Further readings and templates

# Chapter 18: Conclusion: Skills and employability

## Further comments from business professionals:

The process of personal development and learning should be continuous and should continue throughout the rest of your life. You will make mistakes – some big, some small, some painful – but learning from those mistakes and being humble enough to recognise when you are making them is important, which is why skill development is seen as a theme running through this text. This applies to skills most relevant to university life when you are doing essays and examinations, but also to employability skills, such as those covered in Part IV, and need to be demonstrated when going through employee selection processes, outlined in Part V.

It is helpful to get some perspectives from others on how the development of your skills, your values and your world view needs to continue throughout the rest of your life. Some of those views are listed in the text, but here are some others, from equally qualified folk from industry.

### Who responded?

There is a reasonable variety of individuals who gave their thoughts. I do not wish to give their names here, but I would like briefly to share something about their background. One has been working in a marketing role for a year in a brand-new start-up business in Malaysia, having studied for a UK degree. Another works for a manufacturing organisation in the UK, a third is a UK-educated corporate lawyer and mother of two, working in Singapore. A fourth one has a senior role in the China office of one of the big four accounting firms, having had an undergraduate education in Singapore, UK and then the United States, and studied their Master’s degree in New York. Another respondent completed their undergraduate studies in China before moving on to do a Master’s in the UK, then worked for some time as a PA for a Business School Dean before doing an MBA in the United States. Another was an Indian student who studied for both their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the UK before beginning their career as an accountant relatively recently. Another respondent graduated in the UK and began their career in operations management in the UK before moving to a senior role in a large multinational communications company. Two further respondents both work in higher education, one as a Business School Dean in the United States, having worked previously in business education in China, and another who rose quite quickly to a senior management role at a UK university, before deciding that enjoying their role was more important than salary, and took a significant reduction in status and salary to become a careers adviser. So, the diversity of individuals willing to offer advice has been encouraging.

### Making sense of these views

There is a reasonable variety of individuals who gave their thoughts. With that diversity, however, comes contradiction. These are individuals who have various levels of experience, but even with that experience they offered advice as different individuals – with different attitudes, personalities, world views (see Chapter 12) and learning. Perhaps if we were to add a ‘key learning point’ here, it would be that there is no one definitive way to lead or manage others, or work in a team, or communicate with others, or become globally aware, etc. Instead, each person needs to find what works for them.

F. Lorraine trained as a professional accountant, having done both her BSc and MSc inthe UK. She has been working for about four to five years.

### Highlights: Prepare for the unpredictable.

Having been an organised and methodical person, my biggest lesson has been that life is never constant. No matter how much you plan, something unpredictable may happen. It is therefore imperative that one must not fear change but positively embrace it. We should empower ourselves and have some courage to face the unknown.

On time management: Often whilst working in an organisation, one becomes too focused on following standard routine procedures. Being proactive rather than reactive means that we can challenge systems and processes and improve them rather than wait for the mistake to happen. This is an important aspect of time management.

### G. Peter is a finance manager in the telecommunications and travel industry.

Highlights: Incentivise your employees properly; get a sense of perspective about work;stand out and communicate well.

‘You get what you measure’ – think carefully about how you measure people’s performance and incentivise them. You get what you measure – even if it is not what you really wanted! ‘We are not saving lives.’ For the vast majority of people (not my doctor!) try and keep things in perspective. No matter how important and critical you think a task is – it is just work. Relax!

Out of the topics in this book: Leadership and communication stand out. Anyone at any level can provide leadership – it is not about your job position. Don’t wait to be led. Decide to lead! The most successful leaders I have seen are a mix of intelligent, apparently boundless energy, clear long-term vision, demanding of very high standards, empower people to do their job, great story tellers. Although, ideally, a good leader is also a great communicator. It is not totally necessary – as you can employee people who are great communicators as a part of your team!

H. Winnie rose rapidly in her organisation to become a senior manager in the publicsector, before deciding that salary was not the most important thing in life.

### Highlights: Be organised; be creative.

The biggest lesson I have learnt in life is to be organised. Don’t put off stuff you don’t feel like doing until the last moment. Take the time to get things right in advance. When you have to do tasks that don’t interest you, set yourself a time limit and give yourself a reward. With other tasks that can be a time suck, e.g. emails, set a time limit on those too and stick to it. Don’t wander from one site to another losing time and productivity! Be aware of what you are doing and why you are doing it.

On creativity: Many people struggle with creativity but it doesn’t have to mean you’re James Dyson or an award-winning artist. Be creative in how you approach tasks – do things differently to appreciate the impact that might have on how you solve a problem. Listen to other people and observe how they approach things. Ask yourself why you are doing something rather than just doing because you can or feel you ought to.

### I. Jeffrey is a business school dean in the United States.

### Highlights: Be persistent and innovative; lead with people in mind.

While superior intelligence and a college education (particularly a Master degree or more) is certainly an advantage and can help accelerate and lever success in business, the most important qualities in my view are relentless persistence and an eye toward innovation that centers on creating a unique competitive advantage. Think of any modern business icon – whether it be Steve Jobs, Warren Buffett, or Bill Gates – all of them have these qualities in spades.

Leadership at the top of an organisation is essential for achieving extended success. The best leaders are able to create positive organisational cultures resulting in lower employee turnover, higher productivity and more innovation, and more loyal customers – all resulting in more successful brands and organisations.

### J. Janice is president and CEO of an international private higher education provider.

### Highlights: Be purposeful, but flexible.

For about a decade now, I’ve been influenced by the philosophy of Viktor Frankl and more recently by the positive psychology movement. Success for me is about having purpose and pursuing it through helping others to achieve their goals. It’s really about how one reacts to circumstance; however adverse, a positive, constructive reaction will always feel right and produce results. Critical in all of this is to ‘have a plan’ and to execute that plan, since time management is critical.

### K. William is a strategic advisor in the gaming industry.

Highlights: Be patient with yourself; skills of team-working, communication and timemanagement are most important.

Individuals need to be hardworking and patient with themselves, learn from their colleagues, don’t jump from one job to another in a short period of time.

On the skills needed for employment: In every job, team-working, communication and time management are ultimately the most important elements. Without these basic skills, one is hard to progress to a higher position in an organisation.

### L. Blake is a digital content QA tester.

Highlights: A range of skills are important, but there may not be one best way ofdemonstrating each.

Daily life and work are often well defined and highly repetitive and shouldn’t need much thought, spending time on what’s important requires perspective and understanding.

Plan not to do everything, you need to be realistic, everyone has their strengths and limits, you have to prioritise what you can do then delegate or say no.

Simplify your life and organise your surroundings, you’ll find it time well spent and feel better for it.

Time management is all about making decisions and planning to do the right things at the right time.

Creativity often goes hand-in-hand with innovation as they are required to improve or better ourselves and everything that goes on around us.

Team-working is an essential part of the complex world we live in. No single person can be expected to do everything. We can work together to achieve things more rapidly or by combining our skills and knowledge improve the world around us.

Leadership is the driving or guiding force from the people in our lives that give us meaning and direction.

Cross-cultural awareness is more important than ever as we can travel and connect with virtually anyone anywhere in the world. The way of life of others may differ from our own and we need to recognise, respect and understand how to live with those differences.

Communication skills are important to help us understand one another and allow us to work together. The style and frequency of our written and verbal communication as well as our body language all influence how others view and judge us. Tailoring your communication to fit the audience and the moment can literally open up a world of opportunities.

### M. Philip is a forensic engineer.

### Highlights: Be focused and determined.

Don’t let others dictate your life; if someone tells you that you are unable to do something, take a deep breath, find your inner strength and go out and prove them wrong.

Who wills can. Persistence, persistence, persistence. Remember to enjoy the ride (i.e. enjoy what you do!).

Communication is king! Without it your ideas won’t fly!

### N. Jackson is company secretary of a listed company in Singapore.

### Highlights: Be persistent; be humble.

When there is a will, there is surely a way. Do not give up but continuously strive for improvement with the eventual aim of succeeding. It is important that one never looks down on oneself as every one of us has talents to contribute. However, be humble.

On time management: Be organised. List down a list of priorities and tasks to be done for the day at the start of each working day.

On communication skills: Follow up in writing (by email) after a meeting or an important conversation to ensure that one has listened well to what was conversed or agreed earlier