

Reflected Best Self Assignment

When I found out about this assignment I was initially excited. I first read through the instructions for this assignment and thought it would be enjoyable and easy to do—to ask my family and friends about what I am like at my best. Although, once I realized that it was important to get other feedback from past employers or others outside of my friends and family, I felt a little uncomfortable. It felt weird to ask professors and others outside of my family, because I felt that I was overstepping some kind of boundary to ask for personal feedback. Most importantly, I realized that I felt awkward because I was worried how they would perceive me and questioned whether people would see strengths or what they would be. While I did not mind asking those that I am close to for this type of feedback, asking others that I do not consider close family or friends was uncomfortable. Even though, I was hesitant about asking those that I was not especially close to, I believe that the responses were helpful, especially from those I do not know as well.

Through the responses I received, several common themes emerged. These themes include: the ability to see a need and help others, the ability to bring others together, being lighthearted and finding joy in the little things, and persevering in difficult situations. In total I received six responses; two from my best friends, two professors, my Dad, and my Grandma.

Strength 1--Ability to See a Need

These quotes from my two best friends, “You truly have a heart and desire to help others you care about or people in need” and “I think of SO. MANY. instances. where I was excited, and you laughed with me, danced with me, or cried tears of joy for me”, exemplify the strength of mine, to see a need and help others. My friend McKenna described a time when I took care of

her when she was sick, and my other friend described how I was able to meet the needs in our friendship in each situation.

I found it interesting that my two friends saw similar strengths and I wonder if it is because of the level and depth that they know me, or if it is the specific people that I asked. I was not surprised that both of my friends mentioned this strength, because this is something I am constantly aware of and something that I always try to improve on.

I believe that this skill could be translated to a variety of careers. Although, a job where I could directly help or impact others and those in the world around me would be my ideal workplace. My commitment to leverage this strength is to join an organization or volunteer regularly at places like The Red Thread Movement, which would allow me to push myself in ways to serve others outside of my immediate friends.

Strength 2--Ability to Bring People Together

Both my good friend/mentor, Asia and my Dad noted that I have an ability to connect to others and bring people together. In particular, my Dad described a story where I had this idea to go on a mission trip to Thailand through our church. I wanted my good friends to go so I worked hard to convince both my friends and their families that this would be a good idea. In the end, both families decided to go to Thailand, and my Dad believed that my ability to connect to others and the use of my “woo” skills impacted their decision to go on this trip.

I believe that this skill can be translated into a career that involves community and a connection with those that I work with. A workplace that I would thrive at would involve an environment where there is continual communication and where I will feel at ease to freely discuss and share my ideas with others. A commitment I could make to further this skillset is by

applying to become an officer in club, which would encourage me to stretch myself to develop and cultivate my ability to lead and bring others together.

Strength 3--Persevering through Difficult Situations

Another attribute my Dad and my Grandma (who was also my boss for two summers at her own bakery), described was my perseverance. My Dad articulated a story about my perseverance to make the A team in basketball my eighth-grade year. The previous year I was on the B team but decided that I wanted to work in order to make A team. In order to do this, I would practice every day after school for one or two hours straight, working hard on my shooting and dribbling skills. I started by not being able to even do a layup and ended up making A team.

I worked for my Grandma's bakery a few summers ago. She described that she saw my perseverance through my long hours of work and labor, baking. She also saw this occur when I sold baked goods at the farmers market, where I would sometimes come in contact with rude customers but preserved through difficult encounters.

I was surprised to hear that both my Dad and Grandma found perseverance as an attribute of mine, not because I do not believe that I persevere through situations, but because of the extent to which they saw me demonstrate this. I also found it interesting that my family specifically saw this quality, and I wonder whether it is because of their direct relationship to me, the circumstances, or a little of both.

This skill of perseverance can be translated into any career path, which would drive me to continue to work when situations are tough, or demands are hard to meet. If I am in a position where the hours are hard and long, this skill can push me to continue and meet those demands. A

commitment I could make to leverage this strength of perseverance could be through signing up for intramurals, which would enable me to continually work on persevering not just through normal coursework, but also through physical and mental toughness.

Strength 4--Finding Lightheartedness and Joy in all Circumstances

Although most of the responses I received were not unexpected, a few were quite surprising to read. Both my professors with whom I studied abroad described me as someone that had the ability to be lighthearted and find joy in disagreeable situations. My professor that lived at the Oxford house, described the way I could find humor in difficult situations such as my traveling mishaps, while my education professor said that I demonstrated joy and humor in all situations that I experienced.

I consider myself a person that does not take myself too seriously but was surprised to find that they saw this as a positive attribute. I also found it interesting that specifically both professors saw me demonstrate this quality and it made me wonder how my other professors or friends that I studied abroad with saw me, and whether my other professors back at ACU view me in the same way.

These attributes of lightheartedness and finding joy in disagreeing situations could be useful in general, but specifically in the workforce when situations that are tough occur and they need someone that can bring joy or humor. I could utilize these strengths, whether I am in a management position or not, to help create an enjoyable work environment where people can be themselves and be relaxed. A commitment I could make to leverage these strengths is by volunteering with relief organizations or others that will push me to continue to develop finding joy in disagreeing situations or hardships.

Overall, this assignment was very useful because it provided feedback that is important for both personal and professional growth. This assignment gave me the opportunity to gain insight into the strengths that I personally demonstrate and provide specific stories where I displayed these strengths. I enjoyed reading over the stories, because I had either forgotten the stories, or was not aware of the extent to which I impacted others. This assignment as well as other class discussions, have made me realize how essential it is to know your own strengths, not only for personal benefit, but also to utilize them in the workforce to become better leaders, employees, and employers.

Appendix

Asia (mentor and friend)

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

Showing grace to others that often don't deserve it

For example I think of a time that:

One of your best friends started rebelling and making bad choices, she also gossiped and hurt you and you ended up distancing yourself from her. But when she got pregnant you were the one she went to. You were a bridesmaid in her wedding. You are forgiving and you don't hold grudges.

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

Your selflessness that translates into each area of your life, especially through your interactions with people

For example I think of a time when:

You always hung out with the Thailand kid group even though you spent the least time there. Even though you couldn't speak Thai anymore and you might not have known the same people we did, you never let that get in the way of spending time with us. And you never made it about you. You are a gracious listener and you are selfless. (You also care about other cultures)

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

Through your communication skills that bring others together and by seeing the best in others

For example I think of a time when:

Our bible study was a collection of your people- ranging from the preppy tennis player to the party girl who can't seem to breakup with her bf. You see the best in people and bring people together :)

You are a magnet that brings people who have nothing in common together.

McKenna (friend)

One of the ways that you add value and make a contribution is:

How you always look to find time and opportunities to serve and help others

For example, I think of a time that:

- Just last week when I started feeling sick, without me saying a word, you brought me vitamin C, made me breakfast and drove me to Michaels. You truly have a heart and desire to help others you care about or people in need. You constantly talk about wanting to graduate and work somewhere that you can help others for the greater good and to make a difference in the world.

2) One of the ways that you add value and make a contribution is:

Your overflowing love and passion

For example, I think of a time that:

- When you love something or someone you love them deeply and whole-heartedly. When you are passionate about something you put all your energy and love into it. This is one of the most amazing things about you. One example is, that you are very passionate about the well-being of the earth, and though Abilene has no recycling system, you make a point to take your things to recycle every month. As well as, avoiding things harmful to the earth and searching for new ways to protect it.

3) One of the ways that you add value and make a contribution is:

Your desire to learn and grow

For example, I think of a time that:

You stress the importance of being aware and informed. While we were studying abroad in England, you wanted to learn all about each culture and environment. You really wanted to be informed about what was happening around us, as well as, interested to learn more about the world and the people in it. You did this through discussions, debates, eavesdropping and questioning your classmates and the locals.

Grandma (boss)

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

- Your perseverance

For example I think of a time when:

I remember when we were working at the bakery at the end of the day.

The work is hard and never ending. We were both tired. You told me later that you were ready to quit but looked at me who is 50 years older and thought—if she can do it I can do it. Perseverance is a wonderful quality especially when we are pushed beyond our physical limits.

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

- Your connection you make with others

For example I think of a time when:

Recently I have marveled at how you are so connected with your much younger cousins. They often want to play rough and tumble and you are always game for it. You are able to recognize Wyatt's limitations and adjust to them.

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

- Your capability and effectiveness in disagreeing situations

For example I think of a time when:

I remember when you responded to a “cranky” customer at the farmers market. The rule I have set is to always apologize and try to remedy the situation. Our natural instinct is to be offended if the complaint is about a product we worked so hard to make. Many customers asked after you left that summer “where is your granddaughter”. Your capable and effective work with the public was recognized by both customers and me as exceptional.

Dad

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

Your determination and focus

For example I think of a time when:

You went out for 7th grade basketball and made the B team. When 8th grade came around, you determined that you wanted very badly to make the A team. So, you focused upon that very specific goal and devoted yourself to doing everything you could to pursue it. You willingly put other things off in order to devote extra time to practicing. You spent countless hours in the front driveway, shooting, dribbling, and practicing to improve your skills. It was really fun to watch you set your goal and work extremely hard to go after it. You made the team!

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

Woo and friend-making gifts to create community around an event

For example I think of a time when:

You decided that you wanted to get several of your friends to join our family in a short-term summer mission trip to Thailand. You went to your friends and cast a vision, creating a compelling case that this would be fun to do together and a very valuable experience. You

convinced them, and they in turn went and convinced their families. You were able to successfully cast that vision, communicate it well to others, and mobilize those friends to get their families on board. You did this successfully and we had a fantastic trip. Your skills of using your friendships and networks to mobilize others around a vision were fun to watch. You did a very similar thing with the ACU study abroad experience in England. You developed a vision for something you were passionate about and worked your networks or friends to coordinate a study abroad experience when many of your closest friends joined in. You were at your best in communicating clearly a possible and compelling future and worked with others to accomplish that vision.

One of the ways you add value and make a contribution is:

Resilience to bounce back after disagreeing situations

For example I think of a time when:

You were disappointed to lose a potential freshman roommate you thought was compatible with you. Instead, you paired up with someone who you thought would be great, but it turned out wasn't that great initially. What I noticed, however, was that you persevered in looking for the good in your roommate, being patient with her, and trying to learn how to adapt. This you did really well. Even though you didn't become very best friends with that roommate, you learned how to live with her and even experience some joy, building a nice friendship with someone that wasn't super compatible with you. You demonstrated the ability to reset your expectations after a disappointment, persevere under less than desirable conditions, and grow in your relationship.

Professor

1) One of the ways that you add value and make a contribution is: by not taking yourself too seriously. When you do this, you invite others to be light-hearted as well.

For example, I think of a time that: you told many funny stories about yourself (The Greece story for example) Your willingness to laugh at yourself makes other people feel comfortable.

2) One of the ways that you add value and make a contribution is: to value all experiences as an opportunity to learn.

For example, I think of a time that: you were in EDUC 211 (Multicultural Perspectives in Education) in Oxford. As you are not an education major, it would have been easy for you not to participate or value the course. That was not the case. You participated and worked to find applications to your future framework.

3) One of the ways that you add value and make a contribution is: by listening to the voices of others.

For example, I think of a time that: that we travelled throughout the UK and Italy! You listen to the voices of other people and value their thoughts and experiences.

Holly (friend)

One of the ways that you add value and make a contribution is:

You seek to fully know and understand other people

For example, I think of many times when you have returned from traveling and experiencing new cultures and are on fire because you find learning about others and gaining new experiences exhilarating. You also have a desire to woo other people, but you do not do it ignorantly. You seek to understand their thoughts and reasonings prior to sharing your own opinions.

Another way you add value is by: being a good listener and a reliable source of comfort.

I think of the many times I walked away from a situation or friendship with frustration because of the inconsiderate actions of others. However, you are patient beyond measure and see

the pain and value in others even when they do not do the same for you. You remain steady in relationships, regardless.

Another way you add value is by sharing in others' joy and affirming them.

I think of SO. MANY. instances. where I was excited and you laughed with me, danced with me, or cried tears of joy for me. You find joy in very simple things like being in nature, drinking tea, reading, and trying new foods.

Jacque (study abroad professor and house mom)

One of the ways that you add value and make an important contribution is:

- By helping others to find humor in difficult situations

For example, I think of a time that:

- You were on a trip with some friends during study abroad and your group had a difficult day hiking - in an area with which you were unfamiliar and that was fairly strenuous. You helped the group look back with humor on some strange events that day and got everyone laughing instead of complaining about the bad parts of the day.

2) Another way that you add value and make an important contribution is:

- By helping others to be responsible

For example, I think of a time that:

- You always kept good track of assignments and activities on study abroad and did a good job of helping others to remember and keep up with the schedule.

3) Another way that you add value and make an important contribution is:

- By finding humor in all situations

For example, I think of a time that:

- You were always laughing when describing your activities on study abroad. That showed me that you had a knack for finding humor and that you were, generally, positive and optimistic.