**Professional Practice Assignment**

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**Computing**

**Introduction**

***Professionalism*** in today's word is essential, and one of the most significant factors in our level of success in a chosen career. It is a transparent display of ***attitude towards trade*** and our ***company***. According to Sylvia R., "a profession is an occupation, whose core element is work, based upon the ***mastery*** of a complex body of knowledge and skills" (Sylvia R. *2004*). Furthermore, professions are occupations that need an extended period of tutoring and training.

The word professional practice means the conduct and work of someone from a particular profession, and it defines a set of ***standards*** of how an individual behaves in the workplace, his performance, ethics, competence, training and so on that must be met to remain and succeed within the profession.



**Figure 1** - Equal Experts Logo

***Equal Experts (EE)*** is a London based company offering a wide range of IT solutions from web applications to mobile and data services. As a junior IT trainer of EE, I was given a task of organising a two-day seminar about security vulnerabilities in web-applications which will be open to the public and welcomes IT security experts from our business partners, freelancers as well as independent ethical hackers. Throughout the implementation of this conference, we will give demonstrations of several aspects of professional best practices and discussing their methodologies.

**Demonstrate different communication styles that you can effectively design and deliver a training event for a given target audience.**

Categorised as interpersonal (soft) skill, the capability to communicate information and knowledge accurately as intended is a fundamental skill that must not be ignored in any aspects of life, let it be personal or professional. Communication is the action of ***distributing information*** from one person to another person or people. "The field of communication focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media" (*Korn, C. J., 2000*). Throughout the preparations and delivery of the seminar, several channels of communication will be used.

When talking about communication, many people immediately associate to language and speaking in general; however, it is just the verbal or vocal channel of communication. To verbally communicate effectively, one must not only use a confident speaking voice and articulate well - so the ideas and information are ***transmitted clearly*** - but intently use active listening as well. While passive listening is the mere act of hearing a speaker without apprehending the message, ***active listening*** is a skill to concentrate entirely on a speaker, comprehend the information and respond thoughtfully. Active listening is applied through some practical techniques.

* By ***paraphrasing***the speaker, we have the opportunity to clarify obscure or vague information and summarise main points, which not only helps the comprehension of a topic but contributes to the process of better memorisation.
* The use of open-ended or specific ***probing questions***, confirm that we gathered the essence of what has been shared and encourage the speaker into sharing additional information or narrow down a broader subject.

Using body language, facial expressions and gestures that convey information is called the ***non-verbal communication*** channel, and it is often used instinctively rather than consciously. "The total impact of a message is equal to a 7% contribution from the verbal channel, a 38% contribution from the vocal channel, and a 55% contribution from the facial channel" (*Hegstrom, 1979*). Considering that ***more than half*** of our delivery comes through non-verbally, let's examine the impact and role it plays in communication. It can:

* Strengthen or repeat the verbal message, emphasising it.
* Contradict the message, indicating to the listener that we may not be telling the truth.
* Substitute for a verbal message. For instance, the facial expression often conveys substantially more expressive message than words.
* Complement verbal message. Pat someone on the back in addition to giving praise, increase the impact of appreciation.
* Accent a verbal message. Pounding the table can stress the weight of the situation.

We, at Equal Experts, utilised our knowledge of non-verbal communication when selecting our seminar-speaker by watching sample lectures from many candidates, scrutinising all aspects of the candidates' communication. Our choice fell on Andrew Davis – an experienced consultant from MySpace - whose ***body language*** was ***genuinely open*** and his delivery was energetic throughout all his seminar samples.

Any message exchanged by the use of written words and symbols is written communication, and it is the most common ways of communication in business. This channel of communication relies on grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. Developing written communication skills demands training, practice and adequate attention to detail. The following examples can help to improve written communication skills:

* Clarity: The use of simple language and sticking to the concrete, specific information.
* Conciseness: Get to the point quickly and efficiently.
* Tone: In business writing and emailing, our style is professional, combined with formality and friendliness.
* Active voice: It is usually more accessible and more comfortable to follow for readers than the passive voice.
* Grammar and punctuation: It’s crucial for ensuring that our point is getting across.

As professionals at Equal Experts, my team has always had a keen eye on written communication protocols. Emails sent in-house are ***concise***, ***on-point*** and ***accurate***, and grammar mistakes are frowned upon by management; however, the tone is friendly and approaching. Emails sent to customers and business partners are written in a more ***formal*** nature and always proofread.

Responding email to the proposal of the catering company CAIGER & Co.-s manager, Alix Caiger:

Dear Alix.

Thank you for your proposal. We genuinely appreciate the effort that you have put in submitting such a comprehensive catering plan for our company.

We do understand that you have spent considerable time and resources to come up with this function, which outlines in details how you are going to provide food and beverage services for the interval of the two-day seminar.

My team and I reviewed the entire proposal in detail, and overall, we are delighted about it.

Kind regards, Tivadar Debnar.

Email to the Engagement Lead, Ambika:

Hi, Ambika!

I'm coordinating this year’s web security seminar and would like to get some more input on the venue. The event specifications are listed below:

* Date: 06.02.2020 - 07.02.2020.
* The number of guests: 70.
* Sandwiches are served at 10:00 and hot food at 13:00.
* Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available.
* Drink bar offers soft drinks and coffees.

The estimated cost is £50 - 55 per day per person (inclusive of tax), which fits our budget (£60).

The venue is available on the given date (Makers, Shoreditch).

Please advise on your preference for hot food menu items and sandwiches - see menu attached.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Have a nice day!

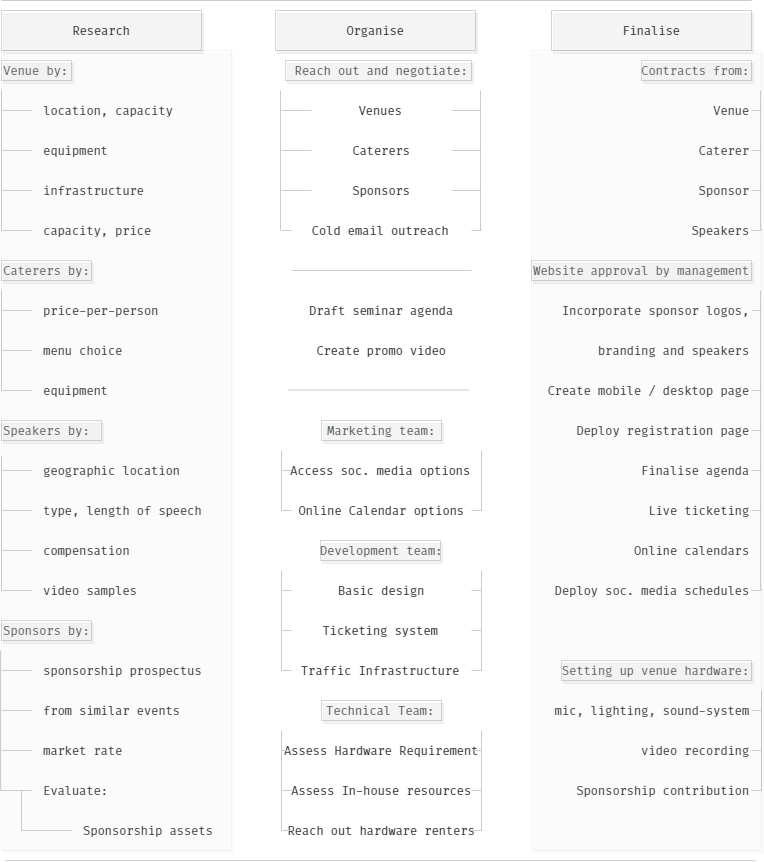
Tivadar Debnar

**Practical time management skills.**

“Time management refers to ***planning*** the ***time available*** in line with personal goals and lifestyles, while keeping individual preferences, likes, and dislikes in mind. The criterion for efficient time management lies not only in achieving set goals, but also in attaining them in the ***minimum time possible***.” (Kaya, 2012)

Several skills and actions that need to be applied to carry out successful and professional time management.

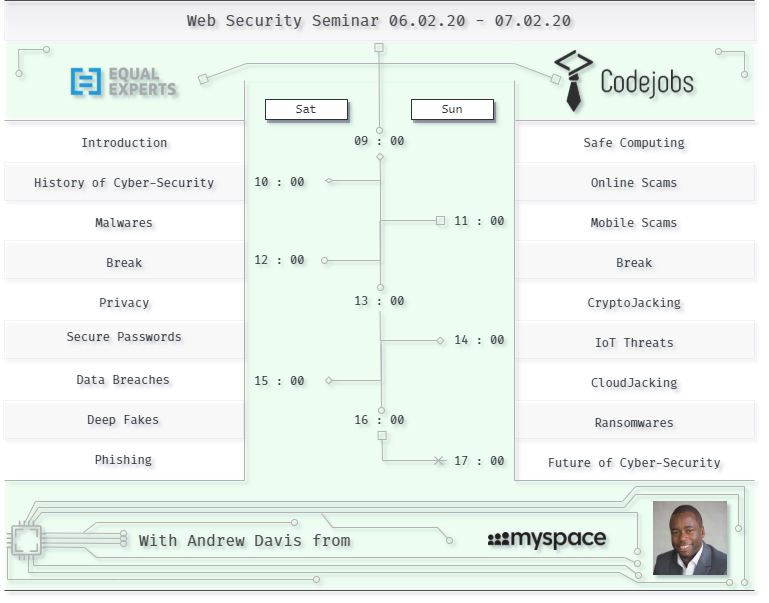
* ***Goal-setting***: My ***first step*** was to schedule a meeting with management and all team members to define our ***end-goal*** and consider all specifications and necessary resources.
* ***Prioritisation:*** the cardinal tool we need to complete the project that has multiple components is a ***master to-do list.*** We factor in all the necessary sub-routines, that will be analysed, ranked and categorised according to their importance into ***do*** (complete), ***defer*** (complete later), ***delegate*** (assign it to a third-party) and ***delete***.
* ***Planning:*** structuring and allocating time and resources into a strict ***schedule***. As the employee responsible for the general organisation of the seminar, I spent the rest of the day, creating an overall plan.
* ***Delegation:*** following the created schedule, I assigned responsibility to team members in line with their skills and position. As a result, every participant is ***accountable*** for their particular task.
* ***Organisation:*** managing workload in a systematic way, such as file management, emails, reminders and alarms, and even organising workspace.

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**Figure 2** - Work Breakdown Structure



**Figure 3** - Grantt Chart

**Figure 4** - Agenda with Sponsor Logo

**Evaluation**

Throughout the organisation of the project, we used various interpersonal skills that led to the success of the seminar. Without professional communication technics, the project could have never been organised smoothly. Additionally, utilising these soft skills helped us finding our sponsor for the event as well, significantly reducing the overall cost of the project.

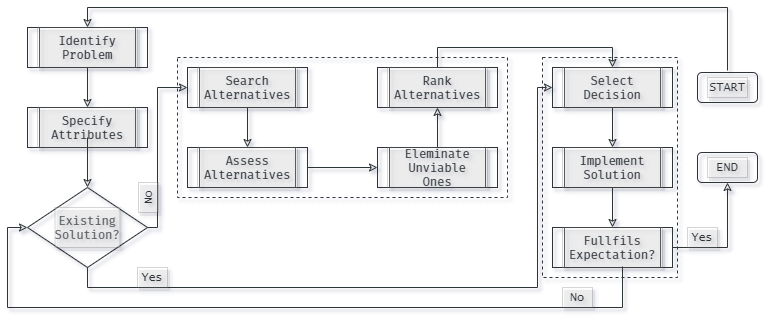
**Problem-solving**

*"Problems are only opportunities in work clothes."* – Henry Kaiser (American industrialist)

Problems are fundamental and necessary building blocks of our professional and every-day life. The ***mentality*** and a consistent ***methodology*** of how we ***perceive*** occurring problems not only shape our career but significantly determines our private life, as well as our mental health.

Equal Experts expects employees to have a positive and confident attitude towards new challenges, also encourages an overall optimistic view of our business and professional development through several steps of problem-solving.

* **Defining the problem and its attributes**: We need to make sure that we are dealing with the *"real"* problem, not a side effect or a symptom of a different issue. A perfect example is a manager blaming employees' attitude for substandard performance, while the underlying issue might be the lack of training or vaguely outlined responsibilities. The problem needs an ***accurate description*** with specific ***features***.
* ***Check for existing solutions***: The chances are that a given problem has already been solved by someone else. Try not to re-invent the wheel!
* ***Creating a set of options:***We cannot pick a solution until several ***alternatives*** have been proposed considering the interest of every participant. At Equal Experts, this step is all about ***brainstorming*** and creativity. As Alfred Nobel said, *" If I have a thousand ideas and only one turns out to be good, I am satisfied"*.
* ***Evaluation:*** Every alternative must be assessed according to their ***possible outcomes*** and acceptability constraints, eliminating unviable ones. Prioritise effective, efficient options, which consequently have the least side effects in implementation.
* ***Implement the first alternative:***Implementation should be iterative, leaving space for adjustments and optimisation.
* **Monitor results:** More often than not, we need to experiment with several alternatives until we find the optimal one.

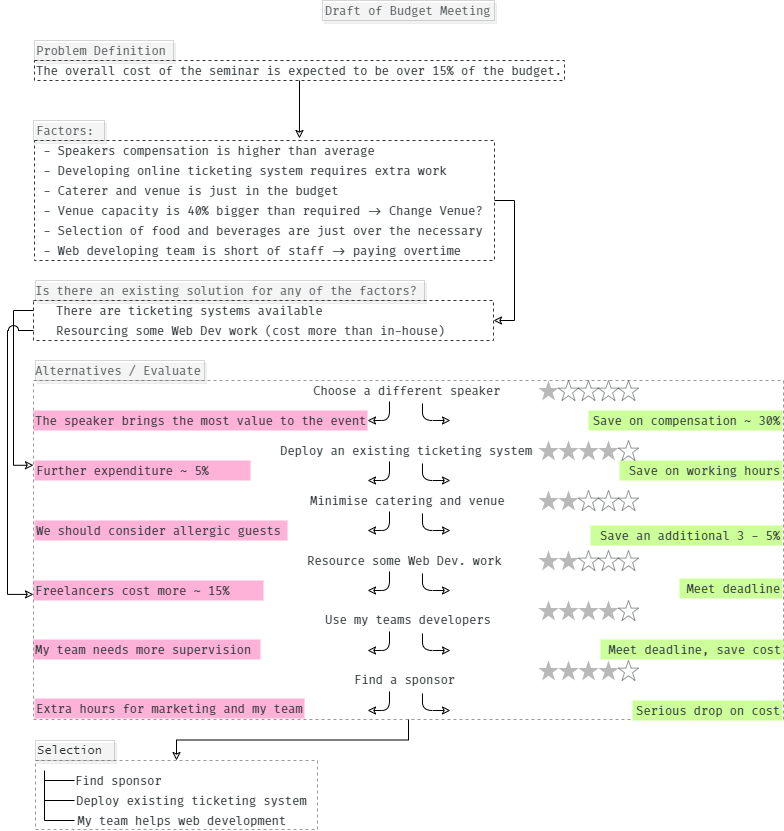


**Figure 5** - Decision Making Flow Chart

**Problem-solving in practice**

In the first phase of the project, it had already become clear that the overall cost of the project will probably exceed our budget. Therefore, I arranged a meeting with the departments involved to find a solution for *reducing the cost*.

Here below is a detailed draft of the meetings decision-making process.

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**Figure 6** - Implementation of Problem Solving

In conclusion, we decided to employ an existing online ticketing system, which will eventually shorten development hours, as it only needs an insignificant amount of integration compared to building one from scratch.

My team has a junior developer who will help the development team with more manageable tasks. Most notably, the marketing team and I will find a sponsor for the event, which will balance the overall cost to match or go below the budget.

**Critical reasoning**

"Critical reasoning is centrally concerned with giving ***reasons*** for one's ***beliefs and actions***, analysing and evaluating one's own and other people's reasoning, devising and constructing better reasoning. "(Thomson, 2009)

Critical reasoning has been the subject of many discussions and inspired countless philosophers, psychologists and great thinkers such as Plato and Socrates.

To improve critical thinking, one must engage in reflective, ***independent reasoning***, and it's more about active learning rather than passively receiving information. A master of reasoning never accepts assumptions at face value, but approaches questions in a systematic, consistent way, thus gaining a more ***in-depth perception*** ***of links*** and their relevance between ideas.

**How to develop critical reasoning:**

* ***Accepting*** that most of the times, we think intuitively or driven by ***emotions*** rather than reason.
* ***Recognising***, when we think or act by ***instinct***.
* ***Identifying inconsistencies*** in an idea or evidence
* ***Realising implications*** behind an argument or statement
* Supporting ***structured reasoning*** for an argument
* ***Foresight*** through setting up a range of possibilities

**Justify critical reasoning** (by an example scenario)

Roger, the senior developer - who is generally considered an excellent leader - has been micromanaging and criticising the team's overall performance for the past few weeks. After the ***initial reactions***, we decided to find out any ***underlying issue***, because the daily target has always been met.

After ***collecting*** all available ***facts***, we summarised that his comments are not addressing any specific issue and always made in front of a superior. He never mentions it privately to any member of the team nor offers help or solution to the problems. All of his critiques are general statements targeted mostly towards junior members.

We ***concluded*** that the real issue might be that my team is helping out development for the period of the project. As Roger always has been a hard worker and he is expected to be promoted soon, we figured that he might have difficulty to accept other departments help because of the pressure to prove himself worthy for his new managerial position.

Without ***logical reasoning***, it would have been near impossible to find out the real cause of Rogers complaints, as even he might not be aware of the ***source*** of his frustration. A positive side effect of this investigation was that none of us could be offended by his behaviour anymore, as logical reasoning took the edge of our ***emotional reactions***, and we could now ***relate* to** his ***situation*** in one way or another.

As this issue is not related genuinely to the development team’s performance, I decided to have a friendly word with him reassuring that he has all the support from my team and that this project will largely contribute to his future promotion.

**Critique of applying critical reasoning**(by analysing participants)

*How could Roger improve personally from critical reasoning?*

Roger might be a great person like any one of us, yet he is to realise his ***subconscious*** wiring for success and the aggressive pushing towards his ambition is counterproductive. A successful leader never puts his team down by mere frustration because these people are the fundamental building blocks of his prosperity. Negative attitude towards them is always reciprocated—consequently, it's a carrier suicide. Furthermore, with critical thinking, he'd ***recognise*** his impatience toward himself, gaining tolerance toward negative impacts.

*How my team could have learnt even more with critical thinking?*

Critical reasoning is more often than not executed by a group.

Although the team ***concluded*** the plausible scenario of the ***motive*** of Rogers behaviour, they did not consider ***other alternatives*** and jumped right into conclusion. Deducting wrong conclusions always backfire and leads towards further misunderstanding, also aggravating the existing problem.

*What could I have learnt from critical reasoning?*

"The road to Hell is paved with good intention." (Henry G Bohn, 1855)

Reaching out to the team for help and support is generally a good idea, but in this ***context*** it might be controversial. With critical thinking I should have decided to gather the facts discretely rather than involving others, which can eventually accumulate more negative attention towards Roger. Regardless of the helping attitude, encouraging discussion about someone that is not present shows lack of ***foresight***, immaturity and poor judgement. Also, it can undermine attitude towards work in general.

Additionally, getting easily provoked and being irritated by snarky comments reflects insecurity and low self-confidence as a professional. As an aspiring junior I need to spend time on ***self-reflection***. A confident and competent project leader never seeks self-validation desperately, has the ***immunity*** to negative impressions and responds ***diplomatically***.

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