bob Burg stated that "All things being equal, people will do business with and refer business to, those people they know, like and trust" (Burg n.d.). He gave an example whereby two sellers trading the same product with equal access to facilities, unit price and technical know-how,

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the seller who develops a relationship and is trusted by the customer would be the one patronised. It is this seller who would get the referrals and not the others because of the mutual trust between the customer and the seller. Humans are social beings who develop trust and respect for those who treat them well.

Nevertheless, face to face networking incurs much cost and time: as individuals must be in the same physical location to share information. In addition, it is also not cost-effective, for instance, if an individual has a meeting in another country they would have to catch a means of transport to arrive there; also when the individual arrives, they would have to worry about accommodation and transportation, this leads to increased cost and environmental pollution. Video technology like Skype can conduct these meetings thereby eliminating these costs and saving time.

Your professional development: use evidence & examples to reflect on the challenges & achievements in your networking journey

I recently undertook a networking survey which accessed my networking ability, of which I had an average score. Based on this score, I have re-evaluated most of my approaches and friend cycle to make sure the company I keep is quality over quantity. For example, I have been able to get a part-time job over the summer through face to face networking; utilizing the Gibbs reflection cycle shown in Figure 3, I can analyse my experience and development.

Description

I applied for a customer service part-time role at SITEL, a company I currently still work for, initially, I was apprehensive while making the application as I had worked for the company the previous summer but had left when university started and had a feeling I was not going to be rehired.

Feelings:

My feelings during the interview process were calm as I was no longer apprehensive as I found out that I knew the person who was interviewing me as we had worked together the year before.

Evaluation

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The evaluation was that I received a call from the company, the individual that interviewed me confirmed that I had the values they were looking for, in addition to having networked with the recruiter previously; I was able to show that I had the relevant experience required.

Analysis:

In terms of analysis, customer service for a large brand like SITEL has enabled me to come out of my shell; I know how to deal with customers now: be it angry or rude ones. I am confident in my abilities now. However, I still believe I can improve my sale skills so I can earn bonuses at work.

Conclusion:

In addition, for the conclusion, through the networks I have acquired through SITEL, I now have a wider acquaintance group of people to turn to in case I need assistance in any way.

Action Plan:

Moving forward I would like to meet more people at work and acquaint with them especially management as I want to apply for a promotion as well as I have just passed my probation.

Figure 3: Gibbs Learning Cycle

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Networking consists of four key ingredients, these ingredients according to Townsend make people stand out from the crowd, they are credibility, personal branding, visibility and social Capital. This is encompassed in the formula below:

Opportunity = Credibility + Personal Branding + Visibility + Social Capital

(Townsend, 2014)

According to Ivan Misner, the founder of BNI visibility is the point whereby someone becomes aware of the nature of your business (Misner n.d). I have been able to improve my visibility as I have been able to create a LinkedIn account with 50 connections so far. I have been able to approach companies like Apple, Unity, CERN through LinkedIn to inquire if I could get placement roles as I hope to obtain a role next year, they have all responded letting me know they will get back to me in January. Furthermore, in terms of personal branding; which according to Schawbel (2009) can be said to be the process whereby an individual figure out what makes them special and communicates it to a targeted audience. I have started a blog on my course because I have realised that not too many people have an idea of what software engineering really entails. I have had a professional photo taken, so I can update my LinkedIn and Facebook profile. When it comes to social capital which refers to how helpful one is to other people, it can also be referred to as an imaginative account which reaps interest whenever we help an individual out, I find that most times I am always the one asking for help, which I believe is because of the limited number if years I have: career-wise. It is only on few occasions where others come to me for help, this is one part of my networking journey which I need to improve on.

Your professional development plan going forward including SMART targets

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Figure 4: Personal Development Plan

What are my goals	What do I need to do to achieve this goal	Resources to help me	How do I know if I'm succeeding?	Timescale for completion
Short Term Goals				
Secure a yearlong placement	I would need a CV, cover letter and information about potential job vacancies.	Online Psychometric Test Revision, EEC futures one to one meeting, Mock assessment centres	I would get a positive response from the companies applied to.	6 months
Pass driving test	I would have to take my lessons, and learn as much as I can	YouTube videos, DVSA handbooks and advice from individuals who have passed	I would gain more confidence, car control and observational skills.	2 months.
Medium Term Goals				
Graduate with a first class	Attend all my lectures, tutorials and PC labs and get good grades in all graded work.	Library resources, Moodle, theta hours, Group reading.	I would get good grades when the individual marks are released	12 months
Buy a house	Get a job that pays well, do my best to improve and gain experience and knowledge	Advice from colleagues, online reviews, agent negotiations	I would be sure on the house that I am buying.	36 months
Long Term Goals				
Pay off debts	I would need a stable income and a job which provides this income	Information on payment plans.	I would be able to pay the full amount and be debt free	10 years
Become a mentor	Have a positive mindset and a strong will and determination to succeed	Books and networking events.	I would like to be able to sensitize the youths to engineering principles and	15 years.

In terms of personal development moving forward; I would set realistic goals, which would act as a compass pointing me in the right direction, so I do not derail. The plans set must be SMART in nature (simple, measurable, achievable in nature, realistic and time-constrained (Reeves and Fuller 2018). An example of a short term task that I am currently working on is to secure a year-long placement, to achieve this task I have developed a CV and signed up to the newsletters for recruting companies such as GradCracker and Findmyplacement to be notified of any vacanies. I have recieved a few rejection replies but I am still hoping for the best, in the meantime, I would continue practising by taking mock tests and attending career workshops held by faculty.

Summary:

In conclusion, my network journey over the past few months has been immense, the skills accrued have made me more focused due to the SMART plans I have set for myself. I have also been able to break into my target market and have an online presence by creating and updating my LinkedIn. I feel I have taken a big step both in personal development and networking at large.

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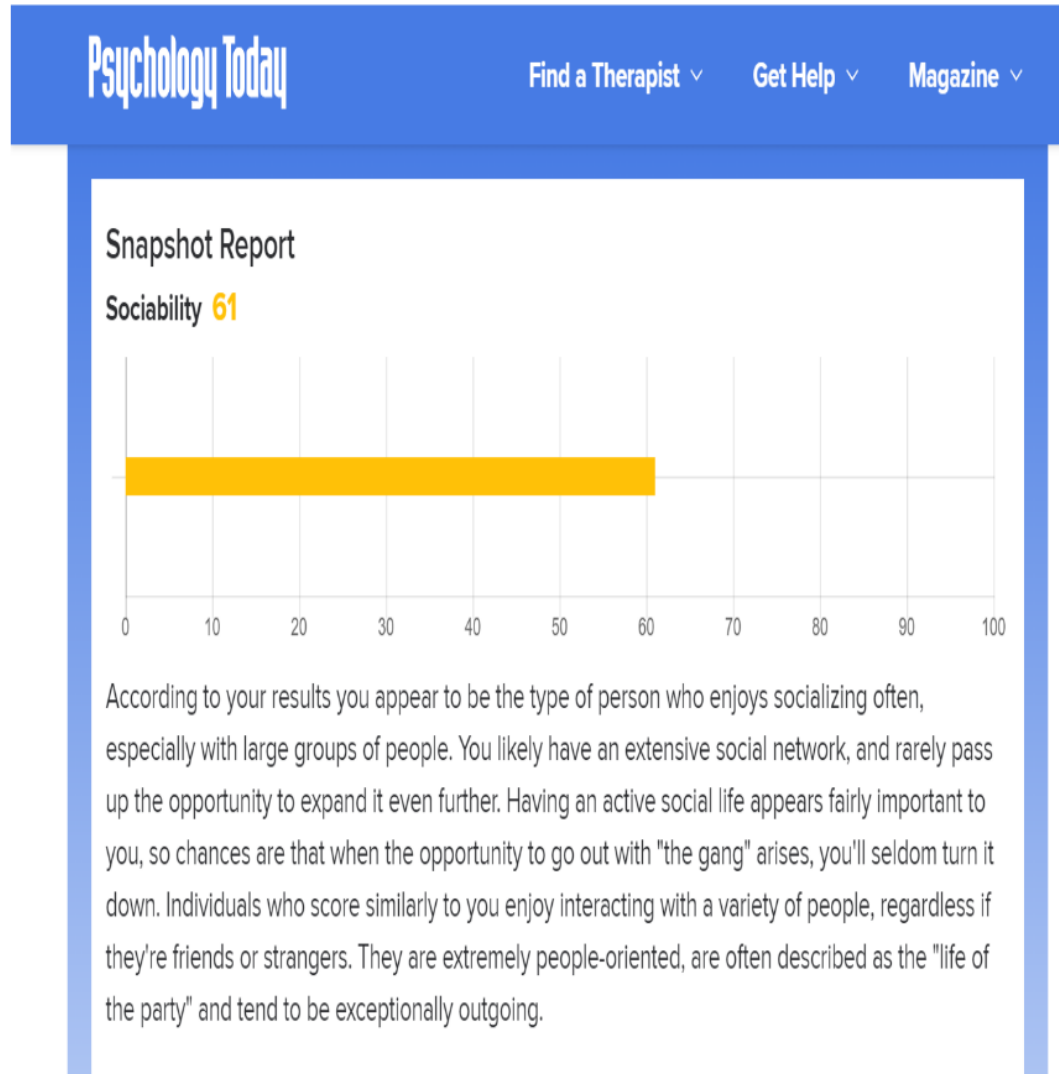
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Appendix

1. Psychology Test
   https://psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com/bin/transfer

Psychology Today

Find a Therapist ∨   Get Help ∨   Magazine ∨

Snapshot Report

Sociability 61

According to your results you appear to be the type of person who enjoys socializing often, especially with large groups of people. You likely have an extensive social network, and rarely pass up the opportunity to expand it even further. Having an active social life appears fairly important to you, so chances are that when the opportunity to go out with "the gang" arises, you'll seldom turn it down. Individuals who score similarly to you enjoy interacting with a variety of people, regardless if they're friends or strangers. They are extremely people-oriented, are often described as the "life of the party" and tend to be exceptionally outgoing.

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FINAL GRADE

82/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

This piece of work has been marked using the Rubric system. To view your feedback, please click on the building block icon at the bottom of this page. As well as the feedback given in the rubrics, there may also be specific comments within the text itself, so please ensure you also review this also review this u also review this.

This is an excellent piece of work which covers all sections.

The student presented an excellent level of theories, applications, arguments and evaluation.

The student has applied the networking attitude test score (52) and four ingredients of successful networking and presented the excellent evaluation of personal networking experience and future development plan.

The student has applied all key theories learned during A251IAE sessions with excellent evaluations.

Well done!

PAGE 1

PAGE 2

QM **good content page**

Good content page which covers all the key sections

💬 **Comment 1**

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good

Comment 2

good

Comment 3

good

Comment 4

excellent

Comment 5

good

QM Excellent evaluation of networking

excellent evaluation of the networking

Comment 6

excellent

QM Excellent evaluation

excellent evaluation

QM Excellent statistics

excellent statistics

Comment 7

key phrases instead of the sentences are needed in the table.

Comment 8

outstanding PDP

Comment 9

good you will be achieving all your goals

Comment 10

pay back mortgages???

Comment 11

excellent

Comment 12

references

INTRODUCTION (5%)   0.80 / 1

POOR 20 (0.20)	A basic introduction has been provided with little or no indication of content and/or purpose
OK 40 (0.40)	A brief introduction has been provided with some indication of content and/or purpose
60 GOOD (0.60)	A good, clear introduction that includes some content and purpose, has been provided
VERY GOOD (0.80)	**A strong introduction that sets the scene for the report has been included, with an indication of content and relevance**
EXCELLENT 100 (1)	An excellent introduction that indicates content, purpose and relevance of the report has been provided and sets the scene for the report.
N/A 0 (0)	Not provided or not as required. You should consult the assignment brief and your notes from the various assignment briefing sessions as to the requirements here.

WHAT IS NETWO (15%)   0.80 / 1

POOR 20 (0.20)	A very limited and impressionistic account of the topic with no or little supporting evidence
OK 40 (0.40)	Some attempt to discuss the topic with some detail and references but limited.
60 GOOD (0.60)	A good, clear discussion of the topic with references used to support points. A deeper critical reflection and wider range of sources and examples would have helped improve this section
VERY GOOD (0.80)	**A very good discussion of the topic with clear examples and effective use of research and reading**
EXCELLENT 100 (1)	An excellent discussion with well chosen and well applied examples and reading which demonstrates a deep and critical understanding of the topic
N/A 0 (0)	Not provided or not as required. You should consult the assignment brief and your notes from the various assignment briefing sessions as to the requirements here.

CRITICALLY RE (15%)   1 / 1

POOR 20 (0.20)	A very limited discussion which barely outlines the two types of networking
OK 40 (0.40)	Some attempt to outline the key differences between the two types of networking but limited critical reflection and theory

60 GOOD (0.60)	A good discussion of the two types of networking with some reflection on pros and cons and some reference to theory
VERY GOOD (0.80)	A very good discussion of the two types of networking supported by appropriate theoretical sources, and offering critical insights
EXCELLENT 100 (1)	**An excellent discussion of the two types of networking, fully supported with theory and deep critical reflections to illustrate key points**
N/A 0 (0)	Not provided or not as required. You should consult the assignment brief and your notes from the various assignment briefing sessions as to the requirements here.

YOUR PROFESSI (20%)   0.80 / 1

POOR 20 (0.20)	A very limited attempt to reflect on your development
OK 40 (0.40)	An adequate attempt to reflect on your development with some reference to evidence. More detail is required along with evidence, examples and critical reflections
60 GOOD (0.60)	A good clear explanation of and reflection on your development with supporting evidence and examples. A wider use of reading, evaluative tools and examples from your networking experiences would have helped improve this section
VERY GOOD (0.80)	**A very good explanation of your professional development, well supported by a diverse range of resources and applied with a high degree of critical reflection**
EXCELLENT 100 (1)	An excellent explanation of your professional development which is detailed, naunced and well supported by a diverse range of resources and applied with an exceptional degree of critical reflection. Well done
N/A 0 (0)	Not provided or not as required. You should consult the assignment brief and your notes from the various assignment briefing sessions as to the requirements here.

YOUR PROFESSI (20%)   0.80 / 1

POOR 20 (0.20)	A very limited account with no or little forward planning to improve your skills and network
OK 40 (0.40)	An adequate attempt which provides a basic plan but needed to be more robust and focused
60 GOOD (0.60)	A good, thought-out plan which does includes SMART objectives. More robust planning would improve this section
VERY GOOD (0.80)	**A very good, well thought out plan which is clearly based on personal reflection and includes robust objectives**
EXCELLENT 100 (1)	An excellent plan which flows from deep critical reflection and evidences robust and SMART objectives

SUMMARY (5%)   0.60 / 1

POOR 20
(0.20)

Poor summary lacking a reasonable conclusion. To obtain a higher grade you would have
benefitted from a clear and concise summary of the assignment and the key points.

OK 40
(0.40)

An adequate attempt to summarise some of the key points and some of the key
recommendations. To obtain a higher grade you would have benefitted from a clear and
concise summary of the assignment and the key points. Recommendations would need to
be clearly highlighted with next steps clearly defined and strongly justified.

60 GOOD
(0.60)

**A good summary of key points and key recommendations. However, to improve your
grade you would need to demonstrate a strong justification for those recommendations
which would be arrived at via reflection and analysis**

VERY GOOD
(0.80)

A very good, clear and concise summary of key points and key recommendations with
evidence of some reflection and analysis leading to some justification for your next steps.
More attention to final analysis and reflection would make your justification stronger

EXCELLENT 100
(1)

An excellent summary which clearly links key points, key recommendations and next
steps, with evidence of deep reflection and analysis leading to a convincing justification
for your next steps

N/A 0
(0)

Not provided or not as required. You should consult the assignment brief and your notes
from the various assignment briefing sessions as to the requirements here.

PRESENTATION, (10%)   0.80 / 1

POOR 20
(0.20)

Very little attention to the structure of the piece, the style is not very scholarly, lacks
fluency and accuracy and references incorrectly use

OK 40
(0.40)

An adequate piece of work in terms of structure, scholarly style, accuracy and use of
references. You could use language more effectively to build a persuasive and rigorous
argument

60 GOOD
(0.60)

Good structure, generally consistent use of scholarly style, readable with few technical
errors and general accurate use of references. You could use language more effectively
to build a persuasive and rigorous argument

VERY GOOD
(0.80)

**Very good structure with consistent use of scholarly style, fluent with accurate use of
language and referencing. You could use language more effectively to build a persuasive
and rigorous argument**

EXCELLENT 100
(1)

Excellent structure with effective use of scholarly style, use of language helps build a very
convincing argument and references are accurately used

N/A 0
(0)

Not provided or not as required. You should consult the assignment brief and your notes
from the various assignment briefing sessions as to the requirements here.

POOR 20 (0.20)	Little evidence of reading and research. You were asked to conduct research and reading to develop and extend your knowledge and understanding of the topics and to help support your discussion
OK 40 (0.40)	Some evidence of reading and research but not always well applied to support or illustrate your discussion. More extensive and relevant research is required and a more strategic and critical application of theoretical and conceptual tools is needed to support you discussion.
60 GOOD (0.60)	Plenty of evidence of reading and research which is mainly used to support your points. However, a more critically engaged use of reading and research would have led to a more sophisticated and nuanced discussion and a more convincing argument
VERY GOOD (0.80)	**Comprehensive use of reading and research and other resources which is used to support and develop your argument plus evidence of a more critical approach to the research which leads to a very nuanced and sophisticated discussion of the topics and a more convincing argument**
EXCELLENT 100 (1)	Extensive evidence of reading and research and other resources which is used to support and evaluate your discussion. However, a more critically engaged use of reading and research would have led to a more sophisticated and nuanced discussion of the topics and a more convincing argument.
N/A 0 (0)	Not provided or not as required. You should consult the assignment brief and your notes from the various assignment briefing sessions as to the requirements here.