# Summary

This personal development module has helped me formalise and reflect upon several aspects of my character, based on my past experience. I have examined the role I have within my team, and the parts of my job I enjoy the most, using Belbin’s category model. I currently feel I am predominately a Resource Investigator. This is a useful role within a software team, as new libraries and techniques are constantly being developed. I am a moderniser: I like to look at the team’s current practises and find new ways of improving them. I really enjoy the times we get as a team when a solution is not yet clear, and we have time to explore different ideas. Recently I helped a fellow team member, whom I regard as fulfilling the role of a Plant in this instance, investigate a graph database solution and present it to the rest of the company. The category model informs me I may lose enthusiasm once a project is established. This is true: I generally rely on Completers and Co-ordinators to make sure I do not get distracted. Before I worked at BT, I completed a software project on my own, but I went through several rewrites, not because the problem was changing, but because I would get so far before becoming convinced I needed to start again. This model has helped me reflect on my past experiences and learn from them.

I have been through all the stages of Bloom’s pyramid while working on both my software and my musical skills, but I have spent more time in the higher sections in the realm of software than in music. Comparing the two experiences demonstrate the importance of shape of the pyramid: I feel I have far more knowledge and comprehension of software development, because of my voracious study of software development when compared with music.

I also see the importance of senior developers on my team: their evaluations are valuable since they are based on the other categories in the pyramid. I can learn from them what to base my evaluations upon in the future.

When writing and performing music I am often paralysed by doubts about plagiarism or originality, and my knowledge of music is unfocussed and patchy. As a result I do not get as far up the pyramid, and I do not base my own creations upon the study of those who have gone before me.

By contrast, when writing software I have no such anxiety, I regularly learn by looking at other's solutions before implementing my own. And I am more aware of strategies for adopting other's work, for example through libraries and package mangers.

Anderson and Krathwohl's addition of the Creating mode to the Bloom model further explains my past struggles to write music. In the past I have begun the compositional process from the mind-set that I could produce a finished composition from scratch based on nothing but inspiration. This pyramid demonstrates an alternative path, with evaluation of others works a crucial prerequisite step to creation of new material. In the future I shall write a piece for the Hadleigh orchestra that is based on a study of compositions I admire.

From my analysis of my past experiences I conclude that at the moment my knowledge and comprehension make me most productive when writing software, while I am still developing and building my musical composition and performance skills. This will leave me a non-pressured environment in which to playing and write music, for example with the Hadleigh orchestra. They will allow me to grow my more instinctive learning style when playing music.

In terms of Kolb's axes, I feel I have an accommodating approach to music. I do not fare well when I analyse: I am at my best when I play instinctively. I have a converging approach to software development. I generally come up with an idea and then implement it.

I feel I have the accommodating approach when planning my life. This personal development module has been important because I have been encouraged to make the switch, if only temporarily, to a more divergent learning style when it comes to fulfilling my life goals. This is a crucial point as I believe that while I may have discovered a default learning style for my music and software learning, I also gain insight by changing styles temporarily.

The team I work with at the moment has a strong culture of personal development and learning that will further boost my knowledge and comprehension, while learning and imitating the senior developers will improve my evaluation skills.

I am fortunate enough to be receiving training and experience in the software industry, which has vacancies all over the world, generally commands a high salary, and includes work that has global impact. It is generally hard to project the direction the industry will develop, but within the business sector I would surmise that automation of repetitive tasks, and data analysis will be too extremely influential areas.

The training I am receiving predominately involves the creation of web-based applications for use within BT. The web application industry is split into two camps: start-ups and enterprise. Start-ups are mostly based in London, and generally have a reputation for high risk and high monetary reward. Several colleagues at BT have found significantly higher wages by joining such companies. Working at BT puts me in the enterprise camp at the moment, and I prefer this since enterprise generally promises better job security. My previous experiences tell me I do not cope well with having an unpredictable future. When I tried to become a professional freelance musician revenue problems played on my mind, even when my position was relatively risk-free.

BT's commercial priorities are split into two parts: the overall strategy for BT, and my team's strategy. At BT there are two main opportunities to be informed of wider strategic decisions and priorities: department-wide webcasts that anyone is welcome to attend. Here past events and achievements are discussed, and the overall direction of the company is described. My team rarely attend the larger scale webcasts run by senior management, since they are in my experience their scope is often too general to relate back to my own work. However, my team is visited regularly by the head of my department, and these visits generate useful discussion and encourage me to consider my team's wider role within BT.

From these meetings I gather that the company's long-term strategy is to drive profits by creating more and more reasons for people to own a broadband landline. This strategy does not appear to include any overall goals for fostering sustainable internal software development. Software development has been handled poorly in the past: the company is still recovering from a significant technical shortfall created by aggressive outsourcing. At a company level, software development at BT is largely about counteracting this shortfall, but fails to act on larger and more complex problems, such as software defined networking. Google use software defined networking to manage their database networks by centralising the control of their network away from their routing devices. By contrast, BT still has a large and complex network whose management falls far behind the industry’s cutting edge.

The strategy for my team, IP Applications, is discussed at quarterly team meetings. We have team retrospectives, which are designed to be examinations of our work practices, but they often turn into useful discussions about what the team should focus on next. These meetings make our targets very clear and that there are opportunities to develop our skills. We are encouraged to learn new techniques and examine and develop existing practices, and regular sessions are set aside for this essential development. Opportunities for further study have been discussed, including completing a Masters or PhD, in fields such as company data analysis and improving how data is processed on the web.

The importance of software development within BT is crucial to my future development within the company. My own beliefs match and have been influenced by the team I am currently working and learning from, and hopefully I will be able to continue my employment at BT while these priorities are spread to BT as a whole. However I am concerned that if the company does not modernise quickly, it will not be able to compete in the market and I will exhaust opportunities for further development within the company.

My long-term plan is to foster a good work-life balance and to develop my existing transferrable skills in software development by finishing my apprenticeship. I would like to stretch myself to manage a software project, and use my apprenticeship to find out as much about how the company does business and organizes itself. At the end of my apprenticeship, I would like to contribute to the overall course of software development within the UK, for example by working towards completing a PhD, or by joining a company applying data analysis or implementing software defined networking. As discussed above, this is the kind of work is the sort of work that could be found within BT if the company can modernise quickly.

I will hesitate before joining a start-up company, because of the stress this will entail. BT has given me a good platform for my work-life balance, and I hope to maintain this platform wherever I work in the future. My job has helped me to maintain what Carol Dweck calls a growth mind-set, where I view my skills and my position as mutable qualities that can be constantly challenged and developed. The apprenticeship scheme is a fine example of a programme that encourages this mind-set. Whatever happens in the future, I would like to maintain this mind-set as best I can.

# References

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