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## Reflection Practices in Consulting Projects for the Learner and Instructor

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# Reflection Practices in Consulting Projects for the Learner and Instructor

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## Introduction

As many educators know, there are a variety of models to use to practice reflection. The two models discussed here include: the “What? So What? Now What?” model and the Pre/Post-Motorola model. Both models can be used with individuals or teams alike. A key point of commonality between the two models includes not only thinking about an experience, but also taking action going forward. Taking action or “doing” is a nod to Dewey and Schön; Dewey and Schön encouraged reflective practice or reflection-in-action (Rolfe, 2014).

## Description of the Practices

### *What? So What? Now What? Reflection Tool*

A primary use of “What? So What? Now What?” is to encourage its practice in individuals or teams. Although there are team reflections, as the next model will uncover, this model was used mainly with individuals and their practice in working individually and as a team member. A year-long experience where this is used is a team-based, project-based course. Individuals are placed on a team that is set up to con-

sult and work with a business partner on a project; ideally, this project is highly valued and will have an impact on the company when completed. The following is a breakdown of each step.

**What?** allows a learner to describe an experience in detail and is what is factual in nature. This is usually the easiest part of reflection, because we are used to “reporting out” about an experience, such as our day, when asked, “How was your day?” It relates to the “take-in” of information.

**So What?** is a reminder to the learner to not only “report out” what they experienced, but to also to describe what the experience meant to them; why is it significant to them? What have you learned? What about the event made an impact on you? I ask learners, “What was your takeaway?”

**Now What?** relates to what will the learner “do” with the information gleaned. How could you/will you use the information you learned? What skills or knowledge have you learned that you will apply in the future? While

each part of reflection is important, “Now What?” relates to taking action:

For Dewey, reflection is not simply having an experience and then going home to think about it. On the contrary, thinking is an active process that involves forming hypotheses and trying them out here and now in the real world. Thinking or reflection is therefore a form of experimentation. We cannot reflect in an armchair; reflection can only take place in practice. (Rolfe, 2014, pp. 1179-1180)

The objective of this type of reflection is to allow the learner to start with something comfortable and then move along in the reflective process to dig deeper and uncover their learning. A comprehensive list of additional questions can be used in each step (Schlesselman, 2019). This can be accomplished a number of ways, including journaling, video recording, and discussion.

### *Pre- and Post-Motorola Reflection Tool*

The pre- and post-Motorola reflection tool was developed by the Motorola Telecommunications Company (USA) as a means to prepare and assess projects. Although this tool was developed in industry, it was adapted in education initially by Timiakatemia in Finland (Leinonen et al., 2004). This tool can be used in preparing (pre) and assessing (post) learner activities such as a meeting, project, event, internship, etc. (Rajala et al., 2017) and is commonly used in a team setting with a report out by the members on related insights. The questions used in the pre- and post-Motorola are different and can be facilitated by the instructor, coach, or learner. The insights are collected during a joint session with

the entire team or as a written individual reflection. Ideally, the pre- and post-Motorola questions become integral in the learning process and are always completed before and after a learner’s experience.

During the pre-Motorola assessment (before the project implementation) the focus is on the learning goals, roles, theories, skills, and purpose.

- What are our learning goals in this project? Identifying goals for the project, meeting, or event helps the learners involved understand better the work involved also. The overall project goal needs to be clear, succinct, and communicated well for everyone to understand.

- What is the customer’s role in the project? Understanding the customer role, needs, and related benefits will provide insight to the learner(s).

- What theories will we use in this project? This question is extremely important because it is essential for the learner to make the connection between their theoretical knowledge and praxis. Higher education institutions are recognizing the importance of supporting learners in integrating their theoretical knowledge into “practicing theory” (Radović et al., 2020).

- What skills will we use in this project? The entire team is empowered by identifying skill sets and competencies to be used in the project. This question also allows for the individual or the team to reflect on areas for improvement.

- How does this project help us to get to our goal? This question helps the learner understand the “why” of the entire project.

The post-Motorola assessment happens after the project has been implemented and focuses on the opportunities, challenges, learnings, and future steps. During this set of questions, the team or individual learner is able to authentically reflect on the overall experience.

- What went well? Celebrating small wins can prove to be a great motivator for both a team and an individual.

- What went poorly? Identifying areas for improvement will help the learner become a life-long learner.

- What did we learn? Reflecting on key takeaways will provide insights for both the project until it is completed and all other future experiential activities.

-What will we do better next time? What will we put into practice? These last two questions set the tone for the next experience and provide a holistic assessment of the entire experience.

Overall, the continuous use of the pre- and post-Motorola questions helps build community, increases feedback sharing within a team, provides a reflective process for any experiential learning activity, and increases accountability within the team.

## Conclusion

After facilitating discussion in

the roundtable session about reflection practices, we learned that others used similar practices and gave students choices in their delivery method of reflection. The key is to make it a regular part of practice. ■

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