

Assignment 1 Part 1: Professional Me

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This reflective paper will provide an overview of my current understanding, knowledge, and skills across two key professional domains: industry awareness and organisational competencies/transferable skills. Industry awareness is a critical aspect of a practising professional's job, which goes beyond the technical aspects of one's role. It involves a holistic comprehension of the industry's landscape, including its current trends, challenges, opportunities, and competitive environment. On the other hand, transferable skills are a set of non-technical abilities and organisational competencies that enable professionals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others. These skills are critical for success in the workplace and complement complex or technical skills.

Industry Awareness

Overview of IT industry

"Information Technology is currently the enabler of most services." (Chitechi & Otanga, 2020) It is a broad field with various categories of services involved in the research, development, and distribution of technology based on the needs of goods and services. This segment includes companies revolving around manufacturing hardware electronics, software development, computers, and other products and services related to information technology. A crucial attribute of this industry is that it is constantly evolving, with new products and services frequently introduced to target audiences with new and upgraded features.

Latest trends and developments in the IT industry and strategy for staying updated

Recent studies show that the rapid advancement of information technology necessitates identifying and implementing appropriate technologies. These technologies include cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence, blockchain, big data analytics, virtual and augmented reality, 5G networks, and others, which provide accurate and real-time efficiency that helps organisations stay competitive in the market (Hamed Taherdoost, 2022). Locally in Vietnam, the e-commerce and banking sectors have risen rapidly, accommodated by new web applications and software. To stay updated

with the latest trends and developments in the IT industry, I rely on various sources, such as news articles, blogs, industry reports, and social media platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn, to follow industry experts and thought leaders.

Key challenges and opportunities in the IT industry

IT innovations have led to challenges and opportunities for those wanting to join this field. Emerging technologies and new trends have also led to a wider skills gap, as IT employees not only need to master the fundamentals of their respective fields but also have to learn new technologies promptly. In addition, the post-COVID-19 area has witnessed a wave of layoffs, with 120,000 IT workers have been out of work only in the US (El-Deeb, 2023). Companies are also affected as they must manage more workloads with a big headcount cut to tighten financials. However, small companies can benefit tremendously from hiring talents laid off from large corporations like Meta or Amazon (Tandyana & Ayuningtyas, 2023). Workers who have easily transferable skills make them attractive candidates to prospective employers.

Aspects of the IT industry that can be tackled in the unit

To obtain easily transferable skills, we must hone our technical skills and refine our soft skills, essential communication, collaboration, and critical thinking abilities that transcend specific technical disciplines (Shuman et al., 2005). I am eager to delve deeper into ICT professionals' ethical and social responsibilities in this unit. How do professional codes and industry standards shape conduct and professionalism? What are the broader societal impacts of technology, from mental health to lifelong learning? Exploring these interconnected themes will help me understand the challenges and opportunities ICT professionals face in today's dynamic tech landscape. This knowledge will be invaluable in shaping my career path and becoming a responsible and ethical force within the industry.

Reflection on understanding of soft skills

Organisational competencies, soft skills, or functional skills

For further analysis of the success attributes in the workplace, we can expand on the terms and definitions of organisational competencies, soft skills, and functional skills. According to LaRue et al.

(2016), functional skills are a broad range of abilities needed to navigate everyday demands. They include self-care, domestic, community, vocational, recreational, social, and behaviour management skills. Soft and personal skills determine how we interact with others and solve challenging problems. Some examples are communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving. These are easily transferable skills used across companies and working fields. Organisational competencies is a broader term encompassing all the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to be successful within an organisation. It includes strategic thinking, decision-making, and adaptation to changes. The term focuses on the effectiveness in a specific organisational context.

Critical soft skills for a professional in the IT industry

In the IT industry, soft skills are as critical as technical skills. Some of IT professionals' most essential soft skills include communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. In the workplace, it is instrumental that we can communicate effectively with our colleagues, clients, and other stakeholders. IT professionals need to convey complex technical information to non-technical stakeholders in a way they can understand. Problem-solving is another essential soft skill for IT professionals. Technical work is such that engineers and developers are constantly solving complex problems. We must be able to think critically, analyse information, and develop innovative solutions to solve problems. The IT industry continually changes, introducing new technologies and methodologies. Therefore, adaptability is a must to handle unexpected situations and be flexible to adjust plans and strategies promptly.

Reflecting on my current soft skills and improvement plan

All soft skills must be sharpened throughout your personal and professional life in a life-long learning manner. However, my main focus for the foreseeable future is working on my verbal communication skills. Balancing work and studies in the IT industry often result in neglecting communication as I emphasise technical skills and new technologies. My verbal expressions can be unclear and awkward in various contexts, creating challenging situations when interacting with colleagues or university friends. Recognising the significance of interpersonal relationships, storytelling, comprehension, affirmation, and listening skills, I aim to navigate these challenges and boost confidence

in social interactions. Improved communication is instrumental in building relationships and expressing thoughts clearly, enhancing overall social experiences. I will commit to clarity and conciseness in speeches to improve my verbal communication, proactive presentation preparation, and master active listening techniques.

Steps for enhancing soft skills during the course

Enrolling in the INF20028 course presents a prime opportunity to elevate my readiness for the IT industry. I have devised a structured approach with defined steps and criteria to sharpen my soft skills. Engaging in class discussions will significantly refine my communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. A vital element of this process involves soliciting constructive feedback from the instructor, enabling targeted improvements in identified areas. Collaborating on group assignments will facilitate the achievement of teamwork goals. After completing the course, I will carefully reflect on my learning, considering my assignments and personal growth to assess my progress. As I concurrently embark on a new role as a software developer, insights gained from class materials and tutor feedback will be directly applied, fostering effective communication and collaboration with colleagues.

In conclusion, the IT field is a dynamic landscape of constant innovation and unique challenges. While driving progress, technological advancements also introduce complexities that demand adept problem-solving and adaptability. This underscores the crucial role of transferable and soft skills. In this course, I will embrace the significance of effective communication, collaboration, and continuous learning. Navigating the IT realm requires more than technical expertise; it demands a blend of interpersonal skills and adaptability. Reflecting on my journey, I recognise the importance of honing these skills for a successful and fulfilling career in an ever-evolving field that thrives on innovation and human connection.

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