When I was working on the Lumii project, I was presenting to a bunch of stakeholders in a boardroom about the power of owning your own story. Lumii was personalized career agent for young Canadian youth with limited job experiences, and we uncovered a lack of self-discovery tools in the market. There were many products out there that helped people with their resumes or helped them find jobs, but none that aimed to empower young people’s existing experiences, albeit it be a job in a fast food restaurant or babysitting.

One of the corporate suit in the meeting, a very solemn and serious director who did not look up once during the presentation, piped up at the end to ask: “Why do you think people will care about these non-professional experiences?”

It was a good question, and I have to admit we as four co-op students may have come across a bit idealistic in our presentation. My teammates froze. I answered, discovering the words as I was spoke them:

I dropped out of university to pursue ballet. I didn’t realize it at the time, but when I look back now, that experience taught me discipline that no other job could have given me. Every job, or experience that I have had led me to be here in this room, and if I never took the time to reflect and discover the skills that I gained in each experience, I never would have made it here.

Lumii was an ambitious, well-researched yet idealistic product. It promised many things, but we had no real data to back up whether it worked or not. Whether our users truly self-discovered their skillsets and became empowered or not. However, I learned something very powerful about myself in developing the product.