

Event Organization and Promotion

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Learning Report

Abstract—The present report describes what I learned during the execution of my activity, from a soft-skills standpoint. The early concept of owning a task was for itself was enough for motivating me into doing something better and to improve. I came to realize the importance of organization methods to fulfill objectives, such as the simple use of a To-Do list. Time management presented itself as of crucial importance, once it prevented me from accumulating tasks and to perform them carelessly. The importance of teamwork can not be stressed enough, as the benefit from getting guidance and advice from more seasoned event organizers was fundamental for the success of the execution of the activity. I also learned how to change the kind of discourse taking into account it's audience, after the unsuccessful promotion of DSI/RNL Service workshop. The language used should have been less factual and more familiar. I also analysed the means of communication used while performing the activity, reaching to the conclusion that it also has an impact in the work flow. As a whole, the skills I acquired/improved, although not being technical, can help to speed up the tasks of future activities.

The Abstract should not exceed 200 words and should not be an introductory text on the subject of the report, but a summary of the whole report, describing what the author(s) did, how it was done, the main results and their importance. It should be discursive and not just a list of topics covered in the report.

Index Terms—Communication, Event, Organization, Professionalism, Time Management, Teamwork.

1 INTRODUCTION

THIS report has the purpose to present an analysis over the soft-skills acquired and improved during the development of the activity, in the scope of the Independent Studies course at Instituto Superior Técnico (IST). Section 2 explores the idea of ownership of a task and in what way that can turn out to be motivating and a means of responsabilization. Sections 3 and 4 describe the way I organized myself in order to push through my tasks in a timely and progressive manner. In Section 5 I analyze the need for teamwork and in what way it was beneficial to the success of my activity. Section 6 exposes the fact that the means of communication we choose can have an impact in the progress of an activity, featuring a small discussion on the choice of the appropriate one. Section 7 addresses the

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need to express ideas in a correct manner and the importance of adjusting the way we write and speak, according to the situation and interlocutor. In Section 8 it is discussed the ability to ask for help versus the incapability of doing so in behalf of a given goal. Section 9 presents the conclusions of this analysis, where I reflect about the way I can perform better after the execution of my activity.

2 OWN YOUR TASKS

Since the beginning of the execution of my activity I was motivated to perform well in my tasks. Unlike some tasks which can be generally split in a team, such as publicizing events that come to Núcleo de Estudantes de Engenharia Informática do Instituto Superior Técnico (NEIIST) promotion list, workshops would only come to life with my own effort of organization. The task I performed in Semana Empresarial e Tecnológica (SET) also had very specific objectives to consider: I would need to contact "my" companies and speakers.

This idea of ownership of a task helped me to

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carry on in moments of high workload where relegating these tasks in favor of other course's work seemed the easy way out. In the long run, this relegation would end up in stressful situations. For starters, setting the right date is a process that takes some time, involving the search and avoidance of evaluation dates and registering possible backup dates. Requesting the appropriate room also needs to be considered, as one has to make sure it has all the conditions deemed necessary for the success of the event. To find and agree on dates with speakers must also be a priority, since they must have enough time to prepare their presentation. Having backup dates ready was helpful, once the event is also dependant on the availability of the speakers and that can be negotiated, providing there is more than one possible date to set up the event.

The concept of owning a task can also be seen as a moral duty. I would rather prefer to receive feedback on how my task was performed successfully than to receive feedback on how poorly and careless it was performed. The progress shown in one's task can also be used to measure one's competence, effort and responsibility.

3 FROM TO-DO TO DONE

Once the events organization often overlapped with important SET contacts, I felt the need to plan ahead the tasks I should perform. Setting (usually daily) deadlines for myself was a way to assure tasks at hand would be taken care of timely.

I was not fond of To-Do Lists until the amount of information I had to keep was just too much and I instinctively began to write down all these dates, contacts and logistic issues that should be taken care of. During the execution of my activity, I would often receive some briefing about the ongoing work at SET. There was a time when I was requested to perform extra contacts. Once again, setting a deadline and keeping note about what I should do was fundamental to keep a balance in the workload. As time passed, the scratches across the To-Do List did not only convey a sign of progress but also a feeling of self-achievement which

boosted my motivation throughout the activity. This personal organization made it easy to understand, at a given time, exactly what had already been done and what I should be focusing next.

4 FILL THE GAPS

One of the skills I improved was time management. I filled little spare times throughout the day in order to be able to get coordination efforts and contacts flowing. I performed more daunting tasks of the To-Do List (like checking dates and requesting rooms/equipment) at night, once these requests do not typically demand an answer.

While working at SET, being conscious that I was occupying someone else's time when I established contact with a speaker/company, I always tried to answer as quickly as possible. By following this method I think I was able to keep companies and speakers engaged in the message I was trying to convey. I also avoided the problem of accumulating and performing contacts at late hours when besides looking unprofessional, I think I would not get an answer until the next day.

5 UNITED WE STAND

During our lives we may feel like we can do everything and get it right, without needing the help of other people. Often this assumption is wrong and we do need help from others to achieve common goals. While performing my activity I could state that an event like SET or a multiple session workshop like the one I co-organized, can be hardly if ever achieved by one person only.

I felt teamwork is essential in order to take care of the several tasks involved in organizing and promoting an event of this sort. As the schedule for organization and promotion is not unlimited, it helps if the work is split between collaborators and each one gets his part done. However, sometimes the work of one is dependant upon the outcome of the results another has obtained. As such, it is of vital importance to keep the wheels turning so that the join task at hands is not compromised. A contextualized

example can be the one of the organization and promotion of the Android workshop. I had to find speakers, set a date and request a room, before Núcleo de Estudantes de Engenharia de Telecomunicações e Informática (NEETI) could design the poster so that IEEE-IST Computer Science Student Branch (IEEE-IST) could build up a text and initiate the promotion of the event, alongside NEIIST.

Having a team to work was also of great benefit once I was performing this activity for the first time and many of the procedures were unknown to me. Vânia Mendonça of NEIIST did an amazing job at compiling and publishing the sets of steps necessary to make a workshop come to life at IST. Besides learning about the entities inside IST to recur to given a certain need, I was also given the opportunity to learn the process of making such an event come to life through a seasoned collaborator.

6 THE MAILBOX IS FULL

The Android workshop involved so many details since day one that the exchange of e-mail grew exponentially. Besides contacting the speakers and requesting a room has it had happened in DSI/RNL Services workshop, I had the effort in coordination with NEETI and IEEE-IST. Trying to keep the organization as professional as possible, our mean of communication was e-mail. In some situations, the questions/answers were so small and situational I almost felt like having a delayed chat conversation with my recipients. Also, with the natural longer response times (as many times the behaviour is to send the e-mail and close the browser window), I came to realize we were not using the correct means of communication. Carina from NEETI felt the same and we started to trade messages via a chat application.

Aspects like this can seem unimportant but I felt an increasing sense of productivity when we switched our mean of communication. Having this in mind, this adaptation helped to increase our work output, discussing in minutes what previously would take hours. Therefore, in future activities, I hope I can identify sooner

this kind of "bottlenecks" and solve them accordingly.

7 THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

While performing this activity I had the need to get in contact with several people from several ages, roles and occupations. Even if the message that is supposed to be conveyed is the same, the way it is spread can make the difference between fulfilling our objectives or not.

In my case, I had two main groups of people I should approach. In one hand, I had all the student community, potential attendees to the workshops I was organizing, while in the other I had CEO's and Public Relations personnel targeted for SET, as well as people working in several entities of IST.

While students tend to be addressed in a more relaxed way when compared to people in professional roles, I realized that the common practice around student groups is to address students in a familiar way, in a way to convey a more personal relationship such that they can see themselves as part of a group, even if not directly inserted into it. When promoting DSI/RNL Services workshop I can now state that the text I have written as invitation was a little too much formal, stating facts, themes, it's usefulness. The invitation text written by IEEE-IST for the Android workshop was much more easy-going and cheerful, conveying the notion that it would be shameful not to think of it, let alone not to attend.

The contacts I performed on behalf of SET were always at a very professional level. While trading e-mails, I have always written in a very professional way, making sure i covered all the topics needed/demanded by my interlocutor. Even so, with the associated weight of sending a message in behalf of the SET group, I felt the need to double check the e-mails sent in order to guarantee it's correctness. I believe I improved my ability to write in a professional way, while making myself clear and straight to the point.

Even if more telephone calls are to be done on behalf of SET, I was contacted by Ordem

dos Engenheiros - Região Sul in order to obtain more information about the sponsorship models SET is trying to obtain. Once again, using an adequate language and making myself clear i was able to clarify that subject cordially.

Being able to pass a message successfully and to have the ability to keep an interlocutor engaged in the conversation is more like an art than a science but I think I did a good job at it. As it stands at the time of this report, three of the SET confirmed and promoted speakers are those whom I contacted.

8 HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

The lack of electrical extensions stated few days before the Android workshop in Alameda was something that only crossed my mind after having a talk with Vânia. After persistently directing myself to several IST entities for about two days, there seemed to be no electrical extensions to borrow in Alameda campus, as I continued to receive negative answers. This fault could jeopardize the entire event.

This was the time I most felt the need to ask for help, since I already had asked several entities for supporting material. Asking for help should not be seen as an inability to do something but an opportunity to learn and/or solve a problem before putting a goal at stake. I asked Gonalo and Vânia for help.

Gonalo replied to me saying that he would check with Laborat3rio de Apoio  Gest3o de Actividades Extracurriculares dos Estudantes (LAGE2) and Vânia advised me to contact Departamento de Engenharia Inform3tica (DEI) directly. Both of these entities ultimately had the material I was looking for, and the solution for possibly the most stressful situation in my activity execution was found. Again, this reinforces the fact that an event must be prepared in a timely fashion to address inconveniences, and that a call for help must be made as soon as a problem is found in order to minimize or avoid it.

9 CONCLUSION

The activity I developed throughout the semester has been a way to improve some soft-

skills that are useful to one's personal development. Other than learning about the procedures that enabled me to fulfill my activity, at the logistic level, I had the opportunity to improve main skills like teamwork, time management, coordination, persistence and communication. These skills, although not being technical can help to maximize the work progress and output throughout the activity's execution.

While I feel like the professional contacts with companies and speakers on behalf of SET were successful, I must assume that the promotional text I have written for the DSI/RNL Services was not the best gather attendees to the event. Therefore, I hope that I can write a better promotional text for the next event I shall organize alongside NEIIST, taking into account the target audience who may not be used to a more formal kind of language. The objective shall be avoiding a text which would feel dull and excessively factual.

As far as teamwork goes, I think it is beneficial when every part fulfills its role. The importance of asking for help should not be discouraged for questions of self pride, when not doing so can impact a greater good. To conclude this report I must state that the opportunity to learn and improve my behaviour at a professional level is invaluable, not only to continue my tasks at SET but also to have the ability to contact any other entity who requires such kind of manners.

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Diogo Barradas is a 21 years old student at IST. He has completed his Bachelor's degree in Information Systems and Computer Engineering and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Information Systems and Computer Engineering, majoring in Distributed Systems and Enterprise Information Systems. He has a keen interest in information security and digital privacy.