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Mindset Reflection
MSMG 60150: Transformational Leadership Portfolio

I enjoy solving problems. I like pairing my communications and creative background with the business elements and acumen I have acquired. Whether it be at an internship, in class, or just in daily life, I regularly call upon my analytical and narrative mind to solve challenges I face. In doing so, I regularly implement an entrepreneurial mindset. One who seeks challenges, looks for problems and actively works to find solutions is someone who exhibits an entrepreneurial mindset, and I believe I carry that frame of mind with me in nearly every action I take.

One of the clearest examples of utilizing an entrepreneurial mindset in my life came when I was an intern at the National Football League. I was part of the league's inaugural "Seed Kit Challenge" where teams of interns were paired with a league department in order to solve business problems facing that group. My squad of interns teamed up with the youth and high school outreach team to figure out a way to connect with young athletes virtually during the coronavirus pandemic.

Being an entrepreneur does not mean you apply your previous skills and knowledge to areas you are familiar with. In fact, entrepreneurs are regularly tasked with trying to address problems they are completely *unfamiliar* with. In this case, I had no previous experience with youth outreach or football operations. All my previous experience was with public relations and football communications, which was the area I was hired to work with. However, given the circumstance, I was challenged to solve a problem for a brand new team. I chose to serve as the communications lead for my group, as I saw my skills best utilized if I could find ways to apply what I know to a new problem.

Throughout the ideation phase, we all collectively threw out tens of ideas. Although some ideas more practical than others, we saw great value in throwing out anything that came to mind. The challenge we faced was a major business problem for a reason – an answer was not easy to come by and took a great deal of thought, research and questioning to come to a solution.

This is a key to using an entrepreneurial mindset – do not be afraid to utilize others and analyze every detail before accepting it. Every member of our group brought to the table a unique perspective and an individual set of life experiences. We all had different areas of study and we each came from completely different parts of the country. An entrepreneur identifies the value in diverse skillsets and finds ways to maximize those valuable traits. When we started to hone in on a social media campaign for our project, we were able to call upon my background in public relations. Another member had experience in football operations and could explain the valuable points we should include in our content. Another member was a college football player and had a grasp on what kind of material would be valuable to a youth athlete. All this together made our initiative better than it would have been had we each worked independently.

I also learned that using an entrepreneurial mindset means that you cannot and should not accept the first idea, no matter how accurate it may seem for the problem at hand. In our initial phase of brainstorming, we came up with the idea for a “Play Football” app. The platform would feature games, content, and access to resources for parents, coaches and young aspiring football players to engage with the sport and improve their skills. As great as this idea sounded, we faced a brick wall when it came to its feasibility. The development of such an app would likely be quite expensive, and it would require an extensive timeframe for its completion. Even though we thought highly of the idea and had great components to go with it, the idea was just not the right solution for the specific problem we were trying to tackle. To adjust, we conducted more

meetings with our department sponsors and other league resources until we were able to take the strong components from the app idea and turn it into something more cost and time effective – a social media campaign. We could still share the content we had hoped while using free platforms where our audience already resided. This taught me that idea generation alone is not a sign of an entrepreneurial mind. An entrepreneurial mindset is exhibited by someone who can identify the best facets of *many* ideas and culminate it into the best and most feasible answer.

The final lesson I learned about the makeup of an entrepreneurial mindset is the importance communication plays. As a group, we put countless hours into creating our social media campaign. We had the right content; we were working with the right stakeholders, and we collected the necessary data to back up our solution. However, a good idea can only go so far unless it connects with the right audience. Our presentation to NFL executives needed to be just as thought out and as organized as the project itself for the league to understand it fully. A great entrepreneur can clearly share a problem that others might not even know exists. As a result, we spent nearly the entire week leading up to our presentation crafting the most well-rehearsed and persuasive presentation we could create.

These lessons learned will bolster my understanding of what it takes to carry an entrepreneurial mindset. Adaptability, problem identification, teamwork and clear communication are all necessary skills that an entrepreneur must know how to use and apply to a given circumstance. My internship experience provided the necessary challenges and opportunities I needed to understand and apply these skills to a real-world scenario, and I will always remember this experience as a time which improved my entrepreneurial mindset.