

Chapter 2

SOFT SKILLS FOR A JOB



Path for Career

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A.THEORETICAL FRAME

I. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter it will analyze according to the most recent researches in the academic field, why soft skills are so important when we are seeking for a job or when we want to improve our abilities in order to reach a better position in our job.

But before that we will present a list of the most important soft skills in the area of this project:

Soft Skills

- “Soft skills” is an umbrella term that encompasses everything from social skills to communication skills to emotional intelligence and personal character traits.
- A sociological term relating to a person's "EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people.
- Soft skills complement hard skills (part of a person's IQ), which are the occupational requirements of a job and many other activities.
- Soft skills are personal attributes, typically linked to how you work and interact with others, which are necessary for success and your career development. Soft skills make it easier to form relationships with other people which makes you visible for the right reasons, consequently unlocking more career-related opportunities for you.

Differences Between Soft and Hard Skills

- Hard skills are abilities directly linked to the job, usually called job-specific skills, such as, computer programming, data analysis, bricklaying etc.
- They are quantifiable, testable and easier to learn compared to soft skills - this table highlights their differences:

Soft Skills Important in Career Development (Bortz, 2017; Beqiri, 2018)

❖ Creativity

Creativity is the number-one soft skill employers seek most in candidates. It is defined as the ability to invent and develop original ideas, especially in arts, although it can cover other fields (economy, law, social and human sciences in general). It is crucial to understand that people do not have to be painters, graphic designers or novelists to be creative. Creativity is not only about excelling in artistic endeavors: it is also about being able to solve problems with relevance and innovative thinking. Creative thinking brings fresh, and sometimes unorthodox, solutions to problems. It can help teams and organizations move in more productive directions. For these and other reasons, this mental agility we call creativity is extremely valuable to companies today. From our perspective, all others skills involve creativity.

A creative person enhances his/her talent by focusing on new ideas, points of view, perspectives, etc. For that reason, creativity is not an external force or a rare skill; it is a habit that can be learned and exercised every day by different means.

The following sections provide a brief framework of **creativity thinking techniques**:

- **Brainstorming** is a technique practiced by a group of people who make up ideas on a topic without regard to how practical they may be. The goal is to come up with an innovative solution that might not occur otherwise. While many of the ideas generated may not be feasible, by setting aside practical constraints and allowing people to speak freely, the end result is often an idea that can be made into a workable solution.

- **“What if” questions** provide tools for improving creativity. For example, if you ask “What if we perform process XYZ in the opposite manner of how we currently do it?”, or “What if we eliminate step 5 from the process?”, it might lead to an improvement in productivity or growth. “What if” questions can be the source of big ideas.

- **Role-playing** can give you a different perspective that can lead to new ideas. For instance, a role-playing session simulating you are the customer can give you a much better understanding of what your customer is thinking during your presentations. This can help you anticipate common objections your customers may have and develop a plan to overcome them.

Creativity can be enhanced:

- Being observant
- Keeping an open mind
- Being a daydream
- Taking risks

❖ Communication

Successful communication involves five components. **Verbal communication** refers to your ability to speak clearly and concisely. **Nonverbal communication** includes the capacity to project positive body language and facial expressions. **Aural communication** is the ability to listen to and actually hear what others are saying. **Written communication** refers to your skillfulness in composing text messages, reports, and other types of documents. And **visual communication** involves your ability to relay information using pictures and other visual aids. Communication skills boost your performance because they help you to extract clear expectations from your manager so that you can deliver excellent work. For improving this skill, it is advisable to take courses of public speaking.

Why employers look for it: Workers are more productive when they know how to communicate with their peers. If you can clearly express the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a project, you'll be a hot ticket.

How to gain it: One way to hone your communication and presentation skills is to join Toastmasters, a national organization that offers public speaking workshops.

Characteristics of an effective communicator:

- Active listening
- Adaptability - adapting your communication styles to support the situation
- Clarity
- Confidence and assertiveness
- Constructive feedback - giving and receiving it
- Emotional intelligence - identifying and managing your emotions, as well as other people's emotions
- Empathy
- Interpersonal skills - social skills which are especially useful in building strong rapports
- Interpretation of body language - this will help you understand how someone is feeling
- Open-mindedness

- Patience
- Simplifying the complex
- Storytelling

❖ **Teamwork**

A company's success is rarely dependent on one person doing something all by him/herself. Success is the result of many people working toward a common goal. The quality of work improves when people use their individual strengths and skills together in collaboration. When employees can synthesize their varied talents, everyone wins. To be a team player is desirable for an employer because:

- There will be less conflict
- It's less likely that people will leave
- The workplace will be more attractive for prospective employees

Characteristics of an effective team player:

- Active listening - listen to the concerns, opinions and ideas of others
- Assertiveness and not aggression
- Collaboration and cooperation
- Coordination
- Delegation - if someone has (stronger) skills necessary for a task then delegate as this aids the overall outcome
- Empathy
- Following the leaders' guidelines
- Giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Helping others problem-solve
- Interpersonal skills
- Knowing yourself e.g. your role, strengths and how you can best help.
- Mediating to bring about agreement

- Negotiation and compromise
- Self-awareness
- Sharing information and ideas
- Sharing the credit
- Showing appreciation and value for others' skills, experiences and contributions
- Supporting the plan even if you don't completely agree.

Why employers look for it: Employers look to team players to help build a friendly office culture, which helps retain employees and, in turn attracts top talent. Furthermore, being able to collaborate well with your co-workers strengthens the quality of your work.

How to gain it: To generate goodwill, lend a hand when you see a co-worker in need. Another way to build rapport is to cover for a colleague while she's on vacation.

❖ **Adaptability**

Why you need it: Things don't always go as planned, and instead of digging in your heels, you need to be able to pivot and find alternate solutions. Successful leaders are the ones who know how to be flexible when problems arise.

Characteristics of effective adaptability:

- Analysing
- Calmness
- Curiosity - you want to learn about the new item, method, technology, etc.
- Decision-making
- Discipline
- Flexibility
- Focus
- Handling of unexpected demands
- Open-mindedness
- Optimism and positivity

- Organisation
- Patience
- Self-confidence
- Self-management - taking responsibility of your own learning
- Self-motivation

Why employers look for it: The speed of change in any given workplace is so rapid, that employers need workers who can adapt to industry shifts and keep the company current.

How to gain it: Push yourself to be an early adopter of change. For example, adapting to technology without mourning what used to be true yesterday is crucial for people to be seen as someone who is capable of meeting new challenges. Inquire about training sessions and offer to teach your co-workers what you learn.

❖ Problem Solving

Why you need it: When something goes wrong, you can either complain or take action. Tip: It's the latter that will get you noticed. Knowing how to think on your feet can make you indispensable to an employer.

Characteristics of an effective problem-solver:

- Analysing
- Creativity
- Decision-making
- Determination
- Initiative
- Lateral thinking
- Logical reasoning
- Negotiation
- Critical Observation
- Perseverance
- Persuasion

Why employers look for it: Nothing is a given. Companies rely on problem solvers—a.k.a. their top performers—to navigate unexpected challenges.

How to gain it: Always approach your boss with a solution, not a problem. So when an issue crops up, sit down and think through how you're going to address it *before* bringing it to your boss' attention.

❖ **Conflict Resolution**

Why you need it: Any time you put more than one person into an organization, there is going to be conflict. It's human nature. Therefore, being able to resolve issues with co-workers will help you maintain relationships with peers and work more effectively.

Why employers want it: Being able to constructively work through disagreements with people is a sure indicator of maturity—as well as leadership potential. Someone like this helps to promote a healthy, collaborative workplace.

How to gain it: The best way to resolve disagreements between co-workers is to address issues directly but delicately. So, when stepping in as a mediator, let both parties air their grievances in a judgment-free environment and then work together to find a solution.

❖ **Work Ethic**

Having a strong work ethic proves to your manager that you believe that work is important because, for example, you are punctual, organised, you meet deadlines, you remain focused etc. It means that you can work independently but also follow orders.

You may even have to carry out jobs below your level of experience but this will only show your employer that you're willing to get the job done regardless. Having a strong work ethic is usually a natural ability or you may have been socialised to regard it as important.

Characteristics of a strong work ethic:

- Accountability
- Achieving high standards
- Attentiveness
- Commitment
- Competitiveness
- Discipline

- Honesty
- Initiative
- Maximising your strengths
- Optimism - even when experiencing challenges
- Organisation
- Persistence and perseverance
- Productivity - completing tasks effectively and efficiently
- Professionalism
- Punctuality
- Reliability
- Responsibility
- Seeking constructive feedback
- Self-direction
- Self-motivation
- Self-supervising

Note: Empathy is an important part of creating an ethical, positive and nurturing work culture.

Caring about what you do and your customers is the core of being a good employee. Showing emotions, being able to connect with the customers, showing them respect, and understanding what they ask for is a huge asset to any organization.

Empathy also means being able to connect with your peers and co-workers. This skill can go a long way in showcasing your potential as someone who works efficiently, but also understands human emotions and behaviour.

❖ Time Management

Trying to do everything at once isn't an efficient way to work and it can often lead to you feel disorganised and stressed. Time management is a way of delegating your time for specific activities. This allows you to manage your workload and time effectively so you can be as

productive as possible. You must be able to priorities your tasks, complete them before they become urgent and know when to delegate certain tasks to others.

Characteristics of effective time-management:

- Decision-making
- Delegation
- Focus
- Goal setting
- Organisation
- Planning
- Prioritising
- Responsibility
- Self-awareness
- Stress management and resilience

❖ **Leadership**

Why you need it: Leadership skills are a mixture of all the other soft skills as you will be able to work independently and within a team but you also take charge and guide the team to work more effectively. Leadership is the skill least developed by yourself which is why many leadership courses exist. Having confidence and a clear vision can help influence your co-workers and get them on board with your ideas now and in the future. Displaying such leadership skills helps you gain visibility within an organization, which can lead to more opportunities for promotions or salary bumps.

Characteristics of an effective leader:

- Ability to work with minimal guidance and supervision
- Accountability and responsibility
- Active listening
- Authenticity
- Conflict resolution

- Decision-making
- Emotional intelligence
- Empathy
- Flexibility
- Generosity
- Modesty
- Motivating
- Selflessness
- Strategic planner
- Supportive
- Trustworthiness
- Delegation
- Crisis management
- Constructive feedback and encouragement
- Seeing the big picture
- Providing clear guidelines and instructions

Why employers want it: Bosses and managers are always looking for employees with leadership potential because those workers will one day be taking over the reins and building on the company's legacy.

How to gain it: Being a leader isn't merely about getting people to do what you want. Leadership means inspiring and helping others reach their full potential. One way to do that is to become the internship supervisor, which gives you the opportunity to manage people, learn how to motivate a team, and take on more responsibility.

Once exposed the soft skills, which are directly linked to the objectives of this project, we will continue with the analysis that the main authors have highlighted.

According to Tino (2018: 100):

“The nature of soft skills can therefore be summarized in what Hurrell, Scholarios and Thompson describe as a knowledge combined with the answers, learned experientially, to environmental stimuli and with the desire to make efforts to identify original responses to particular situations. In summary [...] today the competent subject is not the one who reproduces knowledge in an unambiguous and rigid way, but is the one who knows how to use the knowledge learned in a creative and flexible way, adapting to different situations and identifying creative solutions to new problems”.

In relation to the concept of “competent subject” - one of the goal of Education in schools, but also at the University - is very interesting the reflection that Albert Einstein develops in an address to the State University of New York at Albany, on the occasion of the celebration of the tercentenary of higher education in America, the 15th of October 1931 (Einstein, 1995: 40):

I want to oppose the idea that the school has to teach directly that special knowledge and those accomplishments which one has to use later directly in life. The demands of life are much too manifold to let such a specialized training in school appear possible. Apart from that, it seems to me, moreover, objectionable to treat the individual like a dead tool. The school should always have as its aim that the young man leaves it as a harmonious personality, not as a specialist. This in my opinion is true in a certain sense even for technical schools, whose students will devote themselves to a quite definite profession. The development of general ability for independent thinking and judgement should always be placed foremost, not the acquisition of special knowledge. If a person masters the fundamentals of his subject and has learned to think and work independently, he will surely find his way and besides will better be able to adapt himself to progress and changes than the person whose training principally consists in the acquiring the detailed knowledge.

As we can see, in this fragment Einstein implicitly underlines the importance of what we can define as “soft skills” such as: flexibility and adaptability (considered both as the ability to experience changes as an opportunity for our personal development and for the acquisition of new knowledge); creativity (considered as the ability to create new ideas for innovation process); learn to learn (considered as the ability to learn in autonomous way); critical thinking, a concept strictly connected with “creativity” and considered as the ability to think in a creative way, to explain, analyze and evaluate different problems in different situations or contexts; and, finally, problem solving, which consists in the ability to identify and to analyze a problem, making appropriate assessments and finding alternative and suitable solutions. In other words, according

to Einstein, only if the school and University can allow the student to develop these abilities, we can be able to growth as a “harmonious personality”, which implies the contrary idea of a “dead tool”. In that sense, we can consider soft skills as the tools that allow the human being to be alive, performative and proactive, especially in relation to the problem of work (or the satisfaction in one’s own job).

Curiously, Albert Einstein’s point of view anticipates the position of Edmund Phelps, the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2014.

As Phelps points out in his article “Teaching economic dynamism” (Phelps, 2014):

“economies today lack the spirit of innovation. Labor markets do not need only more technical expertise; they require an increasing number of soft skills, like the ability to think imaginatively, develop creative solutions to complex challenges, and adapt to changing circumstances and new constraints“.

It’s very important to underline that also in this case, we can find some of the most needed soft skills required in the labor market, such as “ability to think imaginatively” and to “develop creative solutions to complex challenges” (directly connected to the ability to develop both creativity and problem solving skills) and the ability to “adapt to changing circumstances and new constraints”, which is evidently related to “adaptability”.

Only creating independent, creative and flexible subjects we can hope to increase the economic dynamism in our society. It’s was evident to Einstein in the 30ths of 20th century; it’s clear to Edmund Phelps in this first years of the new millennium.

But if we read the Phelps’ article till the conclusions, we will find another interesting point of view about the importance and also the necessity of soft skills for the labor market of 21st century, both in Europe and in the United States.

According to Phelps, which is director of Columbia University’s Centre for Capitalism and Society, “A necessary first step is to restore the humanities in high school and university curricula”, because “Exposure to literature, philosophy, and history will inspire young people to seek a life of richness - one that includes making creative, innovative contributions to society”.

It’s a fundamental goal also for Garza-Puente (2019), who emphasizes the need for a humanistic approach to future education. Her study recovers the concept of soft skills starting from its literal translation in Spanish language (“habilidades blandas”). The key point of the study is to delve into the link between new human pedagogy (teaching) and soft skills (creativity and emotional intelligence). The purpose is to provide full, complete training, throughout life. Education

through the application and support of information and communication technologies involves revitalizing the humanism so distorted of being by the management of knowledge and technology, comparing the transition of personality acquired by technologies, the methodological restructuring of teachers to retract the student to the human-person condition so necessary in these times. Although the author does not deal exclusively with a specific educational level, Garza-Puente (2019) upholds the importance of emotional education as part of soft skills subject to training, emphasized in emotional intelligence and combined with the education received, enable satisfaction of the social relations of the student as part of his integral formation. In short, by taking up a human pedagogy that relegates what is lost with apps, it directly affects emotion, interrelationship, construction and motivation.

The school of the 21st century consolidates a humanistic thinking in accordance with an epoch represented by diversity and social dynamism. The technological development has generated a framework of cybernetics and computational systems of rapid communication but relegating human relations, making the individual being, forgetting the social, therefore the need to resume a human pedagogy that considers emotions, capacity development and the expansion of creativity (Garza-Puente, 2019: 43).

For these reasons, it is important that from universities students are trained in soft skills so that they graduate with tools that add a differentiating advantage that allows them to compete in the labor market, get good jobs, get good pay, and generally maintain a high sense of wellbeing with one's own self and in different areas of one's own life.

For the teaching of these skills it is necessary to modify the contents of the education, giving as much importance to the technical knowledge as to the soft competences. This could be underpinned by a formal, systematic and long term process that clearly sets the desired level of these skills and that achieved by students, and continuously provide spaces for students to incorporate soft skills into their profile throughout their career (Tito Maya and Serrano Orellana, 2016: 72).

However, the labor market is increasingly adding value to soft skills rather than hard skills. While the latter are easily trained, learning a soft competition can take many years. Singer, Guzmán and Donoso (2009) point out that even punctual interventions such as attending workshops on soft skills significantly improve these skills among the students, so they suggest that systematic medium and long term strategies could be generated to achieve greater benefits (and we will see some practical examples in the second part of this chapter).

On the other hand, the role of the government is also key to the development of soft skills, because it is at the core of the guidelines that the educational plans must take to achieve the goals that are pursued as a society. States such as La Rioja in Spain have made significant progress in this area, and the regional government has promoted the initiative to collaborate with universities in the struggle against unemployment through a project that seeks to educate students in soft skills so students are protagonists in their goal of improving their employability options (EuropaPress, 2014). This is also very important also in Italy, where, as Tino explains (Tino, 2018: 102):

The Italian Ministry of Education has implemented the regulation on the new educational obligation (22 August 2007) through the so called “transversal skills”:

- a) Learning to learn: each subject must be able to organize his own learning in accordance with the time available, through different resources and methods.
- b) Design: ability to develop and implement projects related to study and work activities, defining objectives and strategies;
- c) Communicate: ability to transmit or understand messages from different genre conveyed using different languages, tools and knowledge;
- d) Collaborate and participate: ability to interact in groups, enhancing one’s own and others’ ideas and abilities and managing conflicts with the aim of achieving the collective result;
- e) Acting in an autonomous and responsible way: knowing how to enter actively, consciously and responsibly in social life;
- f) Solving problems: facing problematic situations by identifying adequate resources and solutions;
- g) Identify links and relationships: elaborate arguments consistent, identifying relationships between phenomena, events and concepts, also belonging to different disciplinary fields;
- h) To acquire and interpret information: to acquire and critically interpret the information received.

If we compare these soft skills to the European context, we will reach the same conclusions, as Maria Cinque demonstrates (Cinque, 2016) comparing the definitions of soft skills according to the main scientific and academic taxonomies and finding out that “the programs of most European universities are still rooted on teaching traditional scientific skills rather than paying

attention to soft and complementary skills” (391) and that “schools must equip students with the tools they need to flourish as well-rounded human beings” (402). Also Musicco (2018) demonstrates the same points by reconsidering the analysis by Cinque and comparing the different contexts in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, UK, Italy and Portugal. The conclusion is the same (Musicco, 2018: 118): “the market requires the availability of flexible, capable, creative people, willing to contribute to the ongoing innovation process, skilled at assuming responsibilities, versatile and inclusive”.

We can check the validity of this theoretical framework also through the reflections of the members of this European project.

According to AcrossLimits, a dynamic SME based in Malta that offers creative technology solutions and provides specialist consultancy services to many European countries, many people have characterized soft skills as those relating to Emotional Intelligence, the ability to recognize and manage one’s own emotions and those of others. However, in reality, they go beyond that, and into the wider realms of how you organize yourself and how you approach life. The good news is that you can learn and develop soft skills as well as hard skills. The bad news is that it’s often much harder, and there is no easy measure of success. Unlike hard skills, there are no exams to prove that you can do them. You measure your success in developing soft skills in how well you manage the relationships with those around you: family, friends, and co-workers, as well as customers and those who provide you with goods or services. Soft skills are very important to handle interpersonal relations, to take appropriate decisions, to communicate effectively and to develop yourself and others around you. In relation to this, we can follow 10 tips for improving our soft skills:

Awareness: You need to begin by making a list of skills that you lack by discussing with your close friends, co-workers etc. Awareness is the first step in building up your soft skills strength.

1. Interact: To build an understanding with your teammates, you should interact more with them.
2. Be optimistic: Exude that positivism and spread the contagious optimism
3. Self-motivating: Set personal goals to reach new targets and keep them for yourself
4. Possess a forgiving and benevolent ego - Humble oneself, accept and learn sincerely from criticism.
5. Be a team player – Learn to trust, build comradeship, set common goals, provide support, friendship and get your hands dirty!

6. Communicate effectively - Be clear, tactful, diplomatic and pace the conversation.
7. Think out of the box: Be creative and hone your innovative and creative skills
8. Look at the Big Picture - Consider all aspects, potential opportunities, threats & contingencies
9. Learn how to prioritize.

As you can see, these are useful tips to recognize which are the most important soft skills, especially if we relate them to the world of work.

To conclude this part, we can summarize this theoretical introduction to the problem of soft skills by saying that: a) the theoretical and technical skills develop in school only through study disciplines, but, as we explained, we cannot forgive that some of the soft skills are innate (and can be improved by different methods and techniques), and others can be achieved through training; b) soft skills develop through models, reflexive experience, and less through explicit learning situations. In this sense it is very important to understand the meaning of “creativity” and “problem solving” skills.

Creativity is the ability to create things. Many people consider themselves “rational”, “logic”, or “pragmatic” and we think only artists need to be creative. But: were Einstein or Steve Jobs artists? Probably not. They were, on the other hand, two of the most creative people in their fields. Because creativity means to take a problem or challenge and look at it from a new and different angle. Finding new ways to do something, new perspectives, new paradigms. Our creativity is only “asleep” by the society and (or) educational system, but it is not completely destroyed. On the other hand, in relation to “problem solving ability” we can consider these aspects: the types of issues that help adults most to evolve are those that are challenging enough to require some control of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. One way to improve problem solving capabilities is to focus on processes rather than results. A process orientation: “How can I do this?”, instead of “Can I do this?”, helps us actively think about ways in which a problem can be solved, instead of focusing on the possibilities of failure.

We will analyze these items and practical aspects in the second part (the methodological one) of this chapter.

2. Best practices and methods for teaching and learning soft skills

It is not always easy to determine which are the best practices and where we can find them. This is due to the fact that best practices and methods for teaching and learning soft skills are disseminated in several sources and platforms. Taking this into account, the purpose of this chapter is to identify the most significant approaches on soft skills. In order to reach this goal, we are going to offer a theoretical and critical bibliography with examples of best practices, based on the judgment of the experts.

According to Singer, Guzmán and Donoso (2009) there is little evidence of an explicit training in soft skills within formal educational processes. The main reason may be that the evaluation of education systems is based on knowledge and cognitive processes. Also, it is true that the educational system puts hard skills before soft skills. However, as we propose to check, good practices and programs that promote soft skills training have been progressively increased.

Starting from a main idea, skills mapping models only exist in Italy and Spain. Their descriptions articulate different circumstances, in line with the universities' and halls of residences' declared goals: intellectual and cultural growth (29,2%); ethical, spiritual and human growth (52,4%); personal growth (22,2%); professional and academic excellence (32,8%).

2.1. Government support and institutional education

Government support determines the inclusion of best practices and methods for teaching and learning soft skills in different countries (Spain, England, France, Malta, Italy and Romania).

The strategies are part of the National Reform Programme and are consistent with the recommendations and initiatives that the European Union has undertaken on this subject, in particular with the objectives and approaches of the call "Youth Guarantee" recently proposed by the European Commission. The Strategy is the driving force behind these measures aimed at reducing youth unemployment. But it also aims to serve as a channel of participation for all public and private institutions, companies and all types of organizations that want to collaborate in achieving their objectives.

To this end, the Strategy has been articulated as an open instrument, to which all those who wish to contribute their own initiatives to meet the challenge of youth employment in any form may join, also that of entrepreneurship and self-employment, and will have a stamp or distinctive that can be used in recognition of their contribution. This open approach is based on the awareness

that everyone must work together to regain the path of growth and the creation of stable and quality jobs, especially for young people, For they are the guarantor of the future of the Welfare State and the personifiers of the creativity, strength and thrust that are so much needed today.

In Spain, The Youth Employment Shock Plan aims to:

- To seek to improve the competitiveness and added value of the Spanish productive structure with the aim of achieving levels of economic growth that will generate a substantial supply of employment, stable or flexible, based on the development of future sectors with high added value.
- Strengthen the commitment to comprehensive training and the qualification of young people, which promotes their individual, collective and professional advancement, to rely on the education system and the working environment as fundamental elements for their social integration, by providing vocational skills to young people with low qualifications, taking care of young people in the rural and empowered environment and strengthening the role of the Public Employment Services as a gateway to the labor market and working life.
- Develop initiatives to return to school, support training in strategic skills, dual vocational training, employment with rights, entrepreneurship for young people, encouraging the trade union participation of young people and business associations.

It will also allow the evaluation, monitoring and control of the use of funds from the General Budgets of the State or the European Union for its justification.

2.2. Main challenges of career guidance in schools and colleagues

Professional guidance in the institutes is understood as a consultancy process that aims to help students to make decisions and follow training itineraries, taking into account their interests and abilities students, as well as the demands of the world of work. In addition, prepare for constant changes that may include situations of unemployment, professional adaptations, changes in occupation and even profession. According to the sociological study “ The laboral future” (2017), carried out at 12,000 students, 23.7% consider that they will work in a job that does not yet exist.

According to Guitierrez-Crespo (2017), we live in a world of changes that will affect the world of work, causing professions to disappear, those that we know will change and others to emerge in the near future. Therefore, the great challenge of professional guidance, will be to train

students to be able to cope and adapt to this process of change. To cover these new work prospects, it would be convenient to develop skills such as: adaptive thinking, social intelligence, intercultural competence, virtual collaboration ...

2.3. Examples of best practices by state and non-state actors

2.3.1. UNITED KINGDOM

Focusing on best practices in English context, the UK, although often referred to as one country, is in effect four countries; England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, each with their own degree of autonomy and extending from that, their own career guidance system. As a result, each of the careers services provided, and the way in which they are provided, differ from one another.

According to “Training and Development Center Ltd”, in England career guidance for young people is provided by schools which have the responsibility for providing access to “independent and impartial” IAG (information, advice and guidance). As a result, careers guidance providers and organizations have been competing to sell their services to schools and have consequently been criticized for saturating the market.

In some areas local authorities and local schools have joined together to secure guidance services from a guidance company via a single contract, in other areas it is left to the individual schools to source this support themselves.

In England the National Careers Service provides guidance about learning, training and work for adults. This is delivered both through their digital service and the local National Careers Service centers offering face-to-face guidance with a qualified career professional.

National Careers Service provides free information, advice and guidance to help people make decisions about learning, training and work opportunities, including apprenticeships. It offers confidential and impartial advice, supported by qualified careers advisors.

It is also important to mention landmarks of British National Career Service. In 2013 the NCC published “An Aspirational Nation” report, obliging British schools to place a statutory duty on schools and colleges to provide accessible independent and impartial careers guidance.

Schools and colleges meeting their new statutory duties also need to build skills and capacity in their workforce, learn from best practice, and access reliable labor market information – in

addition to helping broaden young people's aspirations and help them develop character, career adaptability and resilience.

The National Careers Service (NCS), launched in April 2012, offers confidential and impartial advice, supported by qualified careers advisers. NCS services may be provided face-to-face, via telephone or online and aim to:

- help people with careers decisions and planning
- support people in reviewing their skills and abilities and develop new goals
- motivate people to implement their plan of action
- enable people to make the best use of high quality career related tools.

National Career Service target is addressing young people aged 13 to 18. Local branches of the NCS work with employers, schools, colleges, charities and social enterprises to raise the aspirations of young people and provide them with the knowledge and awareness they need in order to pursue new opportunities and succeed in their chosen careers.

Considering UK National Careers Guideline, in December 2017 the UK Government's new Careers Strategy set out its ambitions and plans to expand the quality and quantity of career provision for all ages. It highlights high-quality careers support, world class technical education and high-quality labor market information as key areas of investment, as well as outlining the crucial role of Government, employers, careers services, local authorities and other actors.

UK also provides tools, developed by the state for career benchmarking in schools. In October 2018 the "Careers guidance and access for education and training providers" was published. The statutory guidance are issued by the British Department for Education. This means that recipients must have regard to it when carrying out duties relating to independent careers guidance and provider access to schools. This statutory guidance replaces the version issued in January 2018. This statutory guidance will be reviewed annually and updated if necessary. Since the Careers Strategy recognizes the 'variable quality' of career provision in English schools, several measures will be put in place to improve the situation by 2020 - notably the appointment of a named 'Career Leader' to lead the career programme in every school.

In addition, the Gatsby Benchmarks (developed by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation) are promoted to ensure that every secondary school in England offers quality career guidance to young people (from the ages of 11 through 18). Eight benchmarks outline what 'good' provision looks like. These are the eight Gatsby benchmarks of Good Career Guidance:

- A stable careers program
- Learning from career and labor market information
- Addressing the needs of each pupil
- Linking curriculum learning to careers
- Encounters with employers and employees
- Experiences of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance

UK provides best practices on education in different ways. “Education & Skills Funding Agency” is responsible for the commissioning, contracting and performance of the National Careers Service. In addition to the telephone channel, face-to-face advice is delivered through eleven prime contractors in 12 geographical areas.

Another purpose is to provide effective career support, schools and colleges should. For that, it is crucial to ensure that all students understand the range of career routes open to them and how to access information necessary to underpin informed choices.

Other targets are:

- Make available face-to-face guidance to all pupils from Year 8 onwards.
- Have strong links with employers who are able to contribute to pupils’ education by raising their awareness and giving insights about the range of careers open to them.
- Have access to high-quality and up-to-date labor market intelligence (LMI) and information about all education and vocational education training routes pre- and post-16 years old.
- Help young people develop competences to be able to transfer their knowledge and skills, be resilient and adaptable within changing sectors and economies.
- Work with parents to raise awareness about career routes and to challenge stereotypes.
- Have access to quality-assured careers providers and professionally qualified career development professionals to provide face-to-face guidance.

- Ensure that all leavers have a planned progression route.
- Integrate career management skills into a broad and balanced curriculum.

Non-state actors are involved in developing career guidance strategies in UK. For this a wide range of non-state actors are required to get commissioned in order to provide career services at school.

There are a variety of organizations that are dedicated to connecting schools with the world of work.

The government-funded Careers and Enterprise Company, which is linking employers to schools, is doing some good work, often in partnership with careers providers such as Career Connect, YC Herts and Adviza.

Related to education, UK provides main challenges for career guidance in schools and colleges. For instance: the lack of personalized services in the one-to-one careers guidance; a whole-school careers education programs; employer engagement (which can inform the first two legs of the stool).

It is clear that in most schools not enough is done on the difference between a general CV and a directed CV or how to relate your online application to the job specification or what about tactics for a video interview for an Elite Apprenticeship compared with a multi-mini interview for medical school?

These careers education issues will involve a complete step-change in how a school does its business, if they are to be implemented in a deep way that addresses the needs of each pupil.

To sum up UK context, according to “Training and Development Center Ltd” at the moment there aren’t enough real policy drivers to make the Gatsby benchmarks a reality for every school and pupil.

2.3.2. FRANCE

Moving on to the next, it is time to focus on France context. France has a hybrid public and private system with similar missions: information on financial subsidy schemes and job searching help. Focusing on landmarks of French National Career Strategy, one is centralized by public agency “Pôle emploi”. On the contrary, private companies work under contract with the government.

According to “Interactive 4D”, there are numerous non-profit organizations:

- Nationwide / for everybody: “Solidarité nouvelles face au chômage”, which works with retired people and teachers mentor unemployed people.
- Regional / local level: “Cap Sud-Ouest”, for recruiting simulations, writing help in the South West of France.
- Nationwide but targeted for precise groups: “Cap-Emploi”, job and career help for handicapped job searchers; “Force Femmes”, which helps women over 45 to find a job or create a company.
- Nationwide but targeted for special jobs: “Job Express”, matching organization for short jobs between individuals.

According to “Interactive 4D”, private online initiatives are important. Concretely, online job boards increasingly provide job seeking help and semi-personalized career guidance.

Universities and postgraduates’ schools also have programs for improving employability skills. Top universities and elite business/engineering schools provide their students with career guidance and international alumni networks. For instance, “Interactive 4D” remarks “HEC Alumni” (Paris), “SKEMA Business School” and “École Polytechnique” (University Paris-Saclay).

As stated by “Interactive 4D”, the main challenge for developing employability skills are the inequalities in the access to career development services. For that reason, digital tools can help overcome these inequalities. “Interactive 4D” strongly believes that video games can improve soft skills at work. The company designs serious games for recruitment training. In this line, digital tools help to overcome inequalities.

Before finishing, it is worth to mention “Emploi Store”, a public website that agglomerates several serious games: apprenticeship, writing a CV, finding a job and changing professional path.

2.3.3. MALTA

In 2018 Malta has nearly achieved full employment and is now intent on investing in Human Capital. This will be reached by implementing the Lifelong Learning Strategy (2020) and the National Employment Policy for better quality jobs. The main career development service in Malta is Jobs Plus, which falls under the Employment Training Corporation (ETC). Jobs Plus provides local jobseekers with successful and rewarding work experiences by empowering, assisting and training them; promoting workforce development

The Traineeship Scheme is intended to provide jobseekers with initial vocational training (pre-employment training) that will help individuals obtain the knowledge, skills and competence required to find and retain employment.

Traineeships are based on the dual system of vocational training providing a combination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. The programmes offered are labor market driven, whereby the job preferences of the jobseekers are matched with the requests made by employers participating in the scheme.

The duration of a traineeship varies between 10 to 26 weeks, on an average of 40 hours/week.

Governmental Schemes:

- Work Programme Initiative Scheme
- Youth Guarantee Scheme
- Childcare Subsidy
- Bridging the Gap Scheme
- Work Exposure Scheme
- Work Placement Scheme

Work Programme Initiative Scheme:

Jobsplus in collaboration with the private sector is assisting long-term unemployed individuals to re-enter into the labor market.

The Work Programme Initiative's (WPI) main objective is that of re-integration the long-term unemployed into the labor market.

This initiative consists of three phases: profiling, training and job placements.

If any participant is not placed in employment for at least 6 out of 24 months from the date of the signing of the WPI contract, s/he is referred back to Jobsplus.

The Youth Guarantee scheme: (ESF.01.002 - Youth Guarantee 2.0) is an EU-funded project, developed for young people aged 15 to 25, and which consists of four education and employment related initiatives: the NEET Activation Scheme II, SEC Preventive Classes, MCAST Preventive Classes, and the ICT Summer Courses.

Based on preventive and assistive measures, each opportunity is designed to help young people continue their education, or increase their chances of finding satisfaction and success in the world of work.

Childcare Subsidy:

Jobsplus' Childcare Subsidy Scheme offers an incentive for individuals with parental responsibilities to attend training courses in order to improve their prospects of employment and integration into the labor market.

A subsidy of €1.50 per hour on childcare services availed of during the period of training is offered by Jobsplus.

The amount of hours eligible for subsidization include the duration of the training course as well as two extra hours (allocated one hour before and one hour after the course to cater for commuting).

In all cases, the subsidy shall only apply for the days and times during which a parent/guardian is attending for a Jobsplus training course

Bridging the Gap Scheme:

This scheme is designed to support the client in the transition period from unemployment to employment. It allows the employer to evaluate the performance of the client in the workplace, prior to proper engagement.

The employer and Jobsplus enter into an agreement regarding the work exposure period, whereby the client is placed on the scheme with the prospect of employment. For the duration of the scheme, registered participants will be exempted from the weekly registration.

Clients receive a weekly allowance of 80% of the minimum wage from Jobsplus while renouncing the rights to any social security benefits throughout the work exposure phase if the period exceeds twenty-eight weeks. Employers participating in this scheme are exempted from social security contributions, wages and sick leave benefits. Throughout this work exposure phase, the employer can benefit from the support of Jobsplus officials.

Work Exposure Scheme:

The Work Exposure Scheme is intended to facilitate transition into employment by providing jobseekers with initial hands on training that will help individuals obtain the knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment.

This scheme is designed to mirror contemporary labor market demand, whereby the job preferences of the jobseekers are matched with employers' requests.

The duration of the work exposure will be 12 weeks and a participant is to report to the workplace for an average of 20 hours/week.

The on-the-job training will take place at the employer's premises with whom the trainee is placed. Participants are paid a training allowance, payable by Jobsplus for every hour attended, which is calculated on the national minimum wage.

The Work Exposure Scheme forms part of the Training for Employment project, which is co-financed by the European Social Fund 2014-2020.

The Work Placement Scheme is aimed at providing training to participants following a course offered by Jobsplus, which includes a practical component.

The Work Placement Scheme gives Jobsplus' trainees the opportunity to acquire both theoretical and practical training.

The duration of the Work Placement Scheme is of a maximum of 26 weeks, on an average of 30 hours/week.

The on-the-job training will take place at the employer's premises with whom the trainee is placed. The hours' trainees have to perform is set by Jobsplus, although trainees are allowed a degree of attendance flexibility ranging approximately between 20 hours to 40 hours per week.

The classroom training programs are recognized by the NCFHE and pegged at respective levels with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Participants are paid a training allowance, which is calculated on the national minimum wage.

Private service providers:

Private entities such as KPMG Malta, Deloitte, Domain Academy, Foundation for Women Entrepreneurs offer a number of accredited courses through the National Commission of Further and Higher Education (NCFHE). The benefit of such courses is that they are recognized in Malta and Europe.

2.3.4. ITALY

It is also important to mention the Italian employment dynamics. Since the late 1990s, the Italian labor market has been gradually reformed: labor market flexibility; softening market rigidities; introduction of temporary and para-subordinated (quasi-regular) contracts. Italian employment

rate is approximately 10% below the European one. Main structural weaknesses: women labor participation is lower compared to men; employment of young people remains below the EU15's average; North-South polarization.

Main legal aspects:

art. 4 - Italian Constitution:

«The Republic recognizes the right of all citizens to work and promotes those conditions that will make this right effective. Every citizen has the duty, according to capability and individual choice, to carry out an activity or a function that contributes to the material or spiritual progress of society»

l. 300/1970 - Workers' Statute:

It implemented Constitution's principles and policy statements such as the recognition and the guarantee of inviolable human rights; the freedom to set up trade unions and take part in union activity; the need for private economic initiative to be directed towards social purposes. Special focus on reinstatement in employment in the case of unfair dismissal (art. 18).

196/1997 – Treu Act:

It totally reformed the procedures for promoting access to employment; it abolished the principle of the public monopoly on employment services, recognizing private employment agencies as legitimate undertakings; providing an alternative to open-ended employment contracts, introducing incentive mechanisms for the employment of young people.

l. 30/2003 – Biagi Law:

It introduced further reforms aimed at enhancing the flexibility of the labor market based on the guidelines in the European Employment Strategy (battling unemployment among young people, long-term unemployment, unemployment in the South of Italy, the low rate of participation by women and older people, etc).

l. 92/2011 – Monti-Fornero Reform:

New regulation of flexible contract types and promotion of apprenticeship agreements (min. 6 months and social security discounts); hiring of an employee on a fixed-term basis is possible only for a max of 36 months; a new unemployment social benefit system for those involuntarily losing their jobs called ASPI (Assicurazione Sociale per l'Impiego).

l. 183/2014 – Jobs Act:

It supports people looking for a job; reduces the number of types of employment contracts; makes employment rules easier; introduces a state-funded resource for companies needing to put employment contracts on stand-by because of a corporate restructuring called CIG (Cassa integrazione guadagni).

2018 -New Law reform proposal:

+ € 1 billion to be allocated to state and non-state employment agencies;

more continuous and long-term connection between employment agencies and jobseekers; integration of unemployed jobseekers through incentives, professional trainings and employment proposals (to choose one of three).

State Tools for Career Guidance:

Unemployment benefits and job-seeking support:

NASpI (Nuova Assicurazione Sociale per l'Impiego) - for employees losing their job;

DIS-COLL (Indennità di disoccupazione per i lavoratori con rapporto di co.co.co.) - for dependent self-employed workers;

ASDI (Assegno di Disoccupazione) - workers who are no longer entitled to NASPI, have children, or are close to retirement age.

VOUCHER for the provision of employment services - the voucher will be allocated to workers being unfairly dismissed or hit by collective dismissals in order to help them find new job. The value of the voucher will be related to the employability of the individuals, and will be paid to employment agencies once the individual has got a job again.

Italian Career Strategy:

Competence of: Ministry of Labor; Ministry of Education and University; Regions and Provinces: CPI (Centri per l'Impiego) – public authorities that connect jobseekers with employers through information, placement and active support services at local, national and European level

Non-state employment agency: APL (Agenzie per il Lavoro) – independent agency authorized by the States which provides services for matching offers and applications for employment or other services relating to job-seeking.

Implementation of state tools:

Business incentive programs for women and young people such as SELFIE-employment, a financial instrument with support from the Youth Employment Initiative, to enhance self-employment among young people.

The FIxO programme (Training and Innovation for Employment), a placement services offered for students and graduates to facilitate students' entry into the workforce via informational services, counseling, traineeships and cross-scanning various job offers with their qualifications.

School-Work Alternation (Alternanza scuola-lavoro), which alternates formal class lessons and working internships inside companies and businesses.

Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans, for the 2017-2020 period.

Non-state actors for career guidance:

Employment agencies as strategic partner and support:

More than 2 thousand non-state employment agencies in Italy

Job search techniques used (Patto di servizio personalizzato);

Career-guidance interview (Colloquio di orientamento specialistico);

Identification of a professional target and development of an action plan (Bilancio di competenze);

Group sessions and courses;

Other activities to develop career development skills.

Career guidance in schools and colleges:

Integration between the educational system and the labor market; Cope with young people unemployment; increase the level of qualification; boost growth and competitiveness of the economy.

Two main forms of dual system in Italy (within “La buona scuola” reform):

D.Lgs no. 107/2015 – School-Work Alternation– mandatory in secondary education

D.Lgs no. 81/2015 – Apprenticeship – paid workers-apprentices (age 15-29).

Career benchmarking in schools and colleges:

87,4% of school involved in school-work alternation; 90,6% of third year's students involved in school-work alternation

BUT still 17% students drop out; 29,3% NEET population in Italy

Public and private organizations are authorized to provide placement services (intermediazione).

Not significant qualitative data that can point out the strongest aspects of the system.

Strengths – career guidance in schools and colleges:

Reduced cost of new entrants and training opportunities; Learning by doing: work-related capabilities of young employees; On-the-job training: opportunity to test new entrants through.

Best-practices – career guidance in schools and colleges:

DESI - Dual Education System Italy

Program aimed at bringing young people back to school and include them in a project-work inside the company training center, 3 months at school + 3 months within the company. Target: people 18-25 years old with a 3-year qualification.

PIL Project – Percorsi di Inserimento Lavorativo, University of Ferrara

Project addressed to undergraduates whom can implement an integrated path of education-training-work for about 18 months with the aim to support their first job experience.

Challenges – career guidance in school and colleges:

SCHOOLS: Absence of specific regulatory provisions; Need of improve mindset towards the value of training, both practical and theoretical; Definition of the tool: job-orientation or educational tool? Or both?

IN GENERAL: Career guidance loosely regulated; Companies underestimate the school curriculum value; Companies and stakeholders not well aware of their role schooling/training system.

HOW to SUPPORT – CAREER GUIDANCE in SCHOOLS and COLLEGES

Need of intermediary organizations to facilitate transition from school to work;

Promote effective dialogue between education and vocational training, public bodies at a territorial level, and organizations representing the interests of the workers and the local economy;

Those involved need to be culturally prepared to accompany the processes of change and innovation.

2.3.5. ROMANIA

Career Counseling in the Romanian Educational System

The primary level (0-4)

The main objective:

Creating of equal opportunities for all children; Counseling for the future career: Identifying skills and developing them during the classes; Reduced Impact: no emphasis is placed on developing of the individual skills

The gymnasium level (5-8)

It guarantees the pupils' access to culture by developing the freedom to enhance their spiritual universe in order to gain access to the values of national and universal culture.

Completion: National Test (called "Evaluare Nationala"). The result in the capacity exam and the average at the gymnasium are used for computerized distribution.

High School Level (9-12)

Focused on the development and diversification of key competences and on the formation of specific competencies according to the branch, profile, specialization or qualification.

Fields: Theoretical; Technology; Vocational; Higher Education

Universities

Since 2014 universities have been forced to set up career counseling and guidance centers (CCOCs). CCOC's career counseling and guidance activity is aimed at:

- the students of the higher education institution in which they operate;
- high school students;
- graduates of their own or of other universities.

CCOC's Objectives:

- Guidance and counseling students / students so that they are able to plan and manage their own educational path;
- Reducing university dropout for various reasons;
- Facilitating the relationship between students and the labor market;

- Increasing the employability of the students in the fields of graduated studies.

CCOC's Activity. Information, guidance and counseling of students in the high school / student termination years by offering the following services:

- educational and vocational counseling;
- psychological counseling and evaluation;
- career counseling;
- development of materials for information, guidance and counseling.

Actions related to increasing the insertion of students and graduates into the labor market by offering the following services:

- training sessions on the employment portfolio, simulation of the employment interview;
- organization of companies' presentations;
- training sessions for the development of students' transversal competences;
- realizing of periodical studies and analyzes on the university dropout, integrating graduates into the labor market, the impact of counseling and vocational guidance services, and proposing measures to improve them;
- developing and applying specific tools to monitor of the labor market insertion;
- participation in activities organized by graduates.

Components of CCOC:

- Psychologists certified in the specialty Educational Psychology, School Counseling and Vocational Counseling;
- career counselors;
- sociologists;
- teachers with expertise in the field of specialization of students and graduates.

1 career / psychologist / 2,000 enrolled students

The Dropout in Universities 1 of 3 students don't arrive at the license (according to ANOSR).

None of the 23 interviewed universities had the students' dropout below 10% and in 10 of these institutions almost one in two students dropped out of studies. 18% of master students do not complete the studies

Causes of university dropout:

- The lack of specialized counseling in high school where students do not discover what they would like to make alive or what career they would suit. Many young people join a college depending on friends, on parents' desires or the number of available places
- Lack of financial resources

2.3.6. SPAIN

Landmarks of National Career Strategy

The Annual Employment Policy Plan (PAPE) contains services (actions) and programs (measures) of active employment policies that are proposed to be carried out by the Autonomous Communities, both those financed through state funds, distributed in accordance with the agreed objective criteria by the Sectoral Conference on Employment and Labor Issues, as well as with its own economic resources, as well as the actions and measures that the Public Service of State Employment itself will carry out in its area of competence.

The R. D. 3/2015, of October 23, which approves the revised text of the Employment Law, establishes as coordination instruments of the National Employment System:

The Spanish Strategy for Activation for Employment, regulated in Article 10.

The Annual Plans of Employment Policy, regulated in article 11.

The Information System of Public Employment Services, which is configured as a common information system that will be organized with an integrated and compatible computer structure, and will be the technical instrument that will integrate the information related to labor intermediation, to the management of active employment policies, and unemployment protection, carried out by the Public Employment Services throughout the territory of the State.

This system will guarantee that labor intermediation functions are carried out properly, without territorial barriers; the registration of job seekers; the traceability of the actions followed by these in their relationship with the Public Employment Services; the common statistics; the communication of the content of the contracts; the knowledge of the resulting information and the monitoring, among other areas, of the management of vocational training for employment,

vocational guidance, employment initiatives and hiring bonuses, as well as the actions of employment agencies.

It will also allow the evaluation, monitoring and control of the use of funds from the General Budgets of the State or the European Union for its justification.

The Annual Employment Policy Plan establishes the objectives to be achieved in each year by the National Employment System, as well as the indicators that will be used to assess its degree of achievement. In this way, the Annual Employment Policy Plan is configured as an instrument for evaluating the services and programs of active employment policies developed by the Public Employment Service of the State and the autonomous communities.

The Annual Employment Policy Plan 2018 is the fundamental annual coordination tool for the management of employment policies and includes a total of 620 services and programs. These services and programs are structured in 6 axes:

- Orientation
- Training
- Employment opportunities
- Equal opportunities in access to employment
- Entrepreneurship
- Improvement of the institutional framework of the National Employment System

For the preparation of the 2018 Plan, the criteria included in section 5, adapted to the Spanish Employment Activation Strategy 2017-2020, have been followed, according to the new programming, evaluation and financing model of active employment policies. According to the Spanish Employment Activation Strategy 2017-2020, three types of objectives are established:

a) Key Objectives, which synthesize and constitute the ultimate purpose of the performance of public employment services, and whose indicators will be the same as that used by the European Network of Public Employment Services in its methodology for evaluation and management of change:

- Reduce unemployment
- Increase the activation and reduction of periods of unemployment.

- Improve the participation of public employment services in the coverage of vacancies
- Improve the level of satisfaction of employers and applicants with the services provided by public employment services.

b) Strategic or priority objectives, which are those that acquire special relevance at a given time, and in which attention and effort must be focused during a period of time:

- Promote the activation and improvement of the employability of young people, with special attention to those with the greatest deficiencies in training and risk of job insecurity, through instruments such as the Guarantee Juvenile and coordination with the education system.

- Promote employment as the main instrument of social inclusion, improving as a priority the activation and insertion of long-term unemployed and those over 55 years of age.

- Promote, according to the needs identified in the diagnoses personalized and with the needs of the productive system, an offer training aimed at a changing labor market, better adjusting competences and facilitating labor transitions.

- Improve the performance of public employment services by modernizing the instruments of the National Employment System.

- Address activation policies from a holistic perspective that has taking into account their sectoral and local dimensions, and establishing frameworks for collaboration with employers, social partners and other agents public and private.

c) Structural objectives, which are those of a stable nature, which have to be addressed by public employment services in their ordinary operation through sustained services over time.

These objectives are articulated in the six axes of the activation policies for employment included in article 10 of the rewritten text of the Employment Law, grouped on the basis of the experience obtained in the Annual Employment Policy Plans of previous years:

- Orientation
- Training
- Employment opportunities
- Equal opportunities in access to employment

- Entrepreneurship
- Improvement of the institutional framework of the National Employment System

Tools, developed by State for career benchmarking in schools

Spain, the State gives the Autonomous Communities the competences to develop the actions they deem appropriate.

As possible tools for career guidance, all universities, public and private, have a professional training service. For example,

- SOIL. Orientation and employment service of Catholic University San Antonio de Murcia
- COIE. Employment orientation and information center of the University of Murcia.

In schools, there is an orientation department that advises students about any professional guidance training.

Non-state actors in developing career guidance strategies

CEEIM (Centro Europeo de Empresas e Innovación de Murcia) is a non-profit private foundation working since 2008 in the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the Region of Murcia. CEEIM works every day in the promotion of entrepreneurship, supporting the creation and consolidation of innovative and technology based companies, boosting the attraction of smart capital and promoting startups globalization.

Main challenges of career guidance in schools and colleges

Professional guidance in the institutes is understood as a consultancy process that aims to help students to make decisions and follow training itineraries, taking into account their interests and abilities students, as well as the demands of the world of work. In addition, prepare for constant changes that may include situations of unemployment, professional adaptations, changes in occupation and even profession. According to the sociological study “The laboral future” (2017), carried out at 12,000 students in Spain, 23.7% consider that they will work in a job that does not yet exist.

According to Guitierrez-Crespo (2017), we live in a world of changes that will affect the world of work, causing professions to disappear, those that we know will change and others to emerge in the near future. Therefore, the great challenge of professional guidance, will be to train students to be able to face with this process of change and adapt to it. To cover these new work

prospects, it would be convenient to develop skills such as: adaptive thinking, social intelligence, intercultural competence, virtual collaboration ..

Examples of best national practices by state and non-state actors.

During these last three years “La Era de los Valientes” has researched and worked with the unemployed and people who seek to change their professional development, identifying the keys and techniques to respond to their future work.

They have worked with people of all ages and with different levels of training: young people without work experience, long-term unemployed, people who want to reinvent themselves and disgruntled workers who want to have a Plan B defined in case things do not turn out as expected.

Their research and experience have led to the methodology that goes beyond a simple workshop and accompanies and helps unemployed people through a book, a software specifically designed and an app for iOS or Android to track the activity, named TALENTIKUM: through questions related to soft skills, this app try to improve the ability of the students and unemployed people to create a more attractive cv and to stay tuned on job opportunities close to the customer.

University programs: soft skills as a part of the curriculum

The inclusion of soft skills as a part of the curriculum constitute a best practice for teaching and learning these abilities. As far as our study are concerned, while technical skills are part of many excellent curricula, soft skills need more emphasis on university programs so that students learn the importance of soft skills at the beginning of their academic programs before embarking on the labor market.

According to Tito Maya and Serrano Orellana (2016: 68), educators have a special responsibility for the development of soft skills, because during the university stage is where you get the greatest impact on the development of those skills. Soft skills are usually best developed through active participation of students, continuous feedback and practice.

It is important that universities train students in soft skills so that they graduate with tools that add a differentiating advantage that allows them to compete in the labor market, get good jobs, get well paid, and generally maintain a high sense of wellbeing with yourself and in different areas of your life.

For the teaching of these skills it is necessary to modify the contents of the education, giving as much importance to the technical knowledge as to the soft competences. This could be underpinned by a formal, systematic and long term process that clearly sets the desired level of

these skills and that achieved by students, and continuously provide spaces for students to incorporate soft skills into their profile throughout their career (Tito Maya and Serrano Orellana, 2016: 72)

There is a lot of research coming from different universities, which have dealt with the topic of how to introduce soft skills in the academic curriculums. However, according to some sources, it is believed that these actions have been taken without having generated enough debate on the issue in order to clarify the concepts around it and to analyse the most appropriate models. The initiatives do not only appear in the academic context, but also in companies, where there are trainings on soft skills.

PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, COURSES

Generally, soft skill development can be performed under different forms and with various tools: mini-curricula; programs, workshops and labs; training sessions (sometimes with outdoor activities); projects (internal project works, external cooperation projects etc.); internal and external competitions; cycles of seminars (face to face lessons) and/or colloquia (guest speakers); company visits, journeys (study tours), internship and on the job training; individual or group tasks / learning based on practical activities.

Some special training programs/courses for developing soft skills are these we are going to develop:

❖ **ICARO INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM FOR ADULT LEARNERS ON SOFT SKILLS.** Agreement number: 2017-1-ES01-KA204-038271:

COURSE METHODOLOGY IN SOFT SKILLS.

Currently, training programs in basic skills already exist in Europe, but in the case of the ICARO project, innovation is based on the design, development and implementation of a methodology based on the following pillars:

- Holistic approach of long-term unemployed adult students: the ICARO project includes the principles and tools used in the case management methodology. The objective of the project is to increase the employability of the target groups and achieve success. It is essential to take into account the personal situation of adult students that prevent their (re) integration into the labor market.

- Special needs of the target groups: ICARO works with long-term unemployed adult students, including groups at risk of social exclusion, so the methodology adapts to their characteristics.

- Development of the initial assessment toolkit to evaluate the profiles of the target groups and assess what skills they have before following the ICARO curriculum to design customized training routes based on specific individual needs.
- Design of an accredited curriculum on social skills for long-term unemployed adults, as they are essential to find a job. The ICARO target group lacks this type of skills and proposes a special methodology to teach soft skills to the specific group of long-term unemployed adult students, including groups at risk of exclusion.
- The use of an online environment for the practical application of the curriculum with the target groups will increase the ICT skills in the ICARO target groups and will take into account the specific profile of the target groups.
- Special attention will be given to strengthening the training of adult staff / employment counselors.
- Finally, there is a possible process of accreditation of skills acquired through participation in the training program.

ACTIONS BEFORE THE COURSE BEGINS

There are different aspects to consider before taking the course, such as: being clear about the profile of the participants to whom it is addressed and the professionals who will give tutoring to the training action; as well as the use of assessment tools in Soft Skills and their results.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPATING PEOPLE (STUDENTS AND GUARDIANS)

The course is aimed at unemployed adults between 18 and 50 years in a job search process, being the objective of this training action (and the entire process designed by ICARO) that participants acquire a good understanding of their skills and skills in relation to social skills, through a process of self-analysis and / or external analysis. Participants must acquire a good understanding of their existing skills and abilities through a process of self-analysis of existing and transferable skills. It is very important for the success of the process, that the selection of the participants in the course is appropriate for the level of the contents. For this, professionals who participate in the selection process must have a thorough knowledge of the characteristics of future candidates to participate: educational level, career and work context, family and social, etc. All this process is based on a personalized itinerary for each of them. It is intended that each student complete an initial assessment of soft skills at the beginning of the course with the help of a labor counselor, to determine the strengths and areas for improvement. On the other hand, the selection of professionals who will accompany the whole process must be adequate to the

final objective: to develop awareness of the need to promote this type of skills, favoring employability. As indicated in the ICARO project, the appropriate profile for mentoring and monitoring during the process is that of professionals with experience in adult education, career guidance who have experience in the field of employment and assistance to groups potentially at risk of social exclusion. In addition, they must have training and knowledge of the tools developed by the Icaro project, which will be used for this diagnosis and to supervise the entire process. This means that educators and counselors must have the necessary skills and competencies to support these people and find and use tools to make the competencies visible and possibly certifiable.

THE COURSE "FROM HOME TO WORK"

The course is organized on the basis of the four Soft Skills categories established by the ICARO project in its IO1:

- Digital competences
- Initiative and Entrepreneurship.
- Social and civic competences.
- Cultural awareness

The access to the course will be made from the detection of the capacity of each user assisted, as well as from his personal analysis of the needs of access or re-entry to the labor market. Therefore, the basis of the project lies in the application of evaluation and self-assessment tools incorporated in the ICARO project; as well as the design of an individualized itinerary (see tools, etc.).

COURSE CONTENTS

The curriculum has been based on the Council Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning and has been designed in accordance with the EU document "Key competences for lifelong learning" (2018), aiming to provide information, knowledge and skills to increase their ability and opportunity to get a job. At the end of the course, you will have created a portfolio of resources and skills that will help you find and keep a job. Therefore, the curriculum, the individual modules and unit themes are designed to "emphasize the importance of personal and interpersonal skills, sometimes called 'life' 'socio-emotional' or 'soft'", as they help people to respond to uncertainty and change.

As detailed in the 2018 proposal, the curriculum also aims to "highlight" civic competence and the role of citizenship, shared values, human rights and strengthen media literacy and

intercultural skills; It also highlights creativity, the ability to plan and manage processes and treat risk as part of decision making, as essential dimensions of business competition.

The course has an estimated duration of 150 hours through an online learning platform developed in Moodle, which combines online learning with face-to-face sessions. The program includes four themes, with a total of twelve units and an approximate duration of 10 hours each subject.

The online program is complemented by a series of workshops / sessions of 40 hours for the entire course. The units are not limited to a sequential and linear access mode. Each module is designed to be available separately and includes a presentation of the content, activities, evaluation and tools that are used individually and in groups, according to the mode of access. The course provides a dynamic and interactive learning environment where the tutor guides students as they apply concepts and becomes creatively involved in the topic and will use inclusive strategies that reinforce the idea that group work is fundamental to the success of a soft skills course.

The tutor is encouraged to be creative and flexible regarding the student's needs and preparation for learning, and will adapt the methodology according to the characteristics of the students to encourage student participation as well. Although the modules and units of this curriculum can be selected and completed at the discretion and choice of the students, an online community of practice is intended to be promoted and supported by counselors, tutors and the students themselves.

STRUCTURE OF EACH MODULE / TOPIC

- **Self-evaluation exercise / Reflective activity.**

These activities should complement each other and allow the student to assess their knowledge of the subject at the beginning of the unit and then check their level of knowledge at the end. It is a reflective activity that must evaluate the learner's perception of what they have learned and also allows them to produce a written work, a video or a complete template to upload to an ePortfolio or Padlet.

- **PowerPoint**

Each thematic area contains a PowerPoint presentation, which covers the critical areas of each topic, providing participants with a good overview of the core content and provides references to material for additional reading. This Powerpoint can include activities for students to pause and reflect on concepts or conduct research. In the first topic "Digital Competences" the power point is narrated, which will allow its visualization online. However, in the other topics, it is

recommended that the visualization be done in face-to-face sessions, since it is advisable for the tutor to develop the content in a manner appropriate to the level and characteristics of the group.

- **Written article**

The article provides detailed information about the area with more links and references for additional reading opportunities. The tutor can recommend its reading and perform some type of analysis activity on it; or, depending on the level of the student, recommend another type of reading more appropriate according to the real situation of the student or group.

- **Activities and extra material.**

A range of activities / exercises designed to be used by the student(s) to transform the knowledge gained through Powerpoint and the written piece. These activities can use the indicated online tools or the YouTube / Tedtalks videos. Written materials can be provided through articles or blogs. Depending on the level of learning and literacy levels, it may be appropriate to prioritize visual material such as video, infographics and images as content. The activities can be independent or act as evaluation forms that require the student to reflect and respond to the content through a blog, video, note or exercise.

EVALUATION IN THE ICARO PROJECT

The evaluation should be carried out through a range of tools and approaches that not only allow an assessment of learning, but also an assessment for learning. The ICARO project is proposed as a process of sensitization towards the acquisition of soft skills, so there is no space for a traditional and formal evaluation system. For this reason, ICARO leaves in the hands of the tutor the type of evaluation and the activities to be carried out, according to the student who develops the course. However, there are some characteristics and elements that will favor a future accreditation of competences.

Evaluation activities. The evaluation will have a continuous component so that students can self-evaluate when necessary and verify their own understanding and acquisition of competences. The evaluation of the module should provide the student with a set of results that provide evidence about the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the student, generating a portfolio of resources, knowledge and skills of applicability. Students must acquire a good understanding of their existing skills and abilities through a process of self-analysis of skills. The evaluator must design and develop assessment tasks for each learning outcome. Students should have the opportunity to show evidence of achievement of all their learning outcomes. The tutor must design the assessment to allow the student to use a wide range of media when presenting evaluation tests, as appropriate.

❖ Another project we present is “DISCO-EUROPEAN DICTIONARY OF SKILLS AND COMPETENCES” (Acronym: DISCO <http://disco-tools.eu/disco2portal/>). DISCO, the European Skills and Competency Dictionary, is an online thesaurus that currently covers more than 104,000 skill and competency terms and approximately 36,000 phrases. DISCO, which is available in 11 European languages, is one of the most extensive collections of its kind in the field of education and the labor market. The DISCO thesaurus offers a multilingual terminology reviewed by experts in classifying, describing and translating skills and competences. It is compatible with other European tools such as Europass, ESCO, MECU (EQF) and ECVET. It is a tool to support the international comparability of skills and competences applied, for example, to curriculum vitae and personal e-portfolios, job and job placement announcements, qualifications and descriptions of learning outcomes. The DISCO online tool helps you understand and adequately express your individual skills and competences in several European languages.

❖ Another interesting project is “SOCIAL SKILLS IN ACTION!” Specialized course on Social Skills from the University of Valladolid (<https://formacion.funge.uva.es/cursos/habilidades-sociales-en-accion/>). The project title is “Training on basic social skills for active job-seekers” (<http://www.proyectohogar.es/index.php/que-es-el-pai/pai-empleo/208-curso-deformacion-en-habilidades-sociales-basicas-para-la-busqueda-activa-de-empleo>)

This is a training course in basic social skills for active job seeking. It is addressed to the working age population (aged 16 and over). The aim of the project is to equip beneficiaries with basic social skills to enable them to pursue an active job search in an appropriate manner. As regards the description of activities, the course consists of three parts:

- AUTOKNOWLEDGE: Try to make them reflect on what they want to do in their working life, the qualities they possess so far (training, work experience) that they think they can get with the skills they possess... Think about the image they project. How do they see themselves? How do you think others see them? How would you like them to see them?
- COMMUNICATION: Provide people with the basic communication skills necessary for job search and to maintain them (in relation to verbal and nonverbal language).
- INTERVIEW: Provide people with the skills to cope with the basic particularities to conduct a job interview. Each course will have a ratio of 10 students.

❖ Continuing with the projects, another interesting proposal is the project titled “100X100 ACTIVATION” (Ministry of Employment and Social Security). The keyword is: “we help you find work in 100 days”. 100x100 Activation is a service promoted by the SEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and the company Local Initiatives, which aims to increase through the mediation of a personal trainer or coach the chances of job placement of people seeking employment. 100x100 Activation consists of a continuous work for 100 days with a group of 25 people willing to find work, which will be coordinated by a coach-coach who will have the function of accompanying them in the activities proposed by the program.

The program is aimed at people who feel that their efforts to find work are not being effective and who believe that by changing strategy or attitude they can achieve that result. They must be registered in the Regional Employment and Training Service (SEF) and they are selected on the basis of a personalized evaluation and they commit to participate until the end of the program. The commitment to participation will imply compulsory attendance at both group and individual sessions.

▪ **WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO GET?**

- Increase your recruitment possibilities.
- Optimize your job search and entrepreneurship strategies.
- Speed up your job insertion.
- Discover your talent and put it into value.
- Make better use of your resources.
- Set achievable professional goals.
- Have a custom action plan.
- Increase your network of professional contacts.
- Tools and techniques to overcome selective processes.

▪ **HOW IS IT DONE?**

The accompanying sessions will be group and individual, offering a personalized service adapted to the circumstances of each person. It is not a training activity, but to give users the opportunity to have the support of expert professionals to increase their skills communication, optimizing strategies for job search and entrepreneurship, better understanding of professional potential,

formulating professional objectives in line with their profile and learning effective techniques for proposing to companies, successfully undertaking a selection interview, or launching their own professional activities as freelancers or entrepreneurs.

The coaches work with active search engines in different facets. In the first place, motivational aspects are developed, with the intention of reactivating those people who need to generate changes in their approach to the search for employment. Subsequently, a talent detection module is performed, which allows the participant to clearly identify and enhance their main skills.

From the identification of strengths, and with this individualized monitoring, participants set a specific professional objective, and begin to analyze the labor market to determine which sector or type of company can best adapt to their profile. Finally, an action plan is drawn up and define deadlines, in which they take concrete steps to get closer to their objectives. Each user of the previous groups managed to deliver more than 100 hp to companies, meet personally and meet with human resources managers, expand your contacts and make yourself known through a preferential channel that opened up access to companies.

The groups work together to attract job vacancies and increase their networks of contacts in the business field, always with a proactive approach to the process of seeking employment.

❖ One more project title: LANZADERAS DE EMPLEO. An Employment shuttle is a heterogeneous team of unemployed people with a dynamic, committed and supportive spirit who voluntarily access this initiative and who, coordinated by a coach, reinforce their skills, generate collective knowledge, become visible and collaborate in the achievement of a Common goal: to get a job, either on your own or on your own.
<https://www.fundaciontelefonica.com/empleabilidad/lanzaderas-de-empleo/>:

2.4. Online assessment tool to evaluate employment-related soft

Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, creativity and entrepreneurship are increasingly in demand in today's labor market and these competencies may prove to be the distinguishing factor between two candidates with equivalent qualifications and experience.

How can we measure these skills? How can students and young workers demonstrate these skills on a CV or e-Portfolio? What are today's and tomorrow's employers really looking for?

The eLene4work European project is tackling the definition of these soft skills, including digital soft skills, and proposes a series of actions and practical tools to help young talents better

understand the expectations of employers, to assess their own level of competency and to further develop these skills through open education initiatives such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and OERs (Open Educational Resources).

Some examples about assessment:

1. <http://coaching.toptenbusinessexperts.com> . It is aimed at company managers, but it can be done for employees with a certain qualification: It consists of a 3-phase process: the first phase studies the level of development achieved by the coach in its managerial competencies. This competence analysis can be carried out in greater or lesser depth: self-evaluation, 180° feedback or 360° feedback. The second phase makes a diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses (it obtains information on strong, weak competences, own perception of the competences and from other's point of view, as well as the potential for improvement). Finally, the third phase proposes an improvement plan and establishes the guidelines that the coach must follow to improve those competencies that have been detected as weak points.
2. <http://www.gesdireccion.es/servicios.htm>. The GesDirección consultancy develops self-assessment with processes based on the Diagnosis of strong and weak competences, as well as an improvement plan. The service is aimed at management teams and organizations and is like the previous one.
3. <http://certificacion.ttisuccessinsights.es/>. DISC - The Master DISC International & Motivadores certification program is aimed at HR professionals, Training professionals, Leaders, Coaches, Consultants and all those interested in supporting their processes of people management, leadership, team formation and coaching, in the personal and organizational field. It supports recruitment processes to have a more assertive selection considering the behavior of people, their strengths and weaknesses and how these can affect the performance of their duties
4. <https://www.insights.com/es/>. Insight Discovery - Evaluates teamwork skills. Starting with the knowledge of oneself and others, they help people to understand the reasons why they choose to work as they do, and why other people act differently. This is a benefit for the overall efficiency of the team. They work primarily with teams, starting with self-knowledge from your own personal style, how your colleagues prefer to work, and what that can mean for the team.

5. <http://people-performance.com/cat/radar-lideratge>. Radar 360. It's kind of the DISC. It is based on labor levels. Competencies that it measures (among others): strategic planning, empathy, delegate, service orientation, team coordination, adaptability, decision making.
6. http://www.ildefe.es/Empleo/Buscas_trabajo/Test_de_Habilidades_Sociales/Social_Skills_Test_of_ILDEFE (Leonés Institute of Economic Development, Training and Employment). It is a multiple-choice test that shows which social skills need to be improved.

2.5. FINAL REMARKS

Taking all these into account, the labor market is increasingly adding value to soft skills rather than hard skills. While the latter are easily trained, learning soft abilities can take many years. The authors mention that the difficulty of training soft abilities is explained by its strong dependence on the traits of per Singer, Guzmán & Donoso (2009) point out that even punctual interventions such as attending workshops on soft skills significantly improve these skills, so they suggest that systematic medium and long term strategies be generated to achieve greater benefits.

According to the above, if it is possible to develop soft skills by making specific interventions on this topic and incorporating tools such as: the design and development of projects in teams, artistic activities or with the community, applying the Kraiger learning circle, games, simulations, modeling, mentoring etc. (Tito Maya and Serrano Orellana, 2016: 71).

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B. PRACTICAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. CREATIVITY

Creativity is not an escape from discipline, it is an escape subject to discipline

Jerry Hirschberg

Creativity is defined as the ability to create things. Many people consider themselves “rational”, “logical” or “practical”, and they think that it is only artists that are creative. Were Edison, Tesla, Einstein or Steve Jobs artists? Most probably not. They were, and are still, among the most creative people in their fields. This is because true creativity means to deal with an issue or a challenge, and approach it from a new and different angle. It means finding new ways of doing one thing, and having new perspectives, and new paradigms.

A group of Japanese farmers have found an innovative solution to be able to transport as many melons in a volume as small as possible. They have placed these melons, while still small, in some square glass boxes. They resulted in square melons which take less room for transport purposes. They have thus gone beyond the millennial idea that melons must be round.

Creativity is a part of each and everyone of us. However, we do not all manage to maintain and develop this skill and turn it into a competence that we can use in life or at our workplace. Half a century ago, Pablo Picasso said: ***"Every child is an artist, the challenge is to remain an artist when you grow up"***.

In a study conducted in 1968 by a team led by Dr. George Land, a test was performed on 1600 children (aged between 4 and 5 years old) where the aim was to discover whether we are born creative or become so during the course of our lives. This test measured divergent thinking, and listed as creative geniuses all those individuals who were able to come up with hundreds of solutions to a specific question or problem. The results were amazing: 98% of respondents were creative geniuses. The children took this test again when they turned 10. This time, only 30% of them proved to be creative geniuses. When tested again at the age of 15, only 12% of them were

still in this category. The test was then subsequently applied to a sample of 280 000 adults that were aged over 25, and the results showed that only 2% of them made it into the creative geniuses' category. The conclusion was that the decrease in creativity is a result of school and family education, and society in general.

Each individual thinks in two different ways:

- **divergent thinking (imagination)**, which is a way of thinking which we are born with, and which is used to create new possibilities;
- **convergent thinking**, which is used when we are making decisions, testing something, criticizing, and evaluating. This way of thinking may result in restricting imagination, especially if it is corrupted by dogmas and paradigms.

Obviously, these two types of thinking have a well-defined role in our lives, and a balance must be struck between them. Can we limit convergent thinking, and restore our childhood creativity? George Land believes that we can do so by getting in touch with our inner child. Creativity can be learnt, however must be practised. .

Even if we are not all creative, we can improve this skill by performing a number of exercises. Depending on our personality and preferred learning method, we can practise one or more of the methods below in order to become more creative.

30 circles exercise

Take a piece of paper and draw 30 circles **In one minute, try to turn as many of them into objects** (one can be the sun, another can be a ball, etc.). Just keep in mind that it is important to get as many objects in 60 seconds (**it is quantity that matters, not the quality**).

❖ Generate as many ideas as possible

A simple exercise is **to generate as many unusual ideas as possible by using common objects**. For instance, how many new uses can you find in 5 minutes for a fork or a desk clip?

James Altucher, an American entrepreneur, reached the lowest point in his life in 2000: he had lost \$ 15 million in the past 2 years, had divorced and was about to lose his house. The only solution he could have a glimpse of was suicide that should look like an accident, so that his children could inherit his life insurance. He still decided to try a new challenge: to become an **idea machine**, considering that money can be lost, but if you have ideas you can earn it again. Altucher started to write **10 ideas a day** in a notebook.

Why 10 ideas?

The task has to be difficult enough to present a real challenge. For most of us, the first 3 ideas are easy to come up with, the next 2 are a little harder, and the final 5 to 10 ideas are the most difficult to find, and are the ones that make your brain "sweat". That is how creativity can be developed. It is important to know that not all ideas must be brilliant or even good. One may have 3650 great ideas a year. However if one idea in 10 is good, that is enough.

What kind of ideas should I come up with?

Ideas can be related to any field: 10 business ideas, 10 stupid invention ideas, 10 leisure ideas, 10 surprises you can make for your friend, 10 things you learnt from X, 10 things to become better, etc.

How long does this exercise take?

The time allowed for this exercise may differ from person to person, and depends on the field in which you want to generate ideas. If you are thinking about 10 business ideas, you should definitely allocate more time to these than you would when thinking about, for example, 10 vacation ideas.

When will you obtain the results?

You will usually need **6 months** before becoming an "idea machine".

How does this exercise help you?

At one point in 2006, Altucher came up with 10 ideas for a website that he wanted to create. Nine of these ideas were bad ideas. He paid a programmer \$ 2,000 to make him a website out of the remaining good idea that he had. Nine months later, he sold it for \$10 million (this was called StockPickr, a financial transaction website based on a user community).

Even if you do not earn as much as Altucher did, these exercises will help you start finding creative solutions to problems, and be able to generate a lot more creative ideas than you had before starting this exercise.

Invest in yourself!

Draw up two columns on a piece of paper:

- Write down your ideas in one of them
- In the other column write down the first step you should take for implementing your idea (just the first step, you will then see where you get).

❖ Notice how other people work.

When you are in a classroom or in an office, pay attention to how people around you work, and observe their process behind good ideas. If there are people amongst your colleagues, who often manage to solve difficult problems, invite them out for a coffee and try to find out how this person goes around in finding solutions to difficult scenarios. Having discussions with people who have led interesting lives, even when these are contradictory to yours, can be a great source of ideas. Even if initially you feel frustrated with the discussion that you are having with them, you will relax along the way, and be able to use their experiences to help you.

Try to travel as much as possible, attend conferences, and pay attention to how moderators (speakers) conduct discussions and build their arguments.

Keep this in mind! Practice and motivation are key ingredients to success!

Invest in yourself

See how one of your colleagues finds solutions to work tasks and note down what he/she does differently to you.

❖ Ask a lot of questions

If you have a habit of asking a lot of questions to colleagues, and acquaintances about different activities related to school, work or life, then you will be able to compare their answers with yours. You will come across new problems to solve, as well as discover innovative answers which will develop your critical thinking.

Invest in yourself

- During the presentation the trainer makes, write down 3 questions and ask them verbally or in writing.
- While reading the news, think about a question you would like to ask the reporter.
- After reading a novel, think about 3 questions you want to ask a character.

❖ Analyze in detail what the people that you admire do

A research idea makes you concentrate, and devote all your attention to a single purpose in order to discover something valuable.

By researching in detail what others are doing right, you will begin to discover patterns, and understand certain things differently. You will also begin to generate your own patterns on how to do things well. **There is no point in doing everything from scratch**, because you risk wasting time in vain and getting stuck in a rut. It is always important to analyse the different solutions that can end up being beneficial.

Your creativity must bring about added value, and not reinvent things in the same way.

❖ Use radiant thinking (make use of mindmaps)

A mind map is a way of brainstorming , without having to worry about the order or structure of ideas. With this method you can get rid of self-censorship, and the fact that you are organizing your ideas visually, helps both in clarifying, analyzing, and memorizing them.

You can mindmap anything, because it helps you focus and you feel like you're accessing resources that you didn't know about. If you want to experience in detail what a mindmap is, you

can read [How to Mindmap](#) by Tony Buzan. In order to make a mindmap, there are numerous dedicated softwares such as [Mindomo](#), or else you can choose to visit <https://coggle.it/>.

Invest in yourself

Access Mindomo or Coogle and create an account on one of them. Choose a topic and create a mindmap.

❖ Make unique associations between the ideas themselves

The British researcher Paul Howard-Jones conducted a study in which he divided a group of people into two, and asked them to create stories based on 3 words. Half the group received the words "wash", "teeth" and "shine", the other half "cow", "zipper" and "star". Those who received the unrelated words came up with more creative stories.

Invest in yourself

- Open the dictionary at random, choose the 3rd word on the top right page. Then repeat the process 3 or 4 more times and then form a sentence with the words found, which will be logical and plausible.
- Choose two sentences from 2 different books (for example, the third sentence on page 50 of each book) and make a story that links them both.

**Creativity is not about finding something, but doing something about it
after you've found it.**

James Russel Lowel



2. TIME MANAGEMENT



You have to use time as a tool, not as a crutch

John F. Kennedy

Time management refers to a set of principles, practices, skills and systems, that are used to control the time spent performing specific activities. This is done in order to increase the efficiency or productivity of work.

Time is not a renewable resource, as it can never be recovered. While the duration of a day, or even of an hour, is the same for everyone, it is what we do in this time frame that differentiates us.

If you want to find out the value of time

1 year: Ask a teenager who has failed admission to university

1 month: Ask a mother who has given birth to a premature baby

1 day: Ask somebody who was born on 29 February

1 hour: Ask 2 lovers who are waiting to meet

1 minute: Ask somebody who has arrived at the station just when the train was leaving

1 second: Ask a driver involved in a car accident

Time management does not only reduce stress, but it is also a life philosophy. Besides health, time is our only true wealth, and it is the currency into which all of our life experiences are

converted into. Consequently, do not waste time as this actually means wasting your life. Even though most people realize that their time is precious, they waste it instead of investing it into their own lives.

Have you ever felt like you are running out of time, and that you are up to your ears in all sorts of activities? For many of us, our daily agenda seems to be constantly crammed. Some of us give up in trying to keep up with everything, whereas others take it upon them to juggle everything. At the end of the day, what we all need is a time management plan, that has the ability of showing us that we have more time on our hands than we think in order to fit in our activities. Is it possible to keep up with everything? Well, **YES**.

There are a thousand ways to waste a day, but none to turn it back.



Arabic saying

Everyday is subjected to the constraints of a universal dictator: the clock. The clock measures time and controls us all, whether we're young, adults, elderly, managers, employees, employers, etc. Each day consists of twenty-four hours, and we must use this time wisely both in our personal lives and our work.

The good news is that managing time can be learnt, but for that you need patience and ... time. By investing a little time and effort in acquiring time management skills you will become a more efficient and productive person, not only on a professional level, but also in your everyday life.

The first step that you need to take is to identify.... **THE TIME THIEVES**. They are everywhere, invisible and silent, but still very active. If you are not careful, they can steal a large part of this important resource. It's useless crying out "I have no time" when you finally realise that you will not be able to recover the lost minutes. "Time thieves" will never go away, but time management can help you in controlling them.

Some of these "thieves" come from external sources, while others rely on you to be complicit, and help them in their mission of distraction.

- ✓ **external** (unplanned or unnecessarily extended phone calls, unexpected visits, colleagues who want to expose you to their own problems, open door policies, the employer, frequent or long meetings, interruptions caused by children, parents, etc.)

- ✓ **internal** (confusing and shifting priorities and goals, lack of a daily work plan, lack of self-imposed deadlines, tendency to do too much, disorder, delays in solving conflicts, resistance to change, too varied and too many interests, inability to say no, indecision, fatigue, etc.).

While you are young, wasting time seems insignificant. However, gradually you will find that you are at the discretion of these ... "thieves". You realise that you are always late or on the run, your deadlines have been exceeded, you feel constantly stressed, and your day never seems to be long enough.

Even when you want to fulfill your daily tasks, there are various "time thieves" that try to steal your precious time. There are many of them, however the most dangerous are the following:



❖ **INTERRUPTIONS** are among the most active time thieves. They come from two sources: from people (such as family, colleagues, friends, acquaintances, etc.) and electronics (such as the phone, email, Instagram, Facebook, etc.). These do their best in stressing you out, and in preventing you from doing your job. Most interruptions do not help you in any way (for example, a colleague came into your office to tell you about what happened to them while being stuck in traffic) and prevent you from being productive to the extent that you would like to be. At the end of the day you will realise that most of the problems that you solved were not yours,

but those of the people around you. That is why you must learn how to refuse tasks that do not concern you, but instead only waste your time.

However, there are also important interruptions that you should accept unconditionally and which are of value to you.

❖ **DISORGANIZATION.** Sometimes you may think that drawing up an action plan is a waste of time. If you fall into this trap, you will find out that what you set out to do lasted 2 or 3 times longer than you initially thought it would. Many times, people do not manage to plan out their activities. This means that they end up focusing on less important things, and fail to perform essential tasks. Planning out activities is an excellent way to prevent the above.



Where there is no plan, chaos will soon prevail

Victor Hugo

❖ **POSTPONING.** Postponing holds you captive within your comfort zone, and keeps you under the false impression that if you ignore your tasks they will solve themselves. You will, however, find that this is all just an illusion. Deadlines will overwhelm you and yesterday's unsolved issues will become today's emergencies. How will you react? You will start solving things at random, superficially, and making many mistakes while increasing your stress levels. However, the undesirable effects of postponement can be fought against through **DISCIPLINE**.

If you postpone something for later on, be careful that this is not something important, which might have major consequences in the future. Postponing irrelevant things however, can add positive value to your working day.

❖ **SELF-SABOTAGE** is one of the fiercest time thieves. Negative thoughts about a series of past events, or the fear generated by a hypothetical failure, can take up most of your time. Having a positive attitude means having a winner's attitude, which gives you the power and ability to chase away self-sabotage.

❖ **MASS-MEDIA, TV, THE INTERNET, THE PHONE.** Currently we spend about 9 years of our lives in front of the TV and over 30000 hours browsing the Internet. Their balanced use is a necessity. The problem arises when the time spent on them is not beneficial, and does not help us in either improving ourselves, solving problems or reducing our stress. By choosing informal, and fun educational programs that are relaxing and useful, we can turn the media into an ally.

❖ **A LACK OF PRIORITIES** will make you waste a lot of time. Do not get involved in situations or problems that are not yours, or that are unimportant.

Invest in yourself!

What can you do in the next 48 hours?

- Monitor your time. Make an hourly list of activities you have performed for 2 days, no matter how simple they were or how long they lasted. Include even the time spent on the phone, with your family, friends, etc., the time spent on social media, on TV or on the Internet.
- Identify the 3 most important "time thieves" and set up an "extermination" plan. What will you do tomorrow to manage your time better?

Organise your time!

The way that you organize your 24 hours is very important. For efficient time management, you need to write up an agenda. You can opt for a hard copy or an electronic agenda. You can also download a TO DO LIST type of application on your phone. In this agenda it is important to write down your tasks for the next day, the time at which you will begin performing each task, and the time allowed for its completion. It is very important to write down specific tasks which enable you to monitor your accomplishments. Once you have completed a task, just tick it off your list, and you will instantly feel better. Even if external factors occur that disrupt your planning, you will have a clearer perspective on the tasks you wish to accomplish.

DO NOT FORGET!

Your agenda must be filled in before going to bed because this way you will know what you have planned for the next day.

Has it ever happened that you started working on something, and a few hours later you realized that you didn't achieve anything at all? I am sure that this has happened to you frequently. The

blame must be put on the ... "time thieves". What can you do in order to efficiently use the time allocated to a task? Use the **POMODORO** technique.

The Pomodoro technique is a time management system that suggests that you take things one at a time, and divide the activities that you have to perform into 25-minute work sequences, including 5-minute breaks.

You have to set your priorities in the morning, and choose what to start with. I recommend that you start the day with the most important tasks and keep working on the other tasks according to their order of importance. **Why?** Because after having accomplished the most difficult task, you will find the rest of the day easier.

This technique helps you in detaching from your surroundings, and focusing more on what you have to do, thus becoming more involved and aware of your work. Even if this doesn't work for everyone, and the process is initially difficult to get used to, this can prove to be helpful in organizing your day. Through practise, you may realise that it is better to perform tasks one at a time rather than multitasking.

Invest in yourself!

What can you do in the next 24 hours?

Choose the task you want to solve. **Only one.** Set your phone alarm 25 minutes later. In this 25-minute interval, work to accomplish the task without doing anything else: without interruptions to talk on the phone, without checking social networking sites, emails, etc. When the alarm goes off, take a 5-minute break for relaxing. You can do whatever you want in those 5 minutes. The important thing is to disconnect yourself from work. After four 25 + 5 sequences, take a 20-30 minute break.

Set up your priorities

Do you sometimes get overwhelmed when presented with multiple tasks at the same time? Are you unsure which one to solve first? During these situations, you must establish your priorities.

Prioritizing means recognizing which tasks are more important than others, and putting these tasks in a chronological order according to their level of importance. Priorities are organized according to things, people or actions. They help us differentiate between what is really

important and valuable in our professional and personal lives, and what is not. Some priorities are set by themselves, while others are the result of our decisions. It is essential for us to understand how to establish our priorities. Why is this important? This is because our life is limited in time, and very often our "sometime in the future" results in "never". Success within our lives is dependent on optimal time management.

The question that each of us must answer is "How shall I categorize my priorities?". If you want to understand the importance of setting priorities within your schedule, follow this presentation:

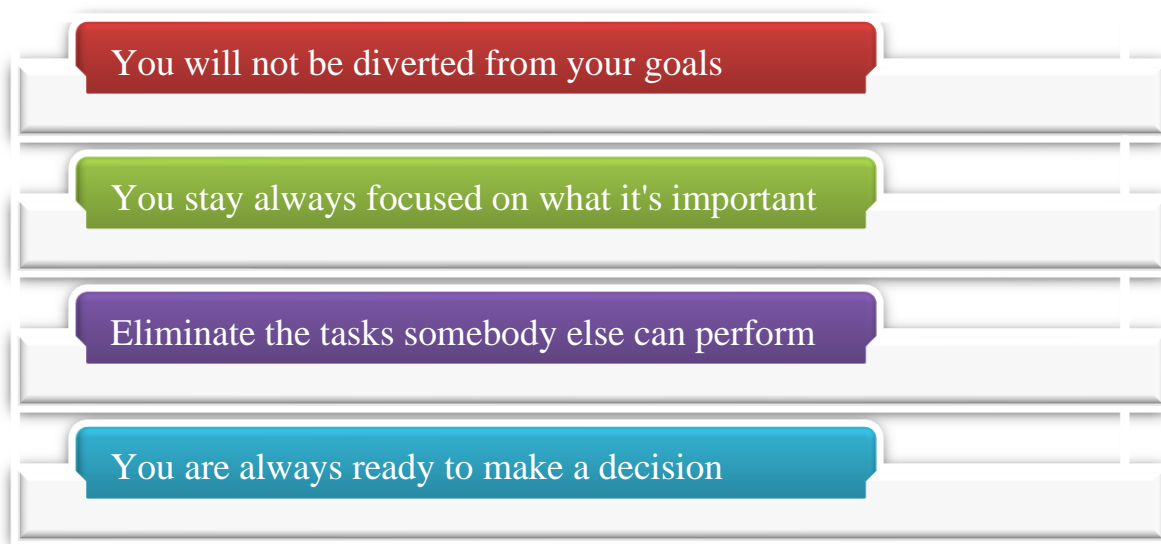
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uls5b64pBM4>

In his book "The Power of Concentration", Jack Canfield proposes a 4-step formula for setting priorities.

- **Step I: Learn how to say NO.** You must do this whenever a less important task (a "time thief") occurs, which distracts you from an important goal of yours.
- **Step II. Delegate.** Some tasks may be too difficult for you or simply unimportant, and so you will need to learn how to assign them to someone else to handle. You must say "Somebody else will do this".
- **Step III: Postpone.** This deferral is related to those tasks that need to be done by you, but not at that current point in time. You have to learn to postpone such tasks for more appropriate times. Warning: Do not fall into the trap of postponing important and urgent activities.
- **Step IV: Take action.** After you have eliminated the unimportant tasks, you are left with the ones that cannot be postponed and you must start handling these **NOW**. Do not put these off, and do not look for excuses. Remember to reward yourself after completing each task in a timely manner.



By setting priorities you make sure that:



When setting priorities we will always be faced with the challenge of choosing between that which is important, valuable and urgent. From a temporal point of view, "important" can mean anything that brings us closer to our goals, and our purpose. On the other hand, "urgent" refers to those things that demand our immediate attention, without necessarily fulfilling a long-term purpose. Our reality is full of emergency traps, which only hinder our path towards the truly important and valuable things in our lives.

What is important is rarely urgent and what is urgent is rarely important. (Dwight Eisenhower)



- ❖ **The tasks in quadrant 1 are A Grade** priorities and must be solved personally and immediately.
- ❖ **The tasks in quadrant 2 are B grade** priorities and are really important and valuable because they ensure your success. They should not be solved today, but they must be

strategically planned with well-defined deadlines, stages of implementation and necessary actions.

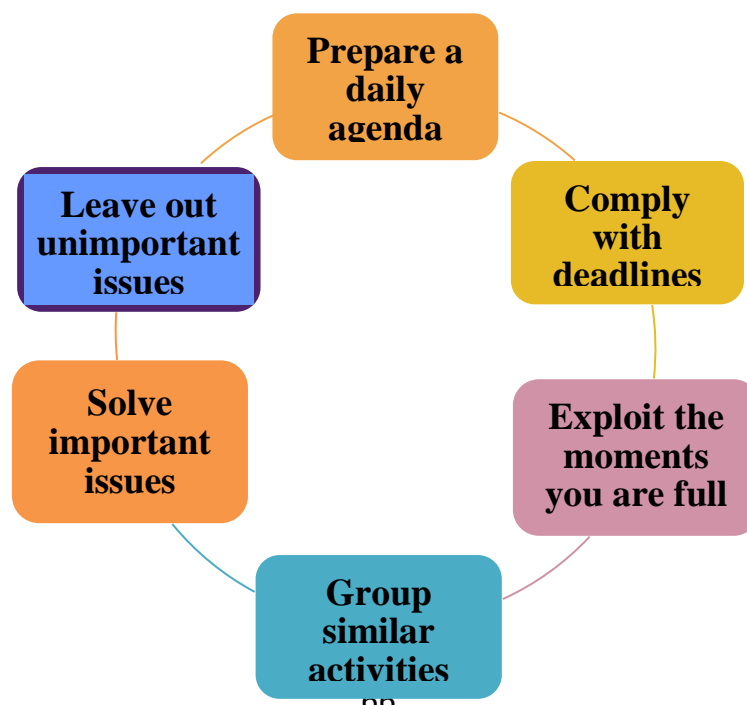
- ❖ **The tasks in quadrant 3 are C-grade priorities** and are the ones that stress us out with their urgency, take up a lot of our precious time and divert us from our truly important life goals.
- ❖ **The tasks in quadrant 4 are D-grade priorities.** They are those things that are too little defined, take up a lot of our time or could simply be trashed.

The greatest importance should be given to tasks in quadrant 2. You must identify the activities that you have to do and plan them out. This way you will reduce the amount of stress caused by quadrant 1, by minimising the number of urgent and important activities that you have to perform. By planning and prioritizing, you can eliminate or reduce the number of activities in quadrants 3 and 4.

In order for this principle to work in your life and become an effective decision-making tool, you will need to build your own system of priorities. For this you will have to adjust the matrix according to your own goals and plans. Make this writing as detailed as possible, because it is only through this that your system of priorities will become a law in making future decisions. In order for the system to really work, you must actively communicate it to those around you.

In your PATH FOR CAREER continuously refer to this set of principles and establish what your priorities are.

DO NOT FORGET!



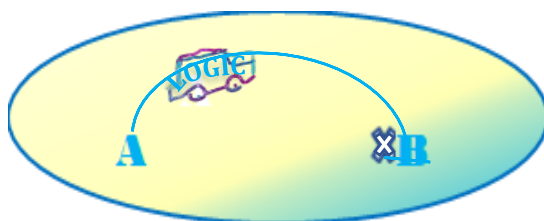
3. PROBLEMS SOLVING

The measure of success does not mean that you have a difficult problem to solve, but whether it is the same problem you had last year.

John Foster Dulles, former US State Secretary

The ability to solve problems refers to the ability to identify the nature of a problem, break it down, and develop an efficient set of actions in order to tackle the challenges related to it.

Problem solving is actually about how to get from A to B using logic.



The current working environment is one that requires employees to come up with solutions to everyday problems, and therefore the ability to solve problems is one of the top qualities that employers look for.

To pass over
obstacles on
their own

To provide
solutions by
using their own
their knowledge

The ability to
solve problems
allows employees

To look for
other references
for resources

To exploit
opportunities
efficiently

By possessing this skill and showing it off with confidence, an employee can quickly increase his or her strengths in the eyes of the employer.

There is a series of behaviours that prove this ability:

- Approaching a task by dividing it into sub-tasks in a systematic and detailed manner
- Anticipating the consequences of one's actions
- Finding multiple and / or alternative explanations for a situation
- Identifying in advance the information needed to efficiently solve a problem
- Proposing solutions, not just identifying problems
- Anticipating possible obstacles and outlining welcoming plans

PROBLEM
SOLUTION

If in some cases the ability to solve problems is an innate one, the good news is that it can also be developed. This development can very often happen after graduating from university / master's studies, as well as within the first years that a recent graduate starts officially working. .

Using the IDEAL strategy for solving problems

IDEAL is one of the most efficient five-step formulas that is most commonly used to solve problems in project management. The acronym IDEAL stands for: Identify (identify the problem), Define (define objectives), Explore (explore solving methods), Act and Learn.

Identify problem
Define goals
Explore ways to reach goals
Act
Learn

An alternative to applying the IDEAL method is by using

Pollya's method, which proposes that one should follow the following four steps in order to successfully solve a problem:

Step 1: Understand the problem

These are the steps that one needs to perform in order to get past the first hurdle:

Problem identification: At this stage you will need to recognize the existence of the problem; identify its nature, and define the essence of the problem itself.

Although the first phase of problem solving may seem obvious, it often requires a lot of thought and analysis. Identifying a problem can be a difficult task in itself. Is there really a problem or not? What is the nature of the problem? Are there actually numerous problems? How do you best define the problem? By spending some time defining the problem, not only will you understand

it more clearly, but you will also be able to communicate its nature to others, This will then lead you to the second phase.

It is very important that when **defining the problem**, you make sure that you are identifying the problem, and not looking at its symptoms. For example, if the team that you are coordinating is performing badly, , it is important to identify whether the fault is of the team members, or if it is due to a lack of essential skills that can be improved through training.

Structure of the problem: This stage involves observing, inspecting closely the problem, finding data and developing a clear image.

After identifying the problem, you must structure it, and this means getting more information and understanding it fully. This phase refers to finding and analysing facts, the purpose (goals), as well as the obstacles in solving it. This step may not be necessary for simple problems, but it is essential for the more complex ones.

"Expressing the problem is often more necessary than its solution, which can only be a problem of mathematical or experimental ability"

Albert Einstein

One of the simplest and most efficient methods of problem solving is by using the 5 **"Why" question technique**, which allows both problem identification as well as finding solutions. Start off by asking the question "Why" or "What caused this problem?" and more often than not, the answer to this question generates the following question after it.

- Why did I receive negative feedback from the client? This is because our team did not intervene in time to solve the issue.
- Why didn't it intervene in time? Solving other emergency situations took longer than expected.
- Why did it take longer than expected? The complexity of the problem was underestimated, because not enough research was put into the data received from the beneficiaries. This led to adjustment possibilities not being properly identified before the intervention.
- Why did I underestimate the complexity of the task? This is because we did not evaluate each stage individually, and correctly estimate the time it would take us to complete.

- Why did we not evaluate each stage individually? We had many outstanding tasks to deal with. It is therefore necessary to re-evaluate the working time and the specifications of each stage.

However, trying to solve a complex problem by ourselves is be a mistake, so don't forget:

"A shared problem is a half solved problem"

Talking to others about problems can be therapeutic, but above all it can help you see things from a different perspective, and opens up the doors to a lot more potential solutions.

To analysis efficiently the causes of our problems it is advisable to go through the following steps:

Define the problem

- What has happened?
- What are the specific symptoms?

Gather data

- What proof do you have that the problem exists?
- How long has this problem been occurring?
- What is the impact of this problem?
- Identify possible factors that might have caused this problem (during this step identify as many factors as possible)
- What was the sequence of events that caused this problem?
- What were the factors that allowed this problem to occur?
- What other problems were there when the problem in question arose?

Identify the real causes

- Why does this factor exist?
- What is the real reason behind the problem?

Recommend and implement

- What can you do to prevent this problem from happening?
- What are the possible solutions?

- Who will be responsible for their implementation?
- What is the risk of their implementation?

Step 2: Set up a solution plan

At this stage *you will generate a number of possible solutions*, which still will have very little evaluation at this point in time.

Using the information gathered during early stages, you will now begin *to think of possible solutions* to the identified problem. In a group scenario, this stage can consist of a brainstorming session, which will allow each person in the group to express their opinions on possible solutions. In organizations, where people have different fields of expertise, it is useful to hear the opinions of every party.

Making a decision: This stage involves a careful analysis of the different possible action plans, and the selection of the best solution for implementation.

This is probably the most complex part of the problem-solving process. Now it is time to evaluate each potential solution. Some solutions may not be feasible due to issues such as time constraints or budgets. It is important that at this stage we also consider what might happen if nothing is done to solve the problem. Sometimes, trying to solve a problem leads to more problems, which is why creative thinking and innovative ideas are required.

Finally, a decision should be taken on which action plan to follow.

Step 3: Apply the plan (solve)

This stage involves the acceptance and implementation of the chosen plan. Several problems may arise during implementation, especially if the identification or structuring of the initial problem had not been fully accomplished.

Step 4: Look back (check and interpret)

Monitoring/Looking for feedback:

The final stage aims to review the results of problem solving over a period of time, and includes seeking feedback on the success of the chosen solution.

The verification of its success can be achieved by monitoring and obtaining feedback from people who were affected by its changes. It is good practice to keep track of the results and any additional issues.

SOLVING COMPLEX PROBLEMS

In this complex and globalized world, our problems are interconnected and tend to get complicated. Solving them means taking intricate decisions and dedicating a lot of creativity into creating a network of ideas.

This is based on using special techniques that allow for the decomposition of problems, and that result in modular solutions. One of the most efficient techniques for addressing such issues is to **focus on key factors**.

Focusing on key factors. The "*key factors*" consist of the largest and most important aspects of the problem, that if solved, will have the greatest immediate impact.

When solving the problems, ask yourself this thing:
"What are two or three 'key factors' or main issues affecting the problem I am trying to solve?"

When analysing a complex issue, focus your time and energy on the key factors and biggest gains; do not get absorbed into solving all the problems. And while this seems obvious, it is easy to accidentally do the exact opposite.

When identifying the key factors of any problem, **rule 80-20** is used to determine those components that contain the highest value.

Rule 80-20

The secret of accomplishing more with less

Rule 80-20, or the Pareto principle, was first adopted as a problem-solving technique by a management consultant who invented the phrase after the 1906 research from Vilfredo Pareto in which he observed that 20% of pea pods from his garden produced 80% of the existing peas.

Since then, this principle has been known as the 80-20 rule and states that 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. When applying for business, the rule can be used as follows:

80% of the profits of a company come from 20% of its customers.

Although this is not a universal principle, this percentage distribution is often valid in many aspects of life, and is one of the first problem solving techniques.

HOW YOU CAN DEVELOP THE PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITY

Do regular brain exercises! In the same way as when you want to improve bodily endurance and muscle functionality over time, you will have to practise regularly in order to work on problem solving. Studies show that games like **"Split Words"** (where you have to match word fragments to form words on a given topic, such as "philosophy"), and **"Tower of Babel"** (where you have to memorize and then match the words from a foreign language with the appropriate image), can develop problem solving abilities.

Play something that will force you to think strategically or analytically! Try a puzzle game such as **Tetris**. If you prefer something else, you may choose to play a role-playing game or a strategy game. In this case, something like **"Civilization"** or **"Sim-City"** may be better suited for you.

Mathematical games also help in solving problems. Whether you're dealing with problems related to numbers or words, these games activate that part of the brain that analyses information.

Cultivate a hobby! Choose something that involves problem solving or activates certain parts of the brain. For example, start learning a foreign language. Language works in both hemispheres of the brain, and therefore learning a foreign language will activate areas that control analysis as well as reasoning and problem solving.

Web design, software programming, puzzles, Sudoku and chess are also hobbies that will make you think strategically and systematically. Any of these will help you in improving your overall problem solving skills.

Listen to music while you work! According to the latest studies, "The combination of music and exercise can stimulate and increase cognitive stimulation, while contributing to the organization of cognitive production."

Use mind maps to help visualize the problem - a visual image of a problem and its possible solutions can help focus the mind, stimulate the brain, increase the capacity for creative thinking, and generate more ideas geared towards solutions.

Create your mind map by illustrating your problem as the central idea. Add your "main branches" which gather all the possible causes of the problem. Use "sub-subsidiaries" to explore further details.

Invest in yourself!

What can you do in the next 48 hours?

Solve the problem of permanent disorder in your room.

What can you do in the following month?

Solve the problem of reducing your monthly expenses.

What can you do in the following 12 months?

Solve the problem of your inability to speak English fluently.

4. TEAM WORK

"Teamwork is the ability to work together to achieve a common idea, the ability to direct individual achievements toward organizational goals. It is the source that allows ordinary people to reach unusual results."

Andrew Carnegie – the richest man in the world in 1901

Teamwork is a skill found in the requirements of most employers. Recruitment specialists analyze this skill during the selection process, by using different means of investigation. They ask specific questions that evaluate the ability of personal interrelation and understanding of the needs of the person with whom they interact. The presence, or the lack of qualities necessary to be a good team member, can be decisive factors in whether or not to hire someone, or keep them employed within the company.

Teamwork involves collaboration, trust, respect and especially efficient communication between its members. These are things that many people might be scared of, and therefore prefer to work alone instead. But is this the best decision? Most times, it is not. Teams are often more capable of solving problems and creating new ideas than individuals are. Therefore your teamwork skills can help you develop both professionally as well as personally within your career.



Setting up a team

Team = a small number of people with complementary skills and competencies who are pursuing a common goal.

Setting up a team can be achieved either by having a coordinator appoint members, or by having people join up voluntarily. In both situations, the person coordinating the team will have to take into account that the team members must have complementary skills, competencies and knowledge. After selecting their members, these must be involved in socializing activities in order to strengthen the group cohesion.

Tuckman pattern. Bruce W. Tuckman hypothesized that teams go through 5 development stages.



1. **Setting up (Immature team).** At this stage, the team members seek to be accepted by the group, need security and seek the guidance of the leader. They gather information about the similarities and differences between them and form their preferences for future subgroups. Controversies and serious topics are avoided, and discussions focus on the tasks to be accomplished. The tasks that each team member will accept is decided on by the other members of the team. In order to proceed to the next stage, each member must leave their comfort zone in which they only deal with safe topics, and move on to the space in which they risk the possibility of a conflict. Each tries to find out from the leader his/her expectations related to their activity,

and the standards to which their tasks must be performed. Even though at this stage there is a lot of enthusiasm and optimism, productivity is low.

II. **The storm (the divided team).** At this stage, competition and conflict arise within personal and organizational relationships at the level of the roles related to tasks. Group members must give in, reshape their attitudes, ideas, and feelings in order to fit the group's organization. Sometimes conflicts don't rise to the surface, however that doesn't mean that they don't exist. Questions asked will be related to the tasks and responsibilities of each person, the appraisal criteria, and the rewarding system. Some members will prefer to keep quiet, while others will try to dominate. If the team does not behave well it will progress to the stage of dissatisfaction. Difficulties will now arise in communication as well as disputes regarding leadership and influence within the team. The morale of the team will frequently decrease as members find that there is a difference between their expectations, and the actual situation. In order to move to the next stage, the team members must approach the situation with a "problem solving" mentality. The members' listening ability is now very important.

III. **Norming (United team).** This stage is dominated by cohesion, where the team members collaborate, acknowledge the contributions of the partners, solve group problems, ask questions to each other, and small groups are dissolved. Increasing the overall level of confidence contributes to the development of group cohesion and a feeling of belonging to the group. The information flow between members of the group is at a maximum level (they ask for, and give feedback), and creativity reaches its peak. The biggest danger at this stage is that some members may begin to fear the inevitable break-up of the group in the future, and may develop initiatives to oppose change of any kind.

IV. **Streamlining (Functional team).** This stage is marked by interdependence at a personal relations level and the ability of tackling problems according to each specific task. Team members can work easily both individually, in subgroups, or with the whole group. They have gained self-confidence, and they no longer need approval, therefore focusing both on tasks and personal relationships. The group is united, its identity complete, and the morale is high, as is the level of loyalty. There is support available that is needed to solve problems, and the entirety of one's focus is on his/her achievements. It must be pointed out that not all teams reach this stage. For a team to become efficient it needs to move beyond the comfort zone and its members should support each other's efforts and admit that interdependence is essential.

**KEEP IT
IN
MIND**

A team cannot be efficient unless it has gone through the storm stage, in which each one has expressed his point of view or expressed his dislikes or sympathies.

**KEEP IT
IN
MIND**

A team cannot be efficient if the rules set in the third stage are ambiguous, not understood or not accepted by all the members of the group!

v. **Winding-up.** During this stage tasks come to an end, and members terminate their relationships. A planned closure usually involves recognizing the results achieved, and the role of each member in the project. It also offers an opportunity for the members to say goodbye to each other personally. The dispersion of a group can result in a minor crisis.

Regardless of the company you want to work with, or already work with, if you aim to achieve quality results you must pay maximum attention to the team of which you are a part of. Achieving superior performance within a team involves recognizing and accepting the qualities, needs and limitations of team members. Each person has a behavioral style, and for each person there is an optimal role in the team.

- **Dominant team members** need varied, challenging tasks that require initiative. In the relationship with such individuals you will need to be direct, concise, show interest and let them take the initiative (or let them believe that they are in control).

- **Influent team members** are motivated when they get tasks that allow them to interact with people. You must be friendly, relaxed, and informal with them, and give them the opportunity to express their ideas publicly.

- **Stable team members** should be involved in specialized, repetitive, and well-known tasks that they can perform at their own pace. With these members it is important to be systematic and objective, and remain constant and predictable while always preparing them for any changes to come.

- **Dutiful team members** need detailed tasks that require accuracy, method, and organization. You have to give them detailed explanations of what they are required to do, and in return they keep their promises, and are serious and loyal.

Whether you are a team manager or a team member, you should try to discover the behavioral style of each person. It is only this way that you will be able to work effectively with each member, with the results being success for the whole team. .

Developing team working skills

The best way to improve your teamwork skills is to be part of a team. During school, training or improvement courses, you have a lot of opportunities to do this. You can join a team or work in pairs to carry out tasks or projects related to the training activity, or enroll as a volunteer in a team that carries out charity work etc. If you have a job, then you are already part of a team involved in reaching a goal. How do you improve your team working skills? By being active, exchanging information with team members, listening, and trying to understand the different views of your teammates. Use the different views in order to develop new ideas. More importantly, do not start off any discussion by thinking that you know better, and that what other members are saying is wrong. Share your suggestions and ideas about the project with other team members, and show flexibility towards each others' points of view. Each participation within a team means extra experiences and points of view which can help you in solving different tasks, and communicating effectively, etc.

At the end of each activity that you have been involved in, analyse and evaluate together with the team trainer or coordinator, your degree of involvement in reaching the goal. Try to understand the factors that led to good results and the causes of failure.

Teamwork is built more off the support that you provide to the other team members, rather than in accepting the help that others offer you. It is important to be aware of what you have acquired, and to be open to accepting new challenges in order to improve your professional skills.

Behaviours that are likely to improve team working ability

You interact efficiently with employees in different situations

You observe other people's right and beliefs

You interact efficiently with employees in different situation

You understand the role of each individual in the group

You encourage open discussions, share ideas and suggestions with your mates

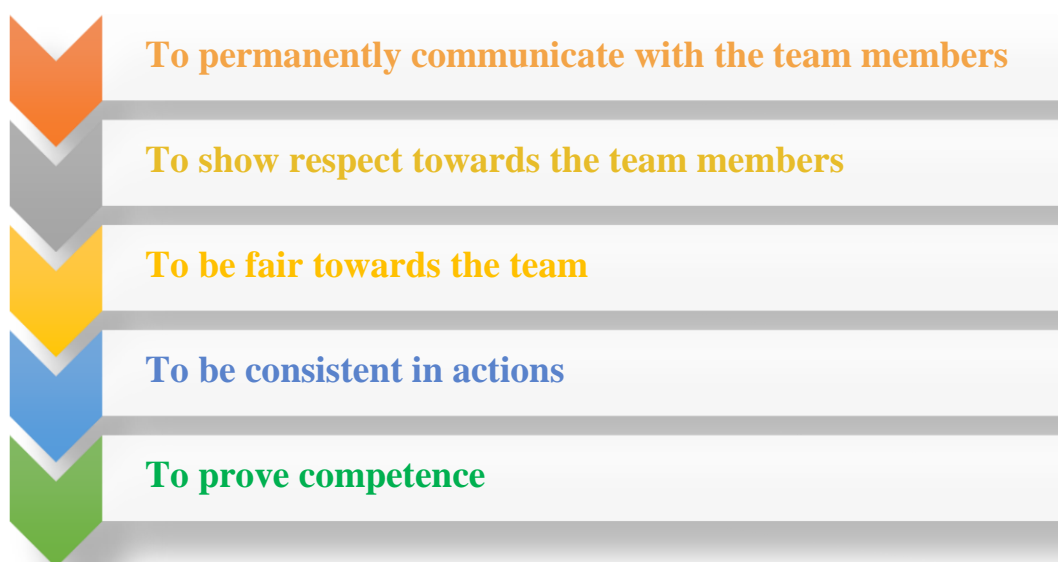
You appreciate and recognise active involvement in performing an action

You are empathetic: you listen to and understand the needs and feelings of those around you

You focus on the team's goals, not on your personal goals

If you have already done this and been a member of a team project, try a new challenge by choosing to coordinate a team instead. You will find that the role of a coordinator is different from that of a simple member. This is because his/her responsibilities are not only limited only to the accomplishment of a task, but it involves the coordination of all the team members in order to achieve a goal.

Basic rules for being a team manager



5. LEADERSHIP

"Leadership is the art of making someone else to do what you want, because they want to do it".

Dwight D. Eisenhower

What is leadership?

Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act towards reaching a common goal. In a business environment, this can mean finding and applying a strategy that will motivate the team into achieving the proposed goal.

Efficient leadership is based on the implementation of ideas, whether these are original or borrowed. However this is only efficient if these ideas can be communicated to others in a way that engages them enough to act in the way that the leader wants them to act.

Simply put, the leader is the inspiration and conductor of action. He or she is the person within the group who enjoys being amongst a combination of personalities and leadership skills, and that makes others want to follow him or her.

Leaders help themselves and others to do the right thing. They set the direction, build an inspired vision and create something new. Leadership is about knowing how to act in order to "win" as a team or organization; it is dynamic, interesting and inspiring.

However, as leaders set the direction, they must also use management skills to effectively guide their team down the right path.

Leadership involves making sound - and sometimes difficult - decisions, creating and articulating a clear vision, setting achievable goals and using the knowledge and tools needed to achieve those goals.

Leaders are needed in most aspects of society, and this ranges from business to politics, to community organizations.

Although the terms of leadership and management are sometimes used interchangeably, they are not the same concept. Leadership often requires leaders to take on certain management tasks, but good leaders understand that their strengths are different from those of good managers.

An efficient leader has the following characteristics: self-confidence, strong communication and management skills, creative and innovative thinking, perseverance when faced with failure, willingness to take risks, openness to change and doubt and reactivity in times of crisis.

This is what *LEADERSHIP* actually means, if we were to analyse it as an acronym. 😊

- **L**oving
- **E**ncouraging
- **A**ccessible
- **D**auntless
- **E**thical
- **R**esponsible
- **S**ervant
- **H**umble
- **I**nspirational
- **P**ersevering

What is the difference between a boss and a leader

How a boss behaves	How a leader behaves
Intimidates - he/she only thinks about the best way to show their authority.	Inspires - He/she challenges their team by recognizing their strengths, and helps them improve their weaknesses.
Notifies and analyses every mistake. He/she criticises his/her team when their performance is weak.	Teaches others - he/she looks for ways to improve their team. He/she praises their success and provides help when bottlenecks occur.
Hears - he/she thinks the team should keep their heads down and execute their tasks without any need for feedback.	Is available to listen - listening to team members is essential for the success of a leader. He/she constantly listens to what their team members have to say and he/she

	takes action when there are any concerns.
Gives orders - <i>"I need you to do this!", "You have to do this by Friday!"</i> When asking for something, the team must meet his/her requirements, without asking any questions. If a project is not ready in time, he/she blames the team.	Asks - <i>"What do you think about this?", "Can you finish this by Friday?"</i> . A leader ensures that the team has all the time and resources that are needed, and that if necessary, he/she can provide help without putting the blame on one specific individual.
Does not get involved - he/she only takes decisions, and lets their team members work.	Gets involved - a leader allows for autonomy within a company, but can also recognize when he/she has to step in and be personally involved in the work.
Harasses - a boss believes that work comes first and foremost, and that team members must be available to work around the clock.	Supports - a leader understands the need for work-life balance. He/she encourages their team to take breaks from time to time, and respects their team members' free time.
Sets unclear and impossible goals - a boss demands that goals be met regardless of costs, and any of his orders related to goals are constantly changing. This creates confusion and frustration among the team. They are afraid to ask questions, and this leads to a waste of time when coming to determining priorities and strategies	Sets clear and realistic goals - a leader's top priority is to make sure that everyone is working towards the same goal. He creates OKRs (Objectives - Key Results) in order to help the team understand its main goals, and how each individual can contribute to achieving them.
His/her slogan is "I'm always right" - a boss thinks that he knows all. He will never lead a happy team towards success until he learns the true meaning of leadership.	His/her slogan is "Leadership and lifelong learning are indispensable to one another" - a leader is both a student and a teacher. He or she constantly asks for feedback on how to be a better leader and communicator.

Leaders: born or made?

While there are people who seem to be more naturally gifted with leadership skills than others, people can learn how to become leaders by working on improving certain skills.

Throughout the course of history, we can find a lot of people who, despite not having previous leadership experience, took charge when faced with a crisis, and convinced others to follow their suggested course of action. They had the necessary skills and qualities that helped them gain leadership positions.

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is a process in which "leaders and their supporters raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation "(**James McGregor Burns**)

This type of leader:

- Follows a path of integrity and fairness.
- Sets clear goals.
- Has high expectations.
- Encourages others.
- Provides support and recognition.
- Generates emotions within people.
- Inspires people to look beyond their self-interest.

How to become a transformational leader

Becoming a transformational leader involves:

1. Creating an inspiring vision for the future.
2. Motivating people to buy into the vision that's being offered to them.
3. Managing to deliver the right type of vision.
4. Continuously building strong relationships with people, based on trust.

Use these steps, along with the tools below, to develop your transformational leadership skills

Step 1 - Create an inspired vision

People need a compelling reason to follow leaders, and this is why you need to create and communicate an inspiring vision of the future.

Having a vision sets the *purpose of the team or organization* - the very same purpose that pushes each of us to wake up every morning to do what we do. Develop this vision systematically and step by step. This is done partly *by understanding the values of the people* that you are leading,

partly by *understanding the capabilities and resources of your organization*, and partly by conducting a smart *analysis of the work environment* and selecting the best path forward.

This is the subject of an *organizational or group strategy*, and developing a coherent strategy requires a lot of hard work and careful thinking.

In order to develop a vision for your team, start by clarifying the company's mission and explore how your team can contribute directly to it.

For the vision and goals to be achievable, leaders should focus on the **strengths** of an organization, and analyze the current situation, by using certain tools such as the [PEST Analysis](#), [USP Analysis](#), [Core competencies analysis](#) and [SWOT analysis](#).

Step 2: Motivate people to buy and offer vision

People can only be truly inspired when their organization has a convincing vision and a clear, worthy mission; and this can be expressed efficiently using well-designed vision statements.

These statements can be extremely motivating when their intentions are expressed clearly, and when they are effectively communicated to everyone within the organization. They also express the purpose of the organization to customers, suppliers and the media, which can have the same motivating effect.

Now, starting from the *mission statement*, you must appeal to the *values* of the people and inspire them with what you will achieve at the end of the journey.

Use success stories and examples as part of your call to action. This will help people appreciate the positive impact that your vision will have on those that you are trying to help. (Hint: if the only person you are trying to help is yourself, you will not inspire anyone.)

Then, talk often about your vision. Link it to people's goals in order to provide context to their tasks, and help people see how they can help achieve a common goal.

Transformational leaders also know that nothing significant happens unless they encourage their team. So, make sure that you know about the *different types of motivation* and use them to inspire your people to give their all.

Step 3: Managing the vision delivery

Simply having a vision is useless, it must become a reality. However, many leaders make the mistake of developing a vision, but forget to give anything back to those that they are leading. In order to manage your vision, you will need to efficiently combine project management with sensitive change management. This will help you make any necessary changes that you need, with the full support of your team. Communicate clearly the roles and responsibilities of each person, and link them to your own plans. Everyone should fully understand their responsibilities, and know how to measure their success. Then, set clear SMART goals for everyone, including some short-term goals that will help people achieve quick successes and become more motivated. Use [goal-based management to connect your short-term achievements](#) to your long-term goals.

You will have to show a lot of self-discipline and endurance, and not give in to things that could hinder the success of the team..

Be a good example to the people in your team by being a hardworking and persevering role model, especially if morale is low and there are delays or difficulties. .

Also, stay connected with people by practicing **Management by Wandering Around (MBWA)**. A powerful way to connect with your team members is to get up from your desk and go around talking to different people, working with them, asking questions, and offering help when needed. This practice is known as Management by Wandering Around or MBWA.

This is an ideal technique for transformational leaders because it helps you to stay connected with ongoing activities, and allows you to address questions as soon as they arise.

Hint:

Clear communication is essential for transformational leadership.

Take time to ensure that whatever you are trying to communicate to the team is being heard and understood, and provide clear and regular feedback so that your team knows what you want.

Step 4: Build stronger, trust-based relationships with your people

As a transformational leader, you need to focus your attention on people, and work hard to help them achieve their goals and dreams.

Leadership is a long-term process and, as a leader, you need to constantly work on building relationships, gaining trust and helping people grow as individuals.

Meet people individually in order to understand their needs, and to help them meet their career goals. What do they want to achieve in their role? Where do they see themselves in five years' time? How can you help them achieve this goal?

You can gain the trust of people within your team by being open and honest in your interactions.

Allow time to coach your team. When you help them find their own solutions, not only will you create a qualified team, but each member will strengthen their confidence both in themselves, and in you as a leader.

Key issues

Transformational leaders inspire loyalty and trust in those that follow them. They have high expectations and push people to reach their goals.

You can become a transformational leader by following these steps:

1. Create an inspiring vision for the future.
2. Motivate people to buy into, and to offer up their own vision.
3. Manage vision delivery.

Build stronger relationships with your team that are based on trust. Remember that in order to succeed as a transformational leader, you will need to work on your own skills, and allow time and space for personal development.

Some advice for becoming a good leader

Take on more projects

A quick way to develop your leadership skills is to take on more responsibility. You don't need to take on more work than you are able to do, however it should get you out of your comfort zone. This is the only way you will truly learn something new, and this will make others notice you as a person with initiative.

Learn to respect your team

A true leader has no problem giving up control, and handing it over to someone else when necessary. He or she does not feel threatened when someone disagrees with what they are saying, asks questions or expresses his or her own ideas.

Learn to anticipate possible problems and opportunities

A good leader is someone who can anticipate possible problems before they occur. This is a valuable skill when managing complex projects with limited deadlines. The ability to predict and provide suggestions in order to avoid potential problems is an extremely important skill that one should have as a leader. This ability also helps you to identify opportunities in cases where others see only obstacles.

Inspire other people

Being a valuable leader means being able to motivate and inspire those that you work with, and being able to provide encouragement or guidance.

Keep on learning

The best way to become a good leader is to continuously keep learning new things.

Make your team stronger by delegating tasks

No one is the best person for everything, and therefore delegating tasks frees up the time required in order for you to do things well. This can be useful for the whole team.

Solve conflicts

Help your team in solving any possible interpersonal conflicts. These will not sort themselves out alone, and ignoring them only will only accentuate them.

Be a better listener

Becoming a leader does not always mean being in the spotlight. A good leader listens to the suggestions, ideas and feedback of the team members and takes them into account. He or she is a good listener and communicator, whose communication is not just limited to words but also to non-verbal communication, such as eye contact and body language.

Do not forget:

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, to learn more, to do more and to become better, you are a leader"

John Quincy Adams

Invest in yourself!

What can you do in the following week?

- Take on new responsibilities, getting involved in a study project with colleagues or in a volunteer action

What can you do in the following month?

- Learn more about active listening by taking an online or direct participation course. A good leader must know how to listen.

What can you do in the following 12 months?

- Learn to solve conflicts and motivate people: attend a course on these topics. Practice this for several months with someone close and follow the results of their evolution, but also of the relationship between you.

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