Interpersonal Skills – Alexandro Bolfa (331500)

Effective Teams

Throughout my studies at VIA University and during my internship at Schneider Electric, I have gained a strong understanding of teamwork effectiveness. Initially, I perceived teamwork primarily as task distribution among members. However, my internship and semester projects highlighted that team dynamics, communication, and collaboration significantly impact project success.

One relevant theory is Tuckman's stages of team development, which consists in five phases: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. In the forming stage team members are introduced and start understanding the project goals. During storming, the team members might have different opinions, leading to potential conflicts. As the team progresses to norming, members start to sort out their differences and build strong relationships with each other. In the performing stage, the team operates efficiently towards achieving its objectives. Finally, the adjourning stage involves completing the task and dissolving the team (Stein, n.d.).

During my time at Schneider Electric I found myself in various stages of team dynamics as outlined in Tuckman’s model. Initially, I faced challenges integrating into a professional software development team, driven by my desire to quickly show my productivity because this was expected from me in my previous work in a warehouse. My early impatience and frustrations aligned with the storming phase of team development. However, with the support and encouragement from my colleagues I successfully transitioned into the norming and finally the performing phases, where I prioritized effective communication and attention to detail instead of speed.

Additionally, during these two and a half year I have learned about my personal profile being mainly blue and green. The blue represents that I tend to be organized, structured and detail oriented and the green is about being people oriented, friendly, good at teamwork and willing to solve group conflicts. Therefore, I am also good at conflict resolutions. At VIA I have learned that if two persons are having a discussion, one person might feel that the discussion is going to escalate, while the other perceives it as a normal discussion (Kristian, 2023). Because of that, is important

that a third person steps in, to bring both discussion participants to the same level and avoid escalation. I have experienced a discussion at work and because of what I have learned at VIA, I knew what I was supposed to do.

Own Learning

Reflecting on my own learning process I can see how motivation, feedback, and reflection have deeply impacted my development. Schön's reflective practitioner model aligns closely with my experience.

According to Schön (1983), it is important to reflect on the action while doing the action and after the action is done. This leads to a continuous learning process by analysing the own experiences. Initially I was unfamiliar with Typescript and Angular CLI. I encountered significant challenges. However, by regularly reflecting on smaller tasks and bug fixes, I gradually overcame difficulties and improved my skills significantly. My reflection on learning new frameworks and languages helped me quickly transition from confusion to competence reinforcing the importance of structured reflection and proactive learning.

Moreover Dweck's (2006) growth mindset theory, supports that to have a growth mindset, challenges should be seen as opportunities to grow. During challenges it is common to have setbacks, but it is important to go through them rationally and taking the time needed, because if you focus on being fast and choose the first solution you find without reflecting on it, you might lose the opportunity to discover different approaches to solve the issue. This helped me shift my initial frustration about productivity into a focus on continuous improvement. Recognizing that the primary goal of my internship was learning instead of immediate productivity, reduced stress and improved my performance highlighting the importance of psychological factors in learning processes. I have learned that if you focus on learning instead of productivity, productivity is just a byproduct, because to be productive you need the experience.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Engaging with Problem-Based Learning at VIA has strengthened my ability to think critically, understand stakeholder perspectives, and work through problems in a structured, methodical way. During my internship at Schneider Electric, I experienced how these skills are essential in real-world development processes.

During the internship, I applied Scrum methodology, which promotes iterative development, constant feedback, and adaptability, core principles that are also emphasized at VIA. This approach helped my team remain flexible and responsive as we developed the "Insight Service" feature, asking stakeholder for feedback to improve scalability and maintainability.

Problem based learning at VIA also emphasized the importance of critical thinking. This involves questioning assumptions and evaluating evidence to reach well-reasoned judgments (Jabaker, 2023). When faced with new or unclear requirements, I learned to ask more targeted questions, evaluate assumptions, and consider alternative solutions before implementing changes.

Understanding the stakeholders behind each feature was just as important as understanding the code. This aligned closely with Freeman's Stakeholder Theory (1984), which highlights the importance of identifying and balancing the interests of everyone affected by a system. By conducting tests and engaging in requirements analysis, I gained deeper insight into the users' perspectives. This helped ensure our solutions were not only functional but also meaningful and user-centered.

This was also my first time having stakeholders in a project, since during the semester projects at VIA they were fictional. I can say that having them makes a big difference, since you as a developer get the satisfaction when you finish to implement the requested task, and they are happy about it.

Group Contract (Individual Contract)

Given that I am working alone on my bachelor project, creating a self directed group contract is important for ensuring accountability. Applying theories on self management and preventive risk management, will help in structuring my work effectively.

The contract includes structured weekly meetings for working on the project and progress checks. I have integrated clear milestones into my project plan for the Storage Connector application which involves integrating Google Drive, OneDrive and SharePoint.

The risk assessment in my project description, aligns closely with preventive action planning. Using a structured risk assessment matrix (impact and likelihood), I identified potential issues like API limitations and OAuth integration challenges. My mitigation strategies, involve alternative API planning, extensive OAuth research and iterative user feedback incorporation.

I am committed into putting all the required effort to complete this project and the first step for achieving this is to respect the project contract.

Reflections on Internship Experience

During my internship at Schneider Electric my responsibilities included frontend development with Typescript and Angular CLI. This experience increased my understanding of enterprise-level, application development, emphasizing scalability, usability, and security. Beyond technical skills, my internship significantly improved my soft skills - particularly empathy, patience and flexibility.

Working in a multinational company exposed me to intercultural teams, improving my communication skills and adaptability. I learned that empathic communication significantly affects team morale and. Understanding and managing my own and my teammates' emotions was important in creating a positive and effective working environment.

Empathy in Software Development

Empathy in software engineering, means understanding and sharing the feelings of end-users and team members significantly, influencing product usability and workplace dynamics. As future software engineers our responsibility involves continuously advocating for users, integrating empathy into design and development processes.

User centered design emphasizes empathy as very important for creating meaningful software. My project "Storage Connector" addresses user frustration from managing multiple cloud storage solutions. Employing empathetic design techniques such as personas and user journey mapping, ensures that the developed application meets the user needs providing ease of access and improved productivity.

Additionally, empathy within team interactions, creates an inclusive and supportive environment leading to higher job satisfaction and better performance. Practicing empathy, patience and being open to different perspectives during my internship, has showed me that these personal competences are very important for effective collaboration and successful project outcomes.

In conclusion including empathy into every phase of software development, from initial planning through iterative implementation and final testing is essential for creating impactful software solutions and a positive productive work environment.

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