Personal Learning Review and Skills Profile

Reflection enables us to learn from experience. After all, how can you learn from successes and mistakes if you do not understand why they happened? Learning, like innovation and Design Thinking, is also an iterative rather than a linear process. In a way, **we learn in loops** rather than in a straight line: we engage with something new, we make mistakes, and we learn from them and bounce back stronger.

In this book, we invited you to adopt four-step approach to learning (as illustrated below). For this we asked you to

1. *engage with a combination of theory and practice-based experiences*, and then
2. to *carry out practical and usually team-based activities*,
3. before *pausing and considering what you have learned*, which will help you to
4. benefit from your learning – and to *build on it* (next loop).

So this book is not just about delivering a team-based innovation project, or learning about innovation and Design Thinking – it is also about **developing and strengthening key employability skills.**

How do we – and, more importantly, how do you know – what skills you have developed, and what skills still need a bit more work? This is where this template for a **Learning Review and Skills Profile** comes in. It is designed to help you reflect on your learning and to become more aware of the skill sets that you already master like a professional as well as the ones that may require a bit more of your attention.

**Being clear about your learning and your skills profile will be incredible useful when applying for jobs**. It will also enable you to be more strategic about your learning and, as a result, may allow you to progress faster in your chosen career.

The remainder of the document guides you though the steps of a simple learning review followed by some guidance on how to create a personal skills profile for applications and career development.

# 1. Personal Learning Review

Reflect on how your employability skills now compare with where you think you were when you began reading this book. Have a look through all your notes and reflection points. Note down your key learning points in each of the seven skill areas in your personal reflective journal and/or the blank space provided below. Ask yourself: **What are the key things I have learned in each skill area?**

If you prefer to conduct your learning review and personal skills profile in a separate document, please download our *Skills learning review template*.

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| ***1. What are the key things I have learned in each skill area?***  *Innovation and Design Thinking:*  *Collaboration and teaming:*  *Critical thinking and problem solving:*  *Commercial awareness:*  *Empathy and communication:*  *Resilience and managing change:*  *Initiative and active learning:* |
| **2. How have I learnt these things (by reading, by doing and reflecting, by watching others…)?**  *Innovation and Design Thinking:*  *Collaboration and teaming:*  *Critical thinking and problem solving:*  *Commercial awareness:*  *Empathy and communication:*  *Resilience and managing change:*  *Initiative and active learning:* |

# 2. Personal Skills Profile

Once you have completed the learning review, it is time to develop your own personal skills profile and to identify some action points. Start by considering each of the skill areas. Think about what skills they cover. You can also download a sample list of employability skills for each section from our online resources.

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| **1. Have a look at Figure 11.3 below. The figure shows a matrix with the seven skill areas against different levels of confidence, with the crying face emoji indicating a skill area you don’t feel at all confident about, the happy face standing for a skill level where you are already quite confident but still see room for improvement and the emoji with the heart eyes standing for skills that you feel you are already really good at. We have added two more for the stages in between.**  **Your task is now to identify some specific skills for each box. Use as much space as needed below to add skills and to take notes**.  **Note:** For example, looking at the ‘communication and empathy’ skills area, you may consider that you are great at storytelling (heart eyes), and also quite strong at visual communication and perhaps active listening (happy face) – but that written correspondence is still more of a mixed bag (smiley face). Contributing to team meetings may still be a bit of a challenge (expressionless face) and presenting without reading from a script may be outright scary (tearful face). This is just an example – your skills profile is likely to be very different. Everyone is different in terms of their own experience, skill sets and in the kind of skills they wish to develop!  We also appreciate that it is not always possible to write a specific skill in each and every one of the boxes. For example, you may be a genius at teaming and have little to improve. Or you simply don’t feel very comfortable at all about your commercial awareness. That is all fine, the main point of this exercise is to reflect and obtain some deeper insight about your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to employability skills!  By looking at each skill area, thinking about what you’re already happy with and what you may want to improve, and filling in the boxes, you visualise your own personal skills profile. Such a resource is very useful to have when preparing for job applications or reviewing career ambitions! |
| **2. Finally, identify at least one action which can help you to develop further each of the skills that you wish to strengthen or improve in (as identified in your personal skills profile).**  **Note**: For example, if you cannot present without reading from a script, you may decide that you will volunteer for more presentations in the next semester. Or if you still struggle with team dynamics, think about if there are additional resources and training that can help you to address this aspect. List your action points below and/or enter them in your personal reflective journal. The list of potential personal improvement actions is virtually endless. If you can, identify SMART targets. These are targets that are **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant and **t**ime-bound (i.e. have a deadline). This makes it more likely for you to follow-up on the actions and achieve the improvements you are looking for.  Make sure to identify actions that you will follow through with and review your progress every couple of months, setting yourself some new goals and actions. Some people spend a lot of money on coaches when simple methods such as a personal skills profile and a regular progress review can already help a lot to develop one’s future career. Good luck!  *Innovation and Design Thinking:*  *Collaboration and teaming:*  *Critical thinking and problem solving:*  *Commercial awareness:*  *Empathy and communication:*  *Resilience and managing change:*  *Initiative and active learning:* |