Mikhail Joseph T. Agudo

Being Independent

The communications course has helped me learn things that I never learned in the one and a half years I've been trying to break into the industry. It was an interesting experience for me, because no one has ever tried to tell me what I should do in a corporate environment. My main takeaway is this: be an independent productive person.

And it honestly makes sense because when it comes to work, there should always be some high degree of independence coming from each employee. If everyone started becoming too dependent, the organization would fall apart. For example, what if there was a problem? Someone who's less independent and more passive might not be able to solve the problem on their own. They would constantly need the guidance of their superiors or their teammates.

Just thinking about it makes me feel disgusted. At myself. Not because I lack confidence, but because about three to four years ago I worked as a service desk support for a government agency, while I was in college. Sometimes I constantly asked my supervisor to help me on a particular something. At the time, I didn't know the kind of mistakes I was making. Looking back, I remember that his face would kind of contort sourly whenever I ask for him. Fortunately for me, he was also kind and I think he just tolerated me in general.

Independence I think shouldn't even be the golden standard. It should be the bare minimum. I think it also serves as the foundation for many of the principles taught in the course. Being independent also entails that I may have my own interpretations on certain things, which if properly combined with inspiration and others' perspectives; would allow me to go extra miles, which is one of the core values.

Being dependent would mean the opposite. I am dependent on my superiors, and would subsequently mean I would be dependent on what I am told. This would mean I am merely following instructions, and not really trying to make something that can be an improvement to the project, task and/or goal.

Independence is also a precursor to being proactive. To be proactive is to seek how much more one can contribute to the overall goal. Once tasks are done, it should be the standard to ask for what else you can do to help out. Similar to what has been mentioned of the dependent worker, they cannot be proactive. To be dependent on what's told or what's expected entails that the dependent worker cannot do anything outside of that scope.

Honoring commitments also mean that one is independent enough to be able to create their own commitments and accomplish them in a timely fashion, preferably in a way that goes above and beyond the call of duty.

Avoiding judgments also requires the independent mindset, because in being proactive and in going the extra mile, the independent worker shows that they can put themselves in a different perspective to accomplish more. Being able to put oneself in the situation of another person gives the independent worker the capability to avoid making unnecessary and possibly quick judgment of character.

Those who are independent can also own their mistakes. They recognize that consequences can result from actions that they have taken upon their own volition; and that mistakes attributed to themselves should be attributed to them. They also recognize that mistakes are the way to growth, and do not shy away from it. Because to commit mistakes means it is highly likely that one went out of their comfort zone; which always has a good chance of improving people.

Honesty is also a trait of the independent mindset. I think honesty is connected not only because of honesty itself, but also because of the opposite. Being dishonest contradicts many of the core values. Commitments must be made realistically, and must be owned up to when not followed through. Even owning up on mistakes requires honesty.

It's also not just independence that's connected to honesty, but also another foundation. "Being vs. Portraying". If one is dishonest, they may be able to show "who" they are to others in the short term. But in the long-term, the dishonest worker's ugly truth is revealed in bits and pieces.

These principles have led me to consider how I would act not only in a work environment but also in the everyday environment. I think it's generally healthy to keep these lessons in mind, in everyday life.

Going forward, I would say that now I am a level 4 communicator (out of 10). Whereas in the past I'd be a mere level 2 communicator. I've learned much about communication in the professional environment, and I hope to apply them in the future. Perhaps I would rate myself level 6 after a year of practice. Best case scenario level 7. I would not go over that though, because learning communication is a life-long journey. I think the highest that anyone can ever achieve is level 9. If someone claims that they're a perfect level 10, I might not believe them. No one can be perfect in communication.

Over the next year, I'd definitely focus more on being proactive and going the extra mile. And that's because for most of my life I have always been that one passive guy in the corner. Only showing himself in stressful times of need, but only during those times.

I want to change that. I've always been shy. And it doesn't mean I have to completely erase my shyness, I just think I have to reduce it from 90% to maybe 30%. Just enough so that I keep trying to get out of my comfort zone.

For starters, I'll try to do things I never usually did in the past. Maybe I'll volunteer for more. I'll volunteer to present in the Zoom meeting. One of the things I'm doing right now is that I try to help other people in group 4, which is definitely something I wouldn't have done last year.

Not only does this help reinforce what I learned, but it also lets me interact with people more, which is really the best practice for communication.

The scenario that struck out to me the most was the one about family emergencies. That I should update my supervisor about the entire situation. My first thoughts were that it felt acceptable that someone wouldn't update the supervisor or the company until Monday. I was completely wrong. Why? Because it really is just that easy to spend half a minute or so sending a message about the situation so far. And it honestly makes sense. This scenario I think helped me put my perspective into that of superior's, and also teammates'. Because not updating them about the situation until Monday when it's a problem that may bleed into work, is unforgivable.

These are all what I have learned from the course, condensed. I find that a lot of the core values relate to being independent, which is one of the things that I have to work more on. I realized that I am a work-in-progress even more so now than I thought a couple of months ago, and it's all something I'll work on in the next couple of months and even years.

Appendix

Power Outage

1. **What communication would you send out to your project manager/supervisor? Would you send this after the power comes back or would you send this communication before the power comes back? How many hours after the power outage would you send this email?**

Assuming I work in a regular office, I would give this about an hour. Sometimes power outages only take a couple of minutes, so it seems like a waste of time to immediately tell the supervisor about it. I think an hour without electricity disrupts work just long enough, so it would be worth notifying my supervisor.

If there are subsequent outages in the same day, I might wait until the end of the day to notify about the power outages; in the mean time I'll try to work as much as I can if at all possible.

My email might go something along these words:

> "Hi Supervisor,
>
> I would like to notify you about my current circumstances. I have had several power outages today and it was enough to disrupt my work. I did all I can to finish my tasks, but not having access to the internet does delay me at times. I'll extend my work time in the next couple of days to make up for it, unless you would like to advise me differently? Thank you for reading this, and hope you have a good day.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Mikhail Joseph Agudo"

2. **Say you were mentoring someone else in the Village and this person failed to send any type of communication back to the supervisor/team till Monday morning. What advice would you give this person?**

I might set up a quick meeting with them at the end of the day, about 15 minutes should be ample time. I'll ask if there was anything that happened over the weekend, to try and get some context if there are any. Then I'll mention that they should at least spend about 10 seconds to 1 minute sending back a simple message saying that they received the supervisor's message. I think anyone should be capable of at least that. This lets the supervisor know that things are good on your end and has received the message.

3. **How would you make up for the lack of progress and the lack of hours you've put into the project? How would you communicate this to the supervisor? Or would you just assume that it's okay not to make up for these hours as it's already Saturday your time?**

I'll extend my work time, and also work extra on the weekends. If I lacked hours, it might be because of poor time management or because of some extraneous variable. If I fail, I'll accept it and the consequences along with it; and if asked I will mention everything that affected my lack of hours.

4. **If you missed any important deadlines for the project due to this, how would you make up to your supervisor/team for this lack of progress? How would you communicate this?**

I think I'd work more than usual, extend maybe an extra hour every day. I'll apologize to the supervisor about what happened. When asked, I'll explain what I think may have caused me missing my deadlines.

Then I'll also send an email, something like this:

> "Hi Supervisor,
>
> I have messed up. < explain what happened, step by step in a summarized manner >. I will work extra to make up for this, but I'd also like to know how you would like me to do this? I'll do my utmost best, and next time I will also do better so something like this won't happen again.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Mikhail Agudo

A New Project

You are very new to the company and your supervisor has given you a new project. This communication was done over Slack and your supervisor gave you some general instruction for the project but you still had a lot of questions/confusions about the project. Your supervisor was expecting you to finish this project by Wednesday the following week but you haven't really made that much progress on the project yet, due to other projects you were working on and because your supervisor is known to be extremely busy and you felt shy asking for some time to go over the project.

Please answer the following questions:

1. **What went wrong with this scenario?**

2. **What could you have done to improve this situation?**

3. **What would you do to rectify this situation?**

If you could have gone back in time to a week before (when the supervisor first gave you that project and you had some uncertainties/questions back then), draft what that email communication would have looked like.

What went wrong was that there was a lack of communication. There was a confusion yet it was never voiced to the supervisor. People don't have psionic mind reading abilities, so I think, if after double-checking all information I would send an email. I will give the gist of what I understood, and then proceed to ask specific questions about the new project.

To rectify this, I think I would still email the supervisor. I would not say that it's been a week since I've been confused, but perhaps I'll just say that I would like to confirm what the project is about, and if they would like me to do the other projects as well.

If I could have gone back in time, the email I would send would be something like:

> "Hi Supervisor,
>
> I would like to ask about the new project you have given me, <project name>. From what I understood, < explain how I understood the instructions > but I am still a bit confused on certain things. I would like to ask < questions >.
>
> I would also like to confirm if I should continue working on the other projects: < other projects' names >. Please advise me. Thank you in advance.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Mikhail Joseph Agudo

Project Deadline Passed

A supervisor has given you a project and asked you when you think you can have the project completed. You answered next Wednesday. You've worked hard during your usual 40 hours/week and next Wednesday has come but you have not quite finished your project yet. Wednesday comes around and your supervisor has seemed to have forgotten about this project and have not followed up with you yet on this project. It's now Friday, and your supervisor still hasn't asked you anything about this project!

Please answer the following questions:

1. **What went wrong with these situations?**

2. **How could you have handled this situation better?**

3. **If you were to go back on time, when would you go back to and what email communication would you send and why?**

4. **Who was ultimately responsible for this project being completed? Who should have followed up first? The supervisor or you?**

If you could go back to Friday the previous week (before the project was due), what would you do differently? Draft an email communication to your project manager.

If you could go back to Tuesday (the day before the deadline), and assuming you've done absolutely your best to finish the project but just weren't able to, what email would you draft to the communication to your project manager? Draft that email now.

There were no updates with the supervisor. The employee has not even tried to update, even after the deadline, which seems dishonest to me.

I would try to update at least once a week, and then when I miss the deadline, I'll send an email regarding what happened and how I failed. Then say something like "I am still working on the project, and I would also like to know how I can make up for my mistake. I am very sorry that this happened. Next time I will manage my time better and also set expectations for myself much better."

I was ultimately responsible as I was the one working on it, and was also the one who promised I could deliver on Wednesday. I should also be the one to follow up, because it's my duty to let them know how things are going along.

If I could go back to Friday, I would say something like:

"Hi Supervisor,

I've been working on the project I was given, and here are some details on what happened. < details on the progress so far >. Have a good day.

Sincerely,

Mikhail Agudo

If I were to go back to Tuesday, I'd send an email like:

"Hi Supervisor,

I have been working on the project you gave me last week. I have done my utmost to finish it, but I'm afraid I am still behind schedule. I don't think I'll be able to finish tomorrow. I did manage to make decent progress, here's the summary of what's been going on so far: < summary of details of the project >

I would like to make up for my mistake somehow, if there are any additional tasks that I may be able to do after I am done with this project; and also request an extension of the deadline to < realistic deadline >.

Sincerely,

Mikhail Agudo

Meeting Scheduled

Your supervisor wanted to meet with you at 3 pm (over Zoom) to go over a few items. It's 3:05 pm now but your supervisor hasn't shown up yet. It's now 3:15 pm now and your supervisor still hasn't shown up yet. You log off from Zoom and continue with your work.

Please answer the following questions:

1. **What went wrong here?**

2. **If you were super proactive in your communication, what would you have done? What message would you send your supervisor and when would you send this?**

Draft the communications you would send to your supervisor and when you would send each of these communications.

Supervisors can be busy, and they may have forgotten. The correct approach should be to send a friendly message that I am at the Zoom meeting and am waiting for them. I think an email may not be appropriate, so a message on Slack or Discord should be enough.

Another thing is that it should be possible to work while waiting on Zoom.

Hi, Supervisor. I am waiting at the Zoom meeting right now. I'll continue my work in the mean time. < smiley face >

A New Consulting Project

Mark has been assigned a new project for a client named John. Mark is the only person working on the project from your company. Mark reports directly to a client who directly manages the project and who is also acting as the project manager. Mark is supposed to do both the front-end and the back-end work for the client.

Mark is new to this project and although Mark has talked to the client a few times, it's not clear what the client expects from Mark, what work Mark should be doing each day, or when they would be meeting, etc.

As you're new to this project, you want to establish a good working relationship with the client also and show that you're talented and you're proactive. Draft your email to the client where you can communicate your excitement about the project and where you can ask appropriate questions to the client. Also, specify when you would send this communication and why you've picked that timing.

I would send this email the next day. As much as I'm excited to work for them, I'd also like to know what exactly I should be doing and when we should meet.

Here would be my draft:

Hi Client,

The new project has really gotten me excited about working with you! Reading over the details has really gotten me pumped up. That said, I would also like to confirm some things based on what we have talked about so far.

< questions about what they expect of me >

< questions on anything specific that they would like me to do >

< any time or day we should meet up? >

Sincerely,

Mikhail Agudo

Major Error

You were responsible for a lot of important features for the project but something happened where you lost all the user data for the last four weeks. This had really put a big setback for the project and you have suspicions that your website may have been hacked, causing these errors. You have also forgotten to back up the database but you aren't sure whether you want to communicate this to the client as it may make you look weaker. You admit that you could have done things better on your end to handle these types of scenarios but you were just busy, burned out, and frankly, you were already doing a lot of extra things for the clients anyway! The client is not that technical and doesn't even know that a database could be backed up automatically so bringing this up may only make the situation worse.

The client is furious and you're afraid to speak to the client as you know the client will be upset.

Would you wait a few days, until the client cools down, to talk to the client? Would you wait until the client comes and talks to you to arrange a meeting? If you were to draft an email to the client now, what would you say?

I will communicate immediately.

> Hi Client,
>
> There has recently been an attack on the servers, and this has caused the loss of four weeks of user data. I am looking into solving this right now. I will get back to you soon.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Mikhail Agudo

I would probably not mention the back up unless they specifically ask me about it.

Sickness of a Family Member

Your wife suddenly feels sick. She could not stand up due to a headache and dizziness. She needs to lie down and needs assistance when going to the bathroom or when eating. You have just finished a meeting and a task needs to be completed within the day.

- What would be your plan in this situation?

- **What would you do if helping your wife means you won't be able to complete all the tasks for the day?**

- **How should you communicate this with your supervisor and with your teammates?**

My general plan would be to do as much work as possible while helping her. If it means I won't be able to finish my tasks, I would still try to do my best for the day. Just for this one situation, I'll extend perhaps up until midnight.

I'll tell my team and the supervisor, through an email:

Hi <team name or supervisor>,

I would like to give a heads-up on my situation today, and what may be for the continuing days. My wife has fallen sick and I do not think I would be able to completely focus on my tasks. I have done my best tonight and have spent additional time to catch up and make sure I finish the tasks.

Just thought I should let you all know.

Sincerely,

Mikhail Agudo

Mental Health Concern

Steve woke up feeling very down. He does not have an appetite to eat breakfast nor he doesn't want to go to work. He feels there's no sense in going to work or even doing anything else. He just wants to sleep the whole day. He has been feeling this for the past 3 days. Steve tried to report for work and do the tasks assigned to him, but he seems to get things wrong. The quality of his work is not the same as it used to be.

- **What do you think is happening here?**

- **If you were Steve's supervisor and you noticed the change in Steve's output after 3 days, what would you do?**

- **If you were Steve, how are you going to communicate this to your supervisor and teammates?**

Something big may have happened to Steve that caused him to feel this way. Another thing is that he might have been burned out because of something from work.

If I were his supervisor, I'd arrange maybe a 15-minute or 30-minute meeting to discuss with him what's been happening recently. I'll tell him specifically that it's about his recent output in the past 3 days, so that he could adjust expectations and prepare for it. I'd like to know about the context, and as well as set things up to help him along the way. Maybe let him get a vacation (I don't know much about management, but I think this can be a decent solution)

If I were Steve, I'll just own up to my mistakes and tell my supervisor and my teammates that I will do better next time. For me, I have ways to motivate myself; people that I look up to in life. I always look at them whenever I feel down. Some of them I know personally and have talked to for advice in life; so I'll just remember their advice and fire myself up.

Teammate Not Following the Policy

Mimi is new to the company. She is very excited to be involved in new projects and to learn from her teammates. She reads the company policy provided by HR, but she noticed that Matt, a tenured teammate is not following the policy. Matt always goes out during work hours in the afternoon and would return after 1-3 hours. Her Mimi got confused because she read in the policy that an employee is only allowed at most 30 minutes of break in the afternoon. She asked Matt where he was going and Matt told her he normally meets his friends. Matt also told Mimi that it's okay and he just needs to offset the missed hours in the evening. Their supervisor is working remotely and he is busy managing other employees.

- **What is wrong with this situation?**
- **What should Mimi do?**
- **To whom and how should Mimi communicate this?**

I think it was the wrong move for Mimi to involve herself even just a little bit with Matt. The correct approach is to let Matt be. It is not Mimi's job to try and do something, and even Matt himself mentioned that he makes up for it in the evening. There is a good chance that the supervisor already knows about this.

Unpredicted Added Task

Story points are already estimated and you have already talked with your team regarding the tasks you should work on. Deadline is approaching and you think that you will make it in

time with the pace you're going(working at least 50hrs/week). But a day before the deadline, you encounter a task that requires RnD and you have no idea how long this RnD will take you.

- **How will you communicate this with your team?**

- **After the RnD, you found out it will take at least another day to finish the task. How will you say it to your team and your supervisor?**

- **If you are a team leader, what would be your response to this kind of situation?**

- **What do you think is the possible solution to make it to your deadline?**

I'll try to do what I can before the day of the deadline, and then tell my team through an email what's been happening to me so far, and that I've tried but I'm not sure how long I'll take to do this task.

After finding out how long I'll really take, I'll tell my teammates immediately as well as the supervisor, about my current situation. Most likely at the end of the day once I've tried doing it.

One solution I see is to simply do more hours. If it's going to take another day, then work an equivalent amount of hours to catch up.

If I am the team leader, I would think that perhaps next time I should ask my teammates to see if they could do their tasks in a reasonable amount of time. I won't feel angry or any strong emotions towards my teammates especially if this is the first time. If this happens again though, I think I would be justified if I reacted strongly.