Career Development

CRN: 52790

Early Self-Assessment Report

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to reflect on and review the set of soft skills I have developed throughout my (pre-)professional life. This primarily includes personal projects and customer-focused work. Between A-Level and University, I took a gap year to figure out what I loved and ended up building VM Host machines and deploying a large variety of services. This helped me develop a better level of problem solving, attention to detail and adaptability. My experience so far working as a phone shop assistant also helped me develop my communication and time management further by getting involved with customers and being in a real working environment. My current set of soft skills will be discussed not only with examples, but potentially my thought process regarding my philosophy on the topic. Later in my report I will evaluate my strengths and weaknesses, discussing areas I can grow; I will create a brief road map for further development, and how it can be maintained.

Current Soft Skills

Problem Solving

During my time developing my home network and personal services, problem solving / critical thinking played a major role in my success. Using pfSense as my routing and firewall solution I experienced many problems in deployment ranging from NAT issues to tunneling issues with WireGuard; learning on the spot and interpreting documentation to solve my specific issues. This experience honed my critical thinking skills, further developing my ability to logically reach solutions. At work, problem solving is key to assisting customers with issues; some customers have phones unfamiliar or uncommon, and thinking on the spot using whatever you can is sometimes the only way to solve their issue. In my opinion, problem solving (critical thinking) is the determining factor in overall ability to solve problems, and plays a huge role in the development of character and other soft skills.

Attention to Detail

The development of attention to detail as a skill branches from Problem Solving, both playing a critical role in one and other. Simple tasks, such as checking a config multiple times, or checking an IP is for the correct host, are vital to minimising risk and error. Attention to detail is also extremely important at work, where compliance with FCA for credit contracts, Ofcom for how we can advertise, and customer data protection is essential and non-negotiable. Personally, I learned to use this from a young age in the form of risk assessment / risk:severity matrices; very useful to daily life to consider the potential detriment to an action, and whether it is worth it. This is not entirely positive, but provides an aspect of careful planning to overcome worry and uncertainty.

Communication

Communication is probably one of the most repetitive, common soft skills to mention, however I think this is for a reason; communication is the basis of all information gain between other people, without having developed proper communication, ideas can

never leave your mind. The ability to explain complex topics in a way non-technical people can understand for example, which I use every day at work. Many customers do not come from a technical background, you want them to leave satisfied and confident, rather than lost or confused. Additionally, in professional technical settings, it is vital to be able to communicate your points clearly, and even non-technically to clients to save time and further explanation in the future.

Time Management

A difficult skill to evaluate is time management, however my ability to prioritise tasks and meet deadlines is something I can achieve quite well. Given I have many time consuming hobbies, a 20-hour-a-week part time job, and university, I think I am doing quite well considering the circumstances. Having to balance assignments, work, and personal projects is the basis of my daily life, some things have to be pushed back down the queue in order to meet deadlines, even if it means the sacrifice of productivity. No matter my delay or procrastination however, I am very good at meeting deadlines, even if it involves cramming.

Adaptability

Adapting to new concepts, ideas, environments, challenges, etc. Is crucial to being able to also implement Problem Solving and any other soft skill. If you can't be comfortable in a new environment for example, there is little chance for progress being made. An example of this was brought up in an interview I did recently where I was asked if I get uncomfortable in new environments, I thought about it and said "I see no reason to be uncomfortable, it's purely detrimental" on the spot, which is a very logic-based answer; I still agree with myself, I view being uncomfortable as a bit of a waste of time, productivity could be made if you are able to get past it.

Areas for Development

I believe my general areas of improvement are lack of drive or motivation, which is something I have subconsciously struggled with for the majority of my academic pathway. This may stem from many oversights such as the way I learn, think and act, namely under pressure, and lack of self-validation, feeling I am not as intelligent as I can be. It is clear from this reflection that this is the major point of improvement in the betterment of my ability. This will be refined by putting more effort in and improved academic discipline, something I am actively working on as of the past year through fitness and dedication to my craft.

Time Management

As mentioned prior, time management is a skill I definitely struggle with maintaining. Extremely ironically I am writing this section rather dangerously close to the deadline of the assignment. This is the area I most struggle with, namely commitment to starting work – I have little issue finishing it, I can just work for hours like a switch flicks in my mind. Admittedly this is likely since I have never faced consequences for my poor time management, as I have historically crammed work at the last possible moment to still do well enough for it to not be an issue. I will work towards improving this by utilising time management tools like Trello to optimise my workload and

segment projects into smaller tasks, write to-do lists, filling out my calendar and attempt to reflect on how I can improve further.

Leadership

Working alone or in a team is usually a non-issue to me, I will usually perform at the same baseline. However I have a dislike in taking charge, even though I am good at it. If I feel like I am proposing the only timely ideas to a group, I will generally naturally be pushed into taking charge, but subconsciously nominate somebody else to step up out of fear of not being good enough to lead. This is definitely irrational thinking, and I *can* believe I am good at leadership, it's just exhausting. Due to this, I will develop my leadership skills by volunteering in the future and stop avoiding leading groups. Lack of good feedback to my contributions in a group is likely another reason I don't enjoy it; I should strive to get feedback from mentors or other group members, since it is clear to me now external validation improves confidence in my ability.

Public Speaking / Presenting

I can be a particularly introverted and anxious individual, making presenting very high-pressure to me. Relating back to before with my tendency to evaluate risk likely invokes an aspect of anxiety and overthinking to high-pressure situations. In smaller groups or informal settings I can excel at voicing my ideas and concepts, however professional presenting with larger groups or consequences to underachieving I find is rather difficult for me. I can develop this further by being more prepared, linking back to my time-management skills and improvement, and practicing with friends, potential co-workers, or group members before a real presentation.

Plans for Continuous Improvement

The Skill Audit from week 3 provided a lot of valuable information on identifying skills for this report, but also in how I can indefinitely attempt to improve the depth of my skills. My opinion is that my personal projects are the biggest outlet for me to improve a large chunk of my soft skills by transforming them into learning opportunities rather than personal gain from the outcome; using Trello to improve my time management skills, creating documentation to improve my communication and problem solving, etc. I have also been putting off learning within certifications, viewing the workload as too much, or not believing I am skilled enough to achieve them; I should work towards these certifications (namely CCNA, Security+, Network+) to improve my general ability to improve my value. Another valuable experience I can apply my skills to and work on my weaknesses is going to be HackCamp; this report and reflection has directly attributed to how I can perform better going forward and be more confident in my ability.

I believe I am good at taking personality tests, from first-hand experience many people cannot answer truthfully or have a rose-tinted view of how they perceive themselves. I have taken many psychometric tests over the years, including 16personalities, NHS ADHD and anxiety tests, and recently, the Graduates First psychometric test from week 7. I consistently am very overly critical of myself, logic driven, and can change between introversion and extraversion depending on the situation. Many people will disregard 16personalities as a logic-driven horoscope, but I feel like people take it too

literally; my classification of INTP (and results in NHS tests) has helped me understand how I think and reflect on how I act under certain situations, allowing me to improve myself with external views I otherwise would not have.

Conclusion

This report and review has emphasised my strengths in communication, problem solving / critical thinking, adaptability, time management and attention to detail and how they were developed through my experiences in education and work. It has not just been a submission for a module but very helpful in providing me a path to improvement indefinitely by highlighting my struggles with leadership, presenting and poor aspects of my time-management and scheduling. By leveraging growth methods discussed, I feel I can commit to improving my effectiveness in my weak points, and add more value to myself professionally.