1A

My top three skills that I would answer are communication skills, analytical mind and hard work. But based on the interviews I conducted, my top strengths come off as communication skills, being a stickler for superior quality work and the ability to constantly evolve based on feedback. Being good with numbers and problem solving and ability to work hard all were rated as the other traits I had, but clubbed as the core skills essential to my field (programming). My unique capability as stated by the five people I asked is that I try to excel, and also expect others to shoot for the same quality. Depending on the person in question, that can be annoying or inspiring. As one person put it, 'it is only because you are always willing to help, that you still are friends with colleagues- past and present'. Examples cited were exams I appeared for, where I also helped my classmates and friends, QA projects I worked on and recent graduate coursework (project based) that I undertook. In a nutshell, I am a hard taskmaster but also an inspiring one. Other traits that surfaced were that I work best when part of collaboration, am a good binding factor in teams and am big on feedback (which seems to be the saving grace as hinted implicitly).

1B

The area in which I want my leadership to best contribute is in personnel development and enforcing adherence to best practices and methodologies. Service industry thrives only based on two factors- personnel and consistent delivery. So, the core purpose of my leadership is to develop employees, train them in both skillsets and mindsets as well as foster a happier workplace- leading to improved work, attitude; consequently encouraging superior services and higher revenue. My leadership serves people and in turn garners bigger turnover through better quality software (by consistently using great programming practices), more users due to simpler and more appealing UX. Closely allied will be greater repute due to stress free project and people management. The leader I want to be is a person who is known for a strong work ethic, an attitude of ‘leading by example’ and striving for excellence, who is approachable and in general ‘nice’. Through my leadership, we will not only get greater income and market share but also committed, inspired and innovative employees. My leadership will be recognized for its values, fairness and innovation. Happy employees, means better software which equates to more number and scope of projects and that can improve the bottom line- profits.

2A

Representation of women in top positions in my industry (IT) is an alarming14% (2014) falling from 19% in the previous year. In my country, the representation in executive boards collectively in the entire workforce is a meager 5%. As a professional on break for parenting, I list here the numbers from my past organization - which is 30% on the Board of Directors but a mere 11% as regards senior leadership.

In my country, women find more opportunities in leadership roles in the fields of PR, HR, fashion, and beauty. They also rise better in non-profit organizations and as entrepreneurs. Sales, marketing and production are areas where women are grossly under-represented.

Sources:

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2B

(For this exercise, I interviewed Dr. Latha Venkataraman, a senior professor with over twenty years of experience, who teaches postgraduate students and also spearheads the Social Studies Department for an IB school. She also acts as a visiting Faculty and Advisor at multiple educational institutions. )

Asked about the various challenges she faced in her career, she mentioned that despite the existence of gender bias; she personally never faced it. She reasoned that her affable personality, unwavering determination and optimism, and disarming lack of ambition helped her circumvent any issues of bias and rise up the ladder. She added that she lets her experience and credentials (she holds numerous degrees and distinctions) to make a case for her. She elaborated that she constantly upgrades herself, asks or makes opportunities herself and forever performs beyond the expectations of her roles. This by itself makes her a leader and ensures success. Reminiscing, she briefly recounted how she got her first teaching assignment at an institute she had enrolled as a student, simply by asking if she could help one teacher with an unexpected injury. One lecture led to another, and before she knew it, she was accepting multiple offers. As she did then and still does now, to stay ahead of competition, she studies by night and keeps updating her degrees and skillsets.

She did affirm that due to various glass ceilings and subconscious discrimination, women couldn’t succeed with the traditional strategies that men can. But she points out that women can achieve success by employing their core strengths and unique skillsets. For instance, she says that she never did get a mentor, but she learnt by reading, listening and observing masters in her field and inspirational leaders. She simply became a mentor herself, as there were spheres in which she could greatly contribute to. She says that genuinely helping others succeed is a great way to grow your own circles of power and influence. Another point she added was that she constantly observes her own self and surroundings and tries to correct gender bias- whether direct or subconscious. This helps foster a better environment for everyone, including herself. She also goes out of her way to give women, especially those who are underprivileged or have not quite risen up the ranks, due to prejudices or bias, opportunities to succeed.

Hard work, a helping spirit, a curious and learning mind can overcome most hurdles in anyone’s way was her advice from personal experience.

3A

The self-assessment was quite thorough and the analysis of results was enlightening to me. My score was 60, so I am in the median of the ‘Excellent’ range.

I scored highest on the section- ‘observe others’ (14 on 15). I never realized that my habit of learning from the experience of others played such a vital role in building my self-confidence. I merely viewed second hand experience as information to be stored in memory; that might be useful, given the right context. Reading the details of how observing others can be helpful or impeding, depending on the outcome, has given me more awareness to better develop this habit.

My next high score was in the section - Developing Mastery Experiences (38 on 45). I am an analytical person by nature, who likes to break up her tasks into smaller assignments. It feeds my ambitious streak and gives me a sense of achievement and the knowledge- that I am slowly but surely progressing towards my goal. I was happy to note that these natural inclinations gave me a good score. I was alarmed though, at the point that ‘… success, if it comes too early will not always feed self confidence’. I have a mental note to myself to keep this fact in mind to make better decisions while breaking up large projects into smaller tasks. Also, the part about believing that my own effort led to success is an area where I need to work on a bit more. My gratitude at help received sometimes outshines my joy of succeeding even after expending lots of my own efforts. So again, point taken; though it will be hard to implement this shift in mindset.

My least score (8 on 10) was in the 'Manage Stress' section. I am a SAHM planning to resume work in a year or so. Given the competitive nature of my field (Computer Science), I am always trying to cram in studies and projects to keep myself in the loop while also caring for a young toddler. The resulting tight schedules and multi tasking does contribute to stress. I just did not realize how much it affects self confidence. So, have decided to double my efforts of reducing that stress with better techniques (I do some yoga and a lot of delegation).

Overall, I found the detailed assessment and explanation quite insightful. The tips are quite handy and practical, especially Bandura's theory.

3B

I can increase my influence with the three teammates who are neutral to me by first getting some basic information about them. I can ask to have informal chats with them (one at a time) and with one other teammate who has a positive opinion of me. This will help create a positive environment in which to at least bond. Using this incident as a precedent, more informal sessions can be made to become at least friendly acquaintances. Judging good moments, I can throw in the fact that I am on good terms with their boss and her superior in a non -threatening way. Interdepartmental meetings and sessions can be used to additionally showcase being on good terms with the said seniors and also demonstrate competency and talent. LinkedIn can be used to additionally strengthen the contact. By finding about their competencies through LinkedIn and through mutual friends, it will be easier to discern common professional interests and groups. Using these to make further conversations and demonstrate more skills will help to bring them around to a level of positive opinion about me, even if not a very excellent one initially. By bringing everyone on board, it will be easier to get consensus while expressing interest to join the team.

4

I wanted a kitchen set advertised in a moving-out sale in my apartment community. My price was twenty-five dollars (half of a new item). when I went to look and negotiate, I found that the toy was already promised to someone else for fifteen dollars. My BATNA was to either offer upto twenty five dollars or to walk away. For the other side, BATNA was obviously a better enticement but also a way to placate the person who had made the first offer. Noting other toys, I asked for the owner to club a plush toy (her asking price for it was five dollars- priced at a third of a new one) and give me both for twenty five dollars. I also asked her consider the fact that the first buyer had only promised to come but not shown up and sales are all about first come first serve anyway. Plus, she could simply state the truth- that someone gave her a better offer. Since, she was considering it, I even offered her exact change. We made the deal.

The experience made me feel quite heady because I do find negotiations unpleasant and unhappy. I concede too much to meet my demands. Plus, I am ecstatic as long as ninety percent of my needs are met. This mindset effectively translates into fewer rewards because to begin with, I got less AND I gave out more than necessary. So, this experience, though humble was a nice step forward for me. I hope to take more baby steps armed with the experience and positivity of this negotiation.

5

90 (85- child, 5- family); 10- self; 2- friends; 1- community

75 -family; 10- work; 5- self; 5- friends; 5- community

I find that my ideal life and current life balance is different only on two counts. First, that I do not work and second, that my family (to be accurate- mommy time) eats into all the other aspects of my ideal and healthy life balance.

Currently, majority of my time is spent in caring for my young toddler. I find myself neglecting all the other familial relationships. This has to improve and is already happening as I make my child more independent and catch myself from being too much of a helicopter parent. Thus, I can free up some of my time by switching from the role of exclusive caregiver to primary caregiver. Also, I am trying to work out occasions like play-dates, potlucks, family outings and get-togethers so as to spend time with friends and family at the same time. There is plenty of opportunity to club the two, as they are not mutually exclusive.

Another major chunk of my time is spent on keeping myself updated. As a SAHM, I keep studying, so as to ease my re-entry into the work environment. This can be rescheduled into community service. I do a bit of micro-volunteering. I have recently come across micro volunteering opportunities that also tap into professional skills like technical expertise to help NGO and communities in need of these very same services. Here again, there is scope for achieving multiple goals with the same activities.

With regards to transfer of skills, I find that this should be a fairly smooth transition. Since, I am calling on essentially the same skills sets, there is only one ‘learning’ as such to do. And that is to broaden my view of the kind of settings I am putting myself in. Like doing community projects instead of self projects to build up a technical portfolio. Or say, going for a trip with friends instead of trying to make a play date and a day trip. The challenge will be in maximizing my experience and involvement. Basically, I need to tweak my maximum segment and allot it into the other segments.

To me success means, having a well defined identity in all aspects of life- family, work, and self. All segments should co-exist in harmony and also each afford us a degree of satisfaction that each of us uniquely craves.

To achieve this success, I need to multi-task and keep my mind open to new and unusual opportunities and increase my involvement in all.

When I am successful, I will be able to inspire others to reach their goals as well.

Part I:

1. Five key valuable concepts from the videos and readings:

BATNA system: The techniques for negotiation and how to prevent myself from giving away too much while receiving too little was very helpful. Plus, the examples in the lecture and in the discussion forums completely resonated with me. So, I realize that there is plenty of room for improvement with a little thought and effort.

1. Five key takeaways from the assignments:

The negotiation assignment was invaluable because I learned that I can negotiate better with just a little bit of application and overcoming a rigid, negatively conditioned mindset. I am trying to apply the technique to all negotiations – personal and professional to get used to it.

1. Example of application of course concepts and assignment takeaways to my experience

Part II:

1. Five current core strengths:

Communication skills

Learnability and Adaptability

Striving for Quality

Feedback Driven Efforts

Analytical mind

1. Five new competencies/ skills to be enhanced/developed to achieve my vision and legacy:

-Improve my negotiation skills- using the BATNA system; try to have more control over the proceedings. Go into any dealing with awareness of areas that I can compromise on and key items that are non-negotiable.

-Learning of the different methods employed by leaders to counter the Double Bind Dilemma. The examples given were quite useful and strategic. Definitely, more study and careful application will help leverage my career.

-Need to enhance my esteem and self-confidence. Based on the readings and discussion forum, there are many ways by which I subtly undermine my own worth- be it for being accommodating, for bonding, due to societal norms. I need to scrutinize my actions and language and remove any subconscious phrases or actions that might be taking away from my capable, competitive and affable persona.

-Learn lingo of managers. Take up a course on managerial techniques.

-Keep myself updated on latest technologies and buzzwords by enrolling in online classes and subscribing to relevant groups and publications

1. Three knowledge areas to gain:
2. Three opportunities/ resources to find/ create:
3. Four persons (role and reason why they would be helpful) who can help find these opportunities: