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GUIDEBOOK FOR YOUTH TRAINERS TO IMPROVE DIGITAL SOFT SKILLS OF THE YOUTH



R3: DIGITAL SOFT SKILLS GUIDEBOOK'S FRAMEWORK

2021-2-TR01-KA220-YOU-000047996



Guidebook for youth trainers to improve digital soft skills of the youth

GUIDEBOOK FOR TRAINERS

Design

Indepcie SCA (Spain)

Project partnership

Science and Human Foundation (Turkey)

Euro-Net (Italy)

Indepcie SCA (Spain)

ESICA (Austria)

Project coordinator

Science and Human Foundation (Turkey)

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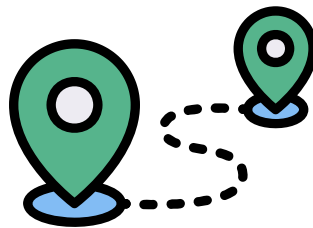
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Introduction

The third result of the project Digi4you consists of a **Guidebook for youth trainers** to improve the digital and soft skills of young people. The guidebook's main goals are:

- To improve youth trainers' working competencies with digital skills concepts and techniques.
- To help youth workers to increase their cognitive abilities and soft skills teaching through ICT tools use.



The guidebook is divided into the following 5 chapters:

1. How to use **digital storytelling** with youth for effective digital self
2. How to create and use **digital portfolios** to employability
3. How to create and utilize **authentic and engaging content** for effective interaction online
4. How to establish **virtual teamwork**, improve organizing and sharing resources online
5. How to achieve effective **online time management** and achieve the goals



Content

Every chapter will have the following **structure**:

1. Introduction
2. Learning outcomes
3. Content: Impact and benefits
Consequences
4. How to develop this skill
5. Conclusions

The **target groups** for this third project result will be youth workers and youth coordinators who train NEETs. The materials can also be used by teachers, trainers, school directors, psychological consultants, academicians in teacher training, education centres and educational NGOs for personal development.





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CHAPTER I

HOW TO USE DIGITAL STORYTELLING WITH YOUTH FOR EFFECTIVE DIGITAL SELF



R3: DIGITAL SOFT SKILLS GUIDEBOOK'S FRAMEWORK

2021-2-TR01-KA220-YOU-000047996





How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Developed by Science and Human Foundation (Turkey)

Introduction

In today's digital age, equipping young people with **digital skills and competencies** is crucial for their success in the job market and society as a whole. However, technical training alone may not suffice, and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and creativity are also essential for thriving in the digital world. **Digital storytelling** is a powerful tool that youth trainers can use to develop both digital and soft skills.

Digital storytelling is a technique that employs **digital tools** to tell stories by creating narratives with multimedia elements such as images, audio, and video. This method effectively conveys information, emotions, and promotes learning while engaging young people and **fostering creativity and vital skills**.

This chapter delves into the **potential** of digital storytelling to develop young people's **digital skills** and **self-awareness** while providing a guide for youth trainers to effectively incorporate digital storytelling in their training programs. It explores the **benefits** of using digital storytelling, provides **guidance** on creating digital stories, and shares **tips** on effectively using this approach in youth training programs. The chapter also showcases successful digital storytelling **initiatives** and provides **resources** to help youth trainers get started.

To begin, we encourage readers to reflect on their experiences as youth trainers and the use of storytelling in their training programs. **Reflection** on the effectiveness of storytelling can provide insights into the potential impact of digital storytelling and prepare readers for the insights and strategies discussed in this chapter.

Throughout this guide, we provide **step-by-step guidance** on creating a digital story, from planning and scripting to incorporating multimedia elements and sharing the final product. We also share **best practices** for effectively using digital storytelling in youth training programs, such as setting clear learning objectives, selecting appropriate digital tools, and creating a supportive learning environment.

By the end of this chapter, readers will gain a better understanding of how digital storytelling can be used as a tool to enhance young people's digital skills and support their personal development. So, let's dive in and explore the **power of digital storytelling!**



How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Understand the **benefits** of using digital storytelling as a tool for developing young people's digital skills and self-awareness:
 - By the end of this chapter, readers will have a better understanding of the benefits of using digital storytelling in youth training programs. They will learn how digital storytelling can be used as a tool to engage young people in the learning process, promote creativity, build soft skills, and develop digital literacy.
- Describe the **steps** involved in creating a digital story, from planning and scripting to incorporating multimedia elements and sharing the final product:
 - Readers will learn the essential steps involved in creating a digital story. They will explore how to plan and structure a story, develop scripts, use multimedia elements such as images, audio, and video, and share the final product effectively.
- Identify **best practices** for effectively using digital storytelling in youth training programs, including setting clear learning objectives, selecting appropriate digital tools, and creating a supportive learning environment:
 - Readers will understand how to effectively use digital storytelling in youth training programs. They will learn how to set clear learning objectives, select appropriate digital tools, and create a supportive learning environment that fosters creativity and engagement among NEETs.
- Evaluate the **impact** of digital storytelling on engaging young people in the learning process, promoting creativity, and building soft skills such as communication and teamwork:
 - Readers will learn how digital storytelling can impact the learning process, promote creativity, and build soft skills such as communication and teamwork. They will evaluate the impact of digital storytelling on NEETs' engagement in the learning process and identify ways to leverage this approach to build essential skills.



- Showcase successful digital storytelling **initiatives** and utilize **resources** to incorporate digital storytelling into youth training programs:
 - Readers will explore successful digital storytelling initiatives and learn how to incorporate them into their youth training programs. They will have access to resources, such as templates, case studies, and toolkits, that will help them implement digital storytelling effectively.
- Reflect on **personal experience** as a youth trainer and use storytelling effectively in training programs to engage NEETs in the digital world:
 - Readers will reflect on their personal experience as a youth trainer and evaluate the effectiveness of storytelling in their training programs. They will learn how to incorporate digital storytelling effectively into their programs to engage NEETs in the digital world and support their digital skills and personal development.





How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Content: Impact and benefits

Digital storytelling offers a **unique approach** to developing digital and soft skills in young people. By incorporating this technique into training programs, youth workers can provide an **engaging and creative way** for learners to enhance their competencies.

The **benefits** of digital storytelling for developing digital skills are clear. Digital storytelling allows learners to explore different digital tools and technologies, such as audio and video editing software, which can improve their digital **literacy skills**. By learning how to use these tools, young people can become more proficient in digital marketing, content creation, and other critical digital skills.

In addition, digital storytelling can help young people develop **soft skills** that are essential for success in the digital age. For example, learners can practice communication skills by presenting their stories to an audience, and receiving feedback and suggestions. Digital storytelling can also help learners develop **teamwork skills** as they work collaboratively to create a compelling story.

One of the main benefits of digital storytelling is its potential to promote **self-awareness and cultural awareness**. By reflecting on their own experiences and perspectives, learners can gain insight into themselves and their communities. They can also learn to appreciate and respect different cultural perspectives and experiences, promoting cross-cultural understanding and empathy.





Furthermore, digital storytelling can help young people build confidence and improve their self-esteem. By creating and sharing their stories, learners can gain recognition and validation for their work. This can lead to a sense of accomplishment and pride, which can have a positive impact on their overall well-being.

The benefits of digital storytelling extend beyond personal development. By promoting creativity and innovation, digital storytelling can lead to the creation of new products, services, and ideas. This can drive economic growth and contribute to social and cultural progress.

In conclusion, digital storytelling offers a range of benefits for developing digital and soft skills in young people. By providing an engaging and creative way to learn, digital storytelling can promote digital literacy, teamwork, communication, cultural awareness, and self-awareness. These competencies can prepare young people for future employment opportunities, improve their overall quality of life, and promote social and cultural integration.



How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Consequences

The lack of digital and soft skills can have **severe consequences** for young people in today's working and educational world. The pace of technological change means that digital skills are becoming increasingly essential for employability, and the inability to keep up with these changes can lead to **missed opportunities and career stagnation**.

Furthermore, the lack of soft skills can lead to **difficulties** in communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, making it challenging to work effectively in the digital world. Inadequate soft skills can also lead to reduced self-esteem, confidence, and motivation, which can ultimately impact young people's overall quality of life.

The negative consequences of a lack of digital and soft skills can be far-reaching. For example, young people who lack these competencies may find it challenging to secure employment, particularly in competitive industries where digital skills are in high demand. This can lead to **financial difficulties**, such as difficulty paying bills and debts, which can have a negative impact on mental health and well-being.

Moreover, the inability to keep up with technological advancements can lead to **feelings of exclusion and disconnection from society**, particularly for young people who are already marginalized or socially isolated. The inability to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, or solve problems can also hinder social and cultural integration, ultimately leading to further isolation and a reduced sense of belonging.

The lack of digital and soft skills can also impact young people's ability to **access vital services and resources**. For example, without adequate digital literacy skills, young people may struggle to access online learning resources or apply for jobs online. This can lead to missed opportunities and a reduced ability to participate fully in society.





Here are some additional consequences of the **lack of digital and soft skills** for young people:

- **Reduced employability:** The lack of digital and soft skills can make it difficult for young people to find and retain employment. This can lead to financial instability and a reduced ability to achieve long-term goals.
- **Limited career prospects:** Without the necessary digital and soft skills, young people may struggle to advance in their careers, limiting their earning potential and professional growth.
- **Increased risk of unemployment:** The rapid pace of technological change means that certain jobs are becoming obsolete. Without digital and soft skills, young people may be at a higher risk of losing their jobs due to automation or other technological advancements.
- **Decreased competitiveness:** In an increasingly globalized job market, digital and soft skills are essential for staying competitive. Without these competencies, young people may find it challenging to compete with candidates who possess the necessary skills.
- **Social exclusion:** The inability to keep up with technological advancements can lead to feelings of exclusion and disconnection from society. Young people who lack digital and soft skills may find it difficult to engage with others, making it harder to form relationships and build a sense of community.
- **Reduced ability to adapt:** In today's world, adaptability is key. Without digital and soft skills, young people may struggle to adapt to changing circumstances, limiting their ability to navigate the challenges of the digital age.

In summary, the lack of digital and soft skills can have **far-reaching consequences** for young people. These consequences can impact their employability, career prospects, competitiveness, social and cultural integration, and ability to adapt to changing circumstances. By prioritizing digital and soft skills training for young people, we can help them overcome these challenges and build brighter futures for themselves and their communities.



How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Workshop-1: Digital Storytelling for Youth Development

Duration: 3 hours

Objectives:

- To introduce young people to the concept of digital storytelling and its benefits for personal and professional development.
- To provide practical skills and tools for creating compelling digital stories.
- To develop teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills through collaborative storytelling activities.

Materials:

- Writing materials (paper, pens/pencils)
- Digital storytelling software (e.g., Adobe Spark, iMovie)
- Multimedia materials (e.g., images, audio, video)

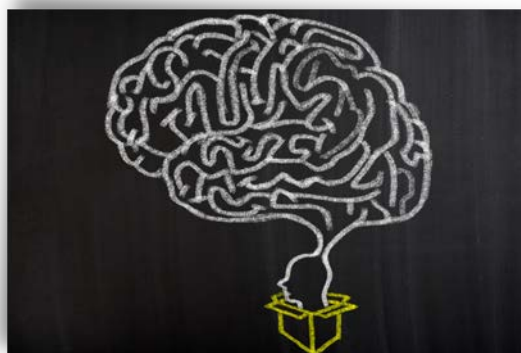
Activities:

1. Introduction (15 minutes)

- Icebreaker activity to introduce participants and create a comfortable learning environment.
- Brief presentation on the concept of digital storytelling and its benefits for personal and professional development.

2. Developing Story Ideas (30 minutes)

- Facilitate a brainstorming session to generate story ideas based on a given theme or topic.
- Encourage participants to think outside the box and be creative.

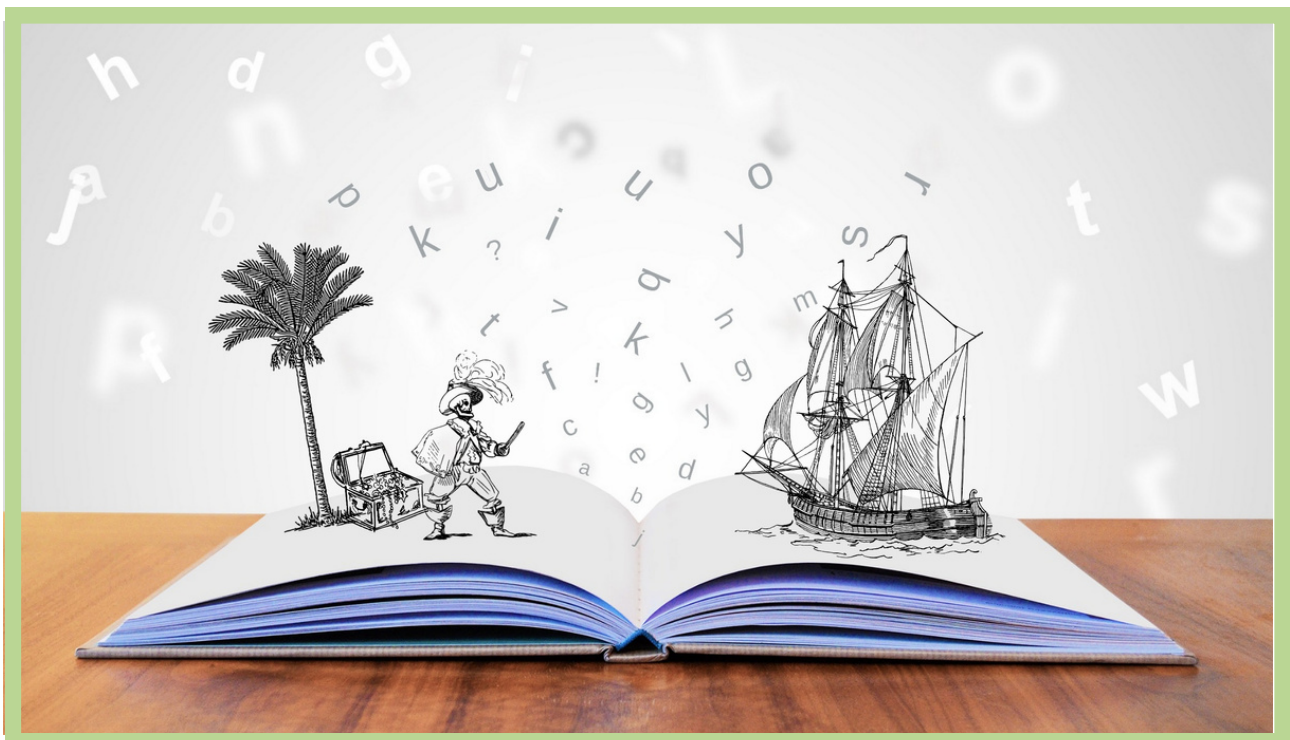


3. Writing the Story (45 minutes)

- Provide guidance on structuring a story and developing a plot.
- Encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences and perspectives to create authentic and meaningful stories.
- Facilitate group feedback sessions to help participants refine their stories.

4. Creating the Digital Story (1 hour)

- Provide hands-on training on digital storytelling tools and software.
- Encourage participants to incorporate multimedia elements, such as images, audio, and video, to enhance the storytelling experience.
- Facilitate group feedback sessions to help participants refine their digital stories.



5. Sharing and Reflection (30 minutes)

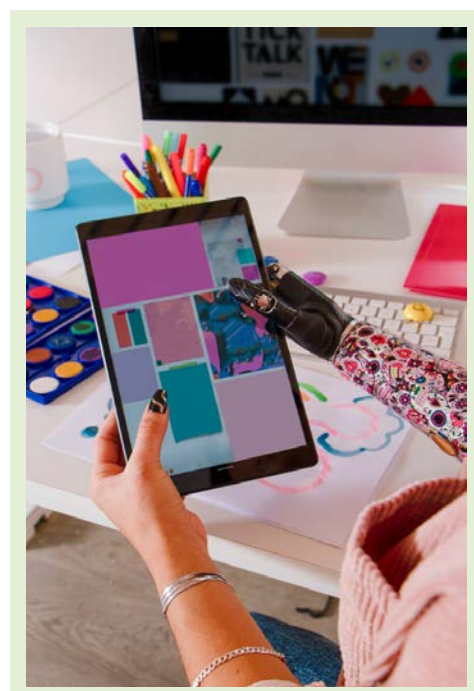
- Encourage participants to share their digital stories with the group.
- Facilitate a group reflection session to discuss the process of creating digital stories, including challenges and successes.
- Provide feedback and encouragement to help participants develop their skills further.

6. Wrap-up (15 minutes)

- Recap the main learning objectives and key takeaways.
- Provide additional resources for participants to continue learning and developing their digital storytelling skills.

Assessment:

- Observe and provide feedback to participants during group activities and individual storytelling sessions.
- Encourage participants to reflect on their learning experiences and identify areas for improvement.





How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Workshop-2: Creating a Digital Story: From Planning to Sharing

Duration: 2 hours

Objectives: Participants will learn the steps involved in creating a digital story, from planning and scripting to incorporating multimedia elements and sharing the final product.

Materials:

- Computers or tablets
- Digital storytelling software (such as Adobe Spark or iMovie)
- Headphones or speakers
- Writing materials (pen and paper, or digital note-taking tools)

Activities:

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Explain the objective and outline the plan for the workshop.
- Provide a brief overview of digital storytelling and its benefits for developing young people's digital skills and self-awareness.



2. Planning and Scripting (30 minutes)

- Discuss the importance of planning and scripting a digital story.
- Guide participants in brainstorming ideas for their digital story and developing a script.
- Provide tips on writing a compelling story that engages the audience.



3. Incorporating Multimedia Elements (60 minutes)

- Demonstrate how to use digital storytelling software to incorporate multimedia elements into the digital story, such as images, audio, and video.
- Provide guidance on how to select appropriate multimedia elements that complement the story and enhance the audience's experience.
- Allow participants to work individually or in pairs to create their own digital story, incorporating multimedia elements based on their script.

4. Sharing the Final Product (20 minutes)

- Discuss the importance of sharing the final product to showcase the work and receive feedback.
- Provide guidance on how to share the digital story through various channels, such as social media, email, or a dedicated website.
- Encourage participants to share their digital story with their peers and to provide constructive feedback on each other's work.

5. Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

- Review the steps involved in creating a digital story and the benefits of digital storytelling for developing young people's digital skills and self-awareness.
- Encourage participants to continue exploring digital storytelling and to use the skills they learned in future projects.

By the end of this workshop, participants will have a clear understanding of the steps involved in creating a digital story and will have developed **practical skills in digital storytelling**. They will also have gained insight into the benefits of using digital storytelling as a tool for developing young people's digital skills and self-awareness.



How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Workshop-3: Using Digital Storytelling to Build Soft Skills and Engage NEETs

Duration: 2 hours

Objectives: By the end of the workshop, participants will have a better understanding of how digital storytelling can be used to engage NEETs in the learning process, promote creativity, and build soft skills such as communication and teamwork. They will learn best practices for effectively using digital storytelling in youth training programs and evaluate the impact of this approach on NEETs' learning outcomes.

Materials:

- Computers or tablets
- Digital storytelling software (such as Adobe Spark, iMovie, or Animoto)
- Writing materials (paper, pen/pencil)

Activities:



1. Introduction (15 mins)

- Youth worker introduces the topic of digital storytelling and its potential impact on building soft skills and engaging NEETs in the learning process
- Participants share their experiences with digital storytelling, if any

2. Benefits and Best Practices of Digital Storytelling (30 mins)

- Youth worker discusses the benefits and best practices of digital storytelling, based on the learning outcomes identified in the guide
- Participants share their thoughts and experiences on how digital storytelling can help build soft skills and engage NEETs in the learning process
- Youth worker provides examples of effective digital stories and tools that can be used for digital storytelling



3. Creating Digital Stories (60 mins)

- Participants work in small groups to create digital stories on a chosen topic, such as their personal experiences, hobbies, or aspirations
- Youth worker provides guidance on the planning and scripting process, the use of multimedia elements, and effective storytelling techniques
- Participants incorporate multimedia elements such as images, audio, and video into their stories using digital storytelling software
- Youth worker provides feedback and support as needed

4. Sharing and Evaluation (15 mins)

- Participants share their digital stories with the group
- Youth worker leads a discussion on the impact of digital storytelling on building soft skills and engaging NEETs in the learning process
- Participants evaluate their own learning outcomes and identify areas for improvement

5. Conclusion (15 mins)

- Youth worker summarizes the key takeaways from the workshop
- Participants reflect on their experience with digital storytelling and identify ways to incorporate this approach into their own work with NEETs

Assessment

Participants will be assessed based on their **engagement** in the activities, their ability to effectively use **digital storytelling tools and techniques**, and their evaluation of the **impact** of digital storytelling on building soft skills and engaging NEETs in the learning process.





How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Workshop-4: Creating a Digital Self Through Storytelling

Duration: 2 hours

- Objectives:**
- To understand the concept of a digital self and its importance for young people not in education and employment
 - To learn how to create a unique personal brand online through digital storytelling
 - To develop storytelling skills and create a digital story that showcases the participant's unique personal brand
 - To learn how to manage a digital self and online presence to ensure they are up-to-date, secure, and free from negative content

- Materials:**
- Computers or smartphones with internet access
 - Writing materials (paper and pens)
 - Digital storytelling tools (such as Canva or Adobe Spark)

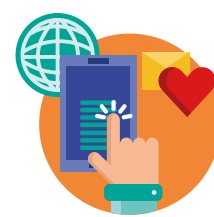
Activities:

1. Introduction (15 minutes):

- Facilitator introduces the concept of a digital self and its importance in the digital age.
- Facilitator explains how digital storytelling can be used to create and promote a unique personal brand online.

2. Developing a Personal Brand Story (30 minutes):

- Participants are encouraged to think about their personal brand and what makes them unique.
- Participants are provided with writing materials and guided through a series of prompts to help them develop a personal brand story.





- Participants are encouraged to think about their strengths, skills, and experiences that make them stand out.

3. Digital Storytelling Workshop (60 minutes):

- Participants are introduced to digital storytelling tools, such as Canva or Adobe Spark.
- Participants are given instructions on how to use the tools to create a digital story that showcases their personal brand.
- Participants are encouraged to incorporate multimedia elements, such as images, audio, and video, to make their digital story more engaging and dynamic.
- Facilitators provide support and feedback as participants work on their digital stories.

4. Sharing and Feedback (30 minutes):

- Participants share their digital stories with the group and receive feedback from peers and facilitators.
- Facilitators encourage participants to reflect on their experience and how their digital story showcases their personal brand.

5. Conclusion (15 minutes):

- The facilitator recaps the key concepts covered in the workshop and reinforces the importance of managing a digital self in today's digital world.
- Participants are provided with resources to help them continue developing their digital storytelling skills and managing their digital selves.



Assessment

- Participants are assessed based on their **participation** in the activities and the **quality** of their digital story.
- Youth workers can also conduct a **follow-up survey** to assess the impact of the workshop on participants' understanding of digital self-management and personal branding.



How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

Conclusions

In conclusion, digital storytelling can be a **powerful tool** for developing young people's digital and soft skills, as well as supporting their **personal growth and self-awareness**. Through digital storytelling, youth trainers can help young people build **essential competencies**, such as digital literacy, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity, and cultural awareness. The following are five key conclusions that summarise the content and spirit of this chapter:

- Digital storytelling is a versatile and effective tool for youth trainers to develop young people's **digital and soft skills**. It can be used in a variety of contexts, from formal education and training programs to informal learning and community initiatives.
- Digital and soft skills are essential for young people's **employability** and education in the digital age. The lack of these competencies can have severe consequences, such as reduced employability, limited career prospects, and social exclusion.
- Youth trainers can use digital storytelling to foster **creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving skills**. By working collaboratively on creating compelling stories, young people can develop important soft skills that are highly valued in the job market.
- Digital storytelling can also promote **self-awareness and cultural awareness**, helping young people to reflect on their own experiences and perspectives and to explore different cultural perspectives and experiences.
- To effectively develop young people's digital and soft skills through digital storytelling, youth trainers need to provide **guidance, support, and resources**. This includes ensuring that learners have access to the necessary digital tools and technologies, setting clear learning objectives, providing feedback and support throughout the process, and creating a supportive learning environment.





How to use digital storytelling with youth for effective digital self

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CHAPTER II

HOW TO CREATE AND USE DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS FOR EMPLOYABILITY



R3: DIGITAL SOFT SKILLS GUIDEBOOK'S FRAMEWORK

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How to create and use digital portfolios to employability

Indepcie SCA (Spain)

Introduction

In Chapter 5 of the “Digital skills training toolkit”, we were able to see the importance of portfolios in providing effective ways to bring together and demonstrate an individual’s competencies.

In addition to going deeper into the **definition** of a digital portfolio and the **different types** of portfolios (developmental, showcase portfolio, authentic, reflective, individual and interactive), in such chapter, the adult trainers became more familiar with the use of different **online tools** for the creation of a portfolio and the contents to include.

However, if you are still uncertain about the role of digital portfolios in aiding young individuals in securing jobs, this chapter will provide an **in-depth analysis of the soft skills** that can be obtained by young NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) when they create their own portfolios during the job search process.

Is there a better way to look into who young people are as a person and an employee to give potential employers an idea of how they would fit into their organization?

A digital portfolio can prove to be an extremely valuable asset during the **job application process**, allowing young people to showcase their personality and unique style while providing tangible proof of their qualifications. This approach can help them stand out from the competition and increase their chances of landing the job.

Digital portfolios have become an increasingly popular tool for young people to showcase their **work, skills, and accomplishments**. While they are often used in academic settings, digital portfolios can also be beneficial for job seekers, particularly young NEETs who may lack formal work experience.

In addition to highlighting technical abilities, digital portfolios can also help young individuals develop and showcase important soft skills that are highly valued by employers. In this chapter, we will explore some of the soft skills that can be fostered through the creation of digital portfolios and how they can enhance a young person's job prospects.

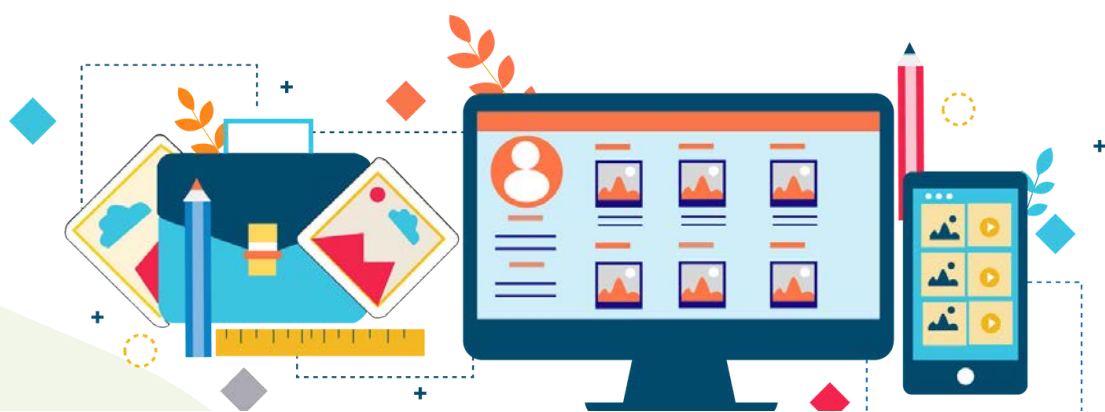


How to create and use digital portfolios for employability

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Understand the **importance of soft skills** in the current and future job market, and how they can differentiate individuals from others when applying for a job.
- Identify and define **key soft skills** that are valued by employers, including communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, and critical thinking.
- Understand how digital portfolios can be used as a tool for developing and **showcasing soft skills**, and how they differ from traditional metrics such as school attended or years of experience.
- Reflect on how to create a **well-organized and visually appealing digital portfolio** that reflects the owner's personality, skills, and interests and articulate experiences and present them in a clear and concise way, demonstrating soft skills to potential employers or educational institutions.
- Develop the ability to showcase young people's achievements, qualifications, and strengths in a professional manner, establishing a **professional identity** and enabling potential employers to gain insights into their work history and skillset.
- Learn how to use digital portfolios for **networking** and making connections with potential employers, mentors, or collaborators.
- Acknowledge the **importance of creativity** in the design of a digital portfolio, and how to strike a balance between creativity and functionality.
- Consider how to incorporate **multimedia elements**, such as images, videos, and interactive features, to enhance the creativity and engagement of a digital portfolio.





How to create and use digital portfolios for employability

Content

Soft skill-intensive occupations will account for two-thirds of all jobs by 2030, according to Deloitte Access Economics report.

Apart from the purely technical skills required in traditional jobs, with ongoing technological advancements, globalization, and demographic changes impacting how businesses operate and compete, the **importance of soft skills** will grow.

In this new global and digitized landscape, soft skills, which are transferable between industries and occupations, can help young people reflect those distinctive traits that will set them apart from others when applying for a job.

Impact and benefits

In the workforce, “today’s employers are increasingly shifting towards **skills-based hiring** and promotion policies that reward individuals for their specific, demonstrated skills instead of signifiers of skills such as years of experience”, says CEO of Credly, Jonathan Finkelstein.

The traditional approach to measuring student competency in education is changing, with standardized tests becoming less relevant, and educators seeking more meaningful ways to differentiate students beyond just test scores and GPAs. **Personalized learning** plans that prioritize **individuality** and **creative expression** are gaining popularity.

Digital portfolios offer a powerful means of developing soft skills because they require young people to articulate their experiences and present them in a clear and concise way. Portfolios encourage **self-reflection** and enable individuals to track their progress over time by setting goals and documenting their growth. Unlike traditional metrics such as school attendance or years of experience, portfolios place greater emphasis on young people’s ability to **think critically** and demonstrate their skills.

There are many **benefits** that the development of digital portfolios can bring to young NEETs who are looking for a job, both in the short and long term:



- **Demonstrating skills:** A portfolio can help young people demonstrate their soft skills to potential employers or educational institutions. Soft skills, such as communication, collaboration, and problem-solving, are highly valued by employers and are often difficult to quantify on a resume. By including examples of projects, papers, or presentations that showcase their soft skills, young people can provide **concrete evidence** of their abilities.
- **Reflection and improvement:** Building a portfolio requires reflection on past experiences and projects, which can help young people identify areas for improvement and set goals for future development. By regularly updating their portfolio and reflecting on their **growth**, young people can continue to enhance their soft skills over time.
 - The Harvard Business Review describes **reflection** as giving “the brain an opportunity to pause amidst the chaos, untangle and sort through observations and experiences, consider multiple possible interpretations, and create meaning. This meaning becomes learning, which can then inform future mindsets and actions.”
- **Competitive advantage:** In a highly competitive job market, having a well-curated portfolio can give young people a **competitive advantage** over other candidates. Employers are often impressed by candidates who have taken the time to create a professional portfolio, as it shows **initiative** and a **commitment** to personal and professional growth.
- **Networking:** A portfolio can also be a useful tool for networking and **making connections** with potential employers, mentors, or collaborators. By sharing their portfolio with others, young people can demonstrate their skills and interests, and open up new opportunities for themselves.
 - A digital portfolio that is publicly available can attract individuals with similar interests and facilitate professional networking. When constructed effectively, a digital portfolio can provide an easy means for individuals to connect with the portfolio owner.



- **Professional identity:** A career portfolio can help young people establish a professional identity and enable potential employers to gain insights into their **work history and skillset**. A well-organized career portfolio can provide evidence of an individual's achievements, qualifications, and strengths.
 - The design of a digital portfolio should be a reflection of the owner's **personality, skills, and interests**. A creative and well-executed digital portfolio can set the owner apart from others and leave a lasting impression on potential employers and collaborators.
- **Creativity:** In the design of a digital portfolio, creativity can be a valuable asset. A visually appealing and well-organized digital portfolio can **capture the attention** of potential employers and collaborators. The design elements of a digital portfolio, such as layout, typography, and colour scheme, should align with the owner's personal brand and showcase their unique style and creativity.
 - Incorporating **multimedia elements**, such as images, videos, and interactive features, can also enhance the creativity and engagement of a digital portfolio. However, it's important to strike a balance between creativity and functionality, ensuring that the digital portfolio is easy to navigate and understand.



Consequences

Portfolios are still largely used in the **art community**, but not only by those who draw, write, or take pictures. Make-up and hair artists are a popular group of digital portfolio creators. Many **technology wizards**, such as UX/UI designers, front-end developers, and product designers can all benefit from a portfolio. Creative directors, interior designers, architects, and freelancers are further examples.

Whether or not a digital portfolio is necessary depends on an individual's specific circumstances and goals. In some fields, such as graphic design, photography, or web development, having a digital portfolio is essential to showcase one's work and attract potential clients or employers. However, in other fields, such as medicine or law, a traditional resume or CV may suffice.

“While many people assume that having a portfolio is only necessary for artists and designers, no matter what your trade, a portfolio is an effective and inexpensive way to exhibit a holistic view of your skills, personality, and identity.” (CANVA)

That said, creating a digital portfolio can offer **several advantages**. For example, it allows individuals to showcase their skills and accomplishments in a visually engaging and interactive way, making it easier for potential employers or collaborators to assess their abilities. Additionally, a digital portfolio can serve as a **centralized location** to house one's work samples, resume, and other relevant information.



How to create and use digital portfolios for employability

How to develop this skill

Examples of using digital portfolios for self-reflection:

- Director of Secondary Social Studies, Dr. Montra Rogers from Houston Independent School District, uses digital portfolios to **coach teachers**. She encourages them to document specific events or to share insights from the classroom. They use portfolios to provide better feedback to one another, track their growth and to tell success stories to larger groups.
- Creative and digital marketing leader of Prophet, Mat Zucker, and his team use digital portfolios to **keep track of past work** and to **meet new objectives**. “Portfolios curate your best stories to impress and convince the prospective client or employer that you are brilliant and can tackle things as in the past, but for them in the future,” says (Mat Zucker).



Examples of using digital portfolios for networking:

Below, you will find a list of ideas from [LinkedIn](#) to **guide young people** to use their digital portfolios to network and connect with potential employers and mentors:

- **Defining goals**

To effectively use an e-portfolio to network and grow learners' career opportunities, it is important to begin by defining their goals. This involves having a **clear idea** of what they want to achieve with their e-portfolio, whether it is to find a job, an internship, a scholarship, or a mentor.



- **Selecting a platform**

Selecting a suitable platform to create your e-portfolio, such as WordPress, Wix, LinkedIn, Google Sites, or Mahara, is also crucial. Individuals should consider **factors** such as ease of use, customization, accessibility, security, and compatibility before choosing a platform.

- **Curating content**

Curating learners' content is also important to ensure that their e-portfolio showcases their best work and achievements, organized into categories such as education, work experience, skills, projects, awards, or testimonials. They should use **different formats**, such as text, images, videos, audio, or links, to make their e-portfolio engaging and diverse.

- **Reflecting on learning**

In addition to displaying their work, their e-portfolio should also reflect their **learning and development**. This can be achieved by including a section where they explain their learning philosophy, goals, challenges, and achievements.

It is also important to promote their e-portfolio through **various channels**, such as their resume, cover letter, email signature, social media profiles, business cards, or personal website, and to network with potential employers and mentors in their field. By using their e-portfolio to showcase their unique skills, personality, and value proposition, they can build trust and reciprocity with others in their industry.

Examples of using digital portfolios for creativity and professional identity:

- The design tool Canva can help trainers and young people create a stunning digital portfolio as a way of enhancing their **creativity skills** when selecting information and designing their interface. In this sense, Canva provides the following tips and tricks for creating an eye-catching digital portfolio of any kind:

- **Curate your best work**

“Start designing your portfolio by looking at all the work you’ve done, then choose your **favourite pieces** and the work you’ve gotten the most positive feedback for.”





- **Make your name or logo visible**

“Whether you have a logo, or just go by your personal name, creating a template that you can use throughout your portfolio provides a visual cue for the reader and reminds them whose work they are looking at”

- **Allow for easy navigation**

“When creating a portfolio, it’s important to help the viewer navigate through your work.”

- **Have a physical copy on hand**

“While the digital world is growing at a rapid pace, if you’re in a meeting, or have a face-to-face interview, having a physical copy of your portfolio shows that you are prepared.”

- **Repurpose your design for other platforms**

“With millions of users, using social media to market the work you’ve created is a great way to create new opportunities for yourself.”

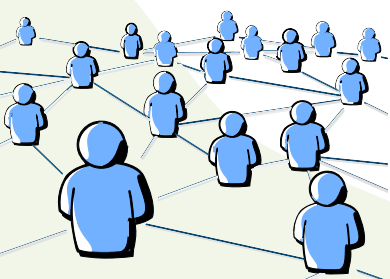
- **Include case studies for extra insight**

“Often, case studies outline the obstacles before the project, the solution to the obstacle and how you were able to overcome that obstacle through your expertise.

- **Develop a seamless brand kit**

“Fonts, colours, and logos play a significant role in revealing you or your brand’s identity to the audience. For a sleek digital portfolio (particularly if it’s in the form of a website) it’s important to choose the main colours, fonts, and images you’ll be working with.”

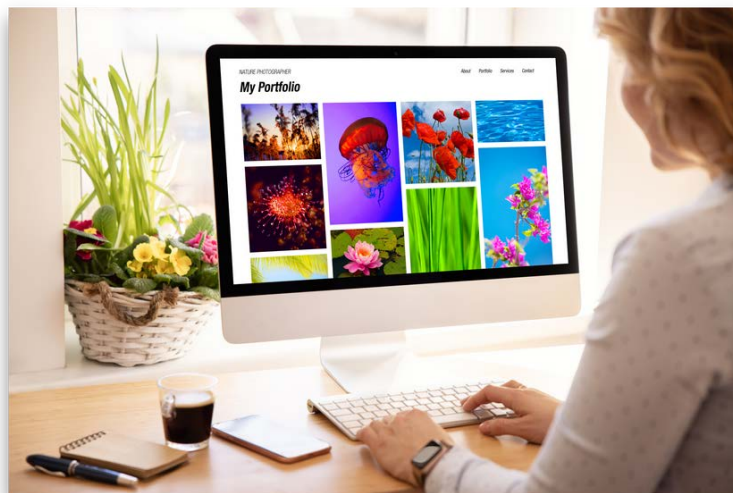
“With millions of users, using social media to market the work you’ve created is a great way to create new opportunities for yourself.”



How to create and use digital portfolios for employability

Conclusions

- Soft skill-intensive jobs are expected to increase in demand, making it essential to possess **transferable soft skills** that can set one apart from others when applying for a job.
- The use of standardized tests in measuring student competency in education is becoming less relevant, and educators are seeking **more meaningful ways** to differentiate students beyond just test scores and GPAs.
- Digital portfolios provide a powerful means of developing soft skills by requiring individuals to articulate their experiences and present them in a clear and concise way. They encourage **self-reflection** and enable individuals to track their progress over time by **setting goals** and documenting their growth.
- Digital portfolios offer many benefits to young NEETs, including helping them demonstrate their soft skills to potential employers or educational institutions, reflecting and improving their skills, giving them a **competitive advantage** in the job market, facilitating networking, and helping them establish a professional identity.
- A well-crafted digital portfolio can capture the **attention of potential employers** and collaborators, making it easier for them to assess one's abilities and accomplishments in a visually engaging and interactive way.





How to create and use digital portfolios for employability

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CHAPTER III

HOW TO CREATE AND UTILIZE AUTHENTIC AND ENGAGING CONTENT FOR EFFECTIVE INTERACTION ONLINE?



R3: DIGITAL SOFT SKILLS GUIDEBOOK'S FRAMEWORK

2021-2-TR01-KA220-YOU-000047996





How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online?

ESICA (Austria)

Introduction

The Internet has become more and more relevant in everyday life, and the same can be said for online communication. The chance to communicate online has changed the **scenarios** in our private lives, work, education and everything we can imagine. It has undoubtedly reshaped the potential of reaching out to friends, but also customers, changing forever the way **relationships** are initiated, carried out or nurtured.

This change has impacted also the way people **communicate online** and what kind of **content** can be created online. From social media to blogs to videos, content creation and the skills that come with it, are essential for establishing an **online presence** and/or ensuring good communication.

Before technological means that open to a potentially unlimited capacity of generating content, users might face the phenomenon of “**information overload**”. This term refers to a situation where the overload of information exceeds the possibility of a user to process and utilize it. As a consequence, the information is not really understood, remembered and stored. This is the point where the ability to create agile and engaging content is crucial.

There are some considerations that a content creator should keep in mind to catch the eye of readers and viewers. First of all, **information quantity and quality**: due to the same phenomenon of information overload, long-winded content does not help in attracting your audience. Poor quality, spelling mistakes, a tedious design, and imprecise or not accurate information will also affect the way content is perceived and consumed and the willingness of the users to refer to the same page again. Nevertheless, no reason to despair!

This chapter has been thought of as a compass for the reader. Through these pages, the **different types of content** are described and analyzed to provide the users with a range of options. Thus, according to their needs, the users will be able to understand how to match their objectives with a suitable model.

The chapter accompanies the reader in the **selection and development of online content**, guiding the readers through the main stages of content selection and development, following a strategy that guides in the creation of relevant authentic and engaging content.

In a fast-growing and ever-changing online world, whoever takes the first steps in content creation has to face some choices and delineate their style, balancing between the target group and the true self. Creating **original and authentic content** takes also an original and authentic personality. Given the latest developments in technology and worldwide access to online means, more and more people decide to establish their presence online. Thus, given the large amount of users, the main question that content creators should ask themselves is: “What makes you, you?”.

It is definitely not easy to define, but it is the **starting point** to valorize your content and make your content special.





How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

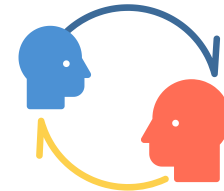
- Gain more knowledge on **communication fundamentals**. The chapter provides an overview of the stages and features of communication to reflect on the factors influencing online and offline communication.
- Learn **different types of content** creation online. The chapter provides a summary of the different content you might find online. The list is not comprehensive of all the types, but it constitutes a starting point for those approaching this field. With an overview, the user will have an idea of which format is more suitable for the topic addressed.
- Reflect on the definition of **authenticity and engaging content creation**, which goes hand in hand with entrepreneurial skills. The module encourages the content creator to be creative, without stressing too much about innovation, but rather about preciseness and true self.
- Be guided on the **steps and reflections** needed to start your journey in original and engaging content creation.
- Receive some **tricks** on how to strategize your work and platform, being user-oriented.
- Learn how to prioritize and **set your goals**, empowered by the SMART goals methodology to define and find your best strategy to succeed.
- Learn some **techniques** and how to engage your audience through some tricks and keeping the focus on your objective.
- Create **authentic content** online.

How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

Content

The word “communication” comes from the Latin word "communicare", which means “to share”. It involves a sender and a receiver, but it is made of different elements, such as the **encoding process** (to transform the idea into an actual message); the **message** (the information conveyed); a **channel** (the tool/system that is carrying out the message, i.e. speech, message, email, etc.); **feedback** (the response to the message) and **noise** (anything that compromises the “quality” of the message).

It is possible to distinguish 4 different types of communication:



- **Verbal:** the language is used to convey the message;
- **Non-verbal:** this type of communication does not require words, like body language, facial expressions or tone of voice;
- **Visual:** the power of images, graphs, and charts;
- **Written:** written words are used, such as in emails or letters.

Especially after the Internet took over around the 90s, communication has changed and been shaped accordingly. The Internet has made communication easy, quick, immediate, spaceless and timeless. Also, the types of communication have been added to the virtuality. Indeed, suffice to think of how the various platforms for video calls have changed the way people interact and how the **4 types of communication** can be included in one interaction. All the types of communication can be joined and contained in only one tool: verbal, non-verbal, written and visual are hosted in a single platform, where you can share your screen, while using your facial expressions, share pictures and write in the chat.

The advent of the Internet has reduced distances, created bridges and it has given voice to people through social media. Social media and mobile technologies have changed the way communication is consumed but also produced. Indeed, we are exposed every day to a constant **flow of information and data**. With the act of consuming, people shape also the future of digital products.

According to what they click, search and watch, the data is collected and used to assess trends and interests. The role of the consumers becomes also one of the producers for their ability to shape what it is created and placed in the market.



Thus, for the creation of products or services, the producer needs to consider the **shifts in communication paradigm**:

- Messages are user-oriented;
- Multimedia and “information presentation” needs to be captivating to engage the public;
- Since we are always connected and considering the plethora of communicators, the ability to transform data into knowledge is essential. What attracts the audience is the story behind those data.

As mentioned, the way we produce material online has been significantly impacted by **visual communication**. Images and videos are becoming the main forms of communication online due to the growing importance of social media and the widespread use of smartphones. Material producers have therefore had to modify their approaches to include more visual components in their material.

Visual communication is a powerful tool to visually express a message, and inspire or evoke a memory, feeling, or emotion. What visual communication is really about in its essence is selecting the **catchy elements** that will attract the audience based on their values and interests. These elements might include a variety and combination of text, icons, shapes, imagery, and data visualizations. Some suggested **strategies** included in visual communication are:

- Showing the impact of your work by using data visualization
- Outlining processes and flows by using shapes and lines
- Creating more memorable information through the use of symbols and icons
- Telling stories through visuals and data
- Harnessing colour to illustrate the importance and attract attention

The abundance of material circulating on the internet is marvellous, but the possible **illimited capacity** of generating content can leave the users or consumers overwhelmed, constantly interrupted by email, calls, messages and notifications, unable to concentrate or worried about missing out. Thus, nowadays the new communication is based on finding a space among the multitude where to stand out.

The process might be terrifying, but there are some **tips and tricks** that can be used to emerge from the crowd. Creating engaging, authentic content where the users can find themselves and where the content creator can emerge from the multitude of information, websites and materials shared by other users can be simplified by some self-reflection and understanding.



First of all, the keyword is **authenticity**. It is not easy to define and not even to reach. But it is a defining and unique characteristic of individuals. What makes you, you? Authenticity not only reveals your true self but also reduces the gap between the content creator and the audience. To be real and authentic brings a sense of truth, intimacy and proximity.

The idea of **closing the gap** is functional to differentiate “**today's content creators**” from traditional media celebrities, with a model of unreachability top-down influence.

The **entrepreneurial skill** should be added to the **authenticity** factor. It is based on a model of continuous self-labour, where success is reached through efforts and is seen as a way towards self-realization. In this perspective, the content creator is imagined as a highly motivated entrepreneur who earns by providing the audience with a range of products, answered needs and services.

Social media are the sites where the authentic self is displayed and self-entrepreneurship empowered. They blur the line between public and private, commercial and ordinary. But, creating authentic and engaging content does not mean writing only about what “big numbers” wish for, following the trends and something outside “the comfort zone”

Often, the strategy used to attract “views” or “clicks” by SEO content creators follows keyword search volume. But, the other side of the coin reveals the creation of an article based on high-volume keywords doesn't mean your audience will click on that article, nor it means your article is compelling, useful and relevant enough for the public to bring social media engagement.

Moreover, **engaging and authentic content** reflects and responds to a need. The suggestion is to imagine the content produced as a part of a mechanism and as the machine itself: first of all, the machine responds to a need identified by its inventor.

Besides, its parts, a gear, a screw, a cable, or one of the inner parts of a machine, make it works. Without one of those parts, the machine is not useful, it does not comply with its purpose and it does not simplify the life of the user. In the same way, the content is part of a **bigger picture**; its creation was determined by the detection of a need and identification of a group that asked for that answer. Lastly, it provides a solution accordingly to the factors analyzed.

If you apply the same reasoning to the content-creation process, you will find out that your material will answer to a **specific group** (i.e. students, youngsters, seniors, people with a particular hobby, etc.) that has a specific need/interest (i.e. enhancing their skills on a subject, entertainment, learn a subject, etc.). Thus, the content created will be shaped in conformity with the understanding between the two parts: from one side the **content creator**, with his persona, identity and expertise; on the other side the **consumers**, with their needs and expectations.

Depending on the message the content creator wants to transmit, the targeted audience and available resources, the **format** at the disposal is various and heterogeneous:

1. Blog content: written articles, posts, guides and general entries inserted in a website or a blog. If mono-thematic, it shows clearly writers' areas of expertise, contributing to promoting and creating the image of a reliable and trustworthy expert in the sector.

In this regard, it might help to look at some **trends** and consult **different sources** to collect users' expectations or questions. In this way, the content created has more chances to answer to the specific needs of a targeted audience and to capture their interests. Remember: a blog shows and requires **commitment**. The publication is not sporadic but planned and organized. **Consistency** is crucial. Moreover, a blog is not a space for self-appraisal and self-referential. The reader will lose interest when:

- the content has no substance;
- it becomes a diary self-centred;
- it is overly lengthy and
- tries too much to sell.

Focus on **quality**, answers and eventually solutions. Be precise but **concise**. Let the reader discover who is the person behind the screen and lines.



2. Listicles: as the name suggests, a listicle might be described as a perfect mixture between a **list and an article**. Probably, most of the users have come across articles such as “The 10 steps to create...”; “The best 7 destinations for youngsters”; “Build your company following these 5 steps”. Usually, a listicle encompasses a set of pictures with a description. It is accessible, appealing, easy to read and concise in the information shared.

There are two important factors a content creator should remember:

1. To match the number in the list with a subheading;
2. Listicles also include an introduction and a conclusion.
 - o To create an engaging listicle, a writer might want to consider:
 - o The topic chosen is suitable for a list;
 - o The content includes valuable lessons/good examples/upshots;
 - o Resort to practical exemplifying instances to clarify the concept or message sent;
 - o Ensure that the list is coherent;
 - o Use a catchy title and subheadings

3. E-books: The content included in the E-book is longer and closer to a book format. It is **downloadable** and available for **online reading** (PDF for instance). In this sense, the content creator or who commissioned the work has more space to show their knowledge and establish themselves as an expert.

There are some undeniable **benefits**, such as the e-book is always a click away, available on-demand and can be consulted at different moments according to the information needed. This gives it a long-lasting duration. It might include external links to your website or blog or other content you have created. Last, but not least, it encompasses a various range of opportunities for its captivating visuality.

Some suggestions include:

- choosing your topic after careful research to ensure you have a plan beforehand on how to develop the ebook;
- defining the solution or answer you want to provide and your target group’s interests;
- including visual elements and choosing appealing colours and in line with the topic presented;
- convert it to a PDF.



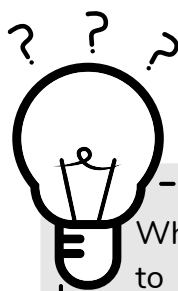
4. Infographics: The visual supports the shared information. This format is useful to have an overview right in front of the users' eyes. It breaks down information to make it more **enjoyable, accessible and straightforward**. The challenging part might consist of coordinating text and images/graphics/charts. It requires careful research to include complete information. In this case, it is good to include empty spaces to divide concepts and information and have a tidy presentation. Also, use the **colours** wisely (perhaps to create connections and stimulate the users) and use a **font** easy to read.



5. Videos: Video creation, regardless of the format or topic, will help the producer to engage with the audience. The most used social media platforms contain a video option but with limited **24 hours of availability**. But there are other platforms ad hoc for videos in which a content creator can resort to various formats: interviews; practical videos on how to do something; behind-the-scenes videos; video tours, etc.

The **advantage** of this content is that creativity plays a major role. Imperfections are allowed as a connector between screens. The **disadvantage** consists of the adaptation of the video to the content: the more professional the producer wants to appear, the more they will need to boost their digital skills and invest in professional platforms and tools to record the videos.

A **tip for beginners** might be to focus on the content provided and the message sent.



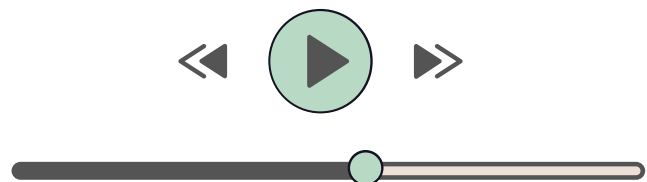
What is the main goal? How the video is going to improve or help the audience? Be sure to create short videos and publish them on different platforms to create traffic in social media, blogs or websites.



6. Podcast: it is an **audio episode** that can be shaped as an interview, friendly chitchat, or debate with more participants. But the essential part is to identify the common thread. The producer needs to identify the main topic or the umbrella term that might cover the following episodes. Once content creator chooses the topic, they should ask themselves: how is this podcast going to stand out and differentiate itself? This will provide the content creator with the key towards their definition of **originality and authenticity**.

The first step following the topic selection should be to write down several possible **episodes' titles**. It is important to have an idea beforehand of what will follow. At the same time, it is important to decide how to structure it: - who is the target group (age, interests, lifestyle, values)? - how long does every episode last (approximately)? and how often will the podcast be published? - in which category does it fall (history, entertainment, cinema, nature, travels, etc.)?

Lastly, a short but captivating and easy-to-remember name will increase the chances of success.





How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

Content

Impact and benefits

- **Increased digital literacy:** Learning how to create content online requires familiarity with **digital tools and platforms**, which can help increase digital literacy and confidence in navigating the online world. It boosts the chance of **employability** and enhance the development of **transversal skills** that can be re-used and adapted to different contexts and needs.
- **Communication skills:** To be a great communicator is a key factor in every field. This skill eases the proceeding in the **different fields** and experiences of life. Creating engaging online content requires clear and effective communication skills that can be adapted to **online and offline scenarios**. It also enhances the ability to connect with people, building a good network.
- **Boost creativity:** Developing online content can be a highly creative process that allows for experimentation, innovation, and self-reflection and as a coping mechanism against stress and boredom, helping to enhance **problem-solving skills**.
- **Expanded career opportunities:** In a digital world, every job has a part of tasks or development that entails content creation and digital skills. Learning how to create engaging online content can open up **new career opportunities** in a variety of industries, creating connections and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- **Personal branding:** Creating engaging online content can help individuals to affirm their knowledge and area of expertise, becoming a **reference point** in a niche. Personal brand leads to promoting ourselves as leaders in the field.
- **Community building:** Engaging online content may enhance engagement and generate **deep connections** with a target audience by helping to create a passionate group of individuals around a brand or topic.
- **Opportunities for growth:** To be able to communicate online and be authentic and engaging will bring new opportunities for exchanging information, learning **new fun facts or skills** and starting a dialogue with like-minded people who can suggest different perspectives or occasions for growth.



How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

Content

Consequences

According to the 80/20 Pareto Principle, 80% of all the consequences come from 20% of the causes. The percentage has been used in business to highlight that the 80% of the results and success will derive from the 20% of the efforts. It can be applied also to the field of skills related to engaging content creation, considering it represents a transversal skill that has the potential to **boost access to opportunities** but also interaction with the world.

The lack of content creation skills might negatively impact young people's ability to engage with the digital world and take advantage of the opportunities that it presents. It is important for young people to develop these skills in order to actively participate in society, thrive in today's digital environment and enhance their chances to **be competitive** in the market. Among the consequences, there are:

- **Decrease opportunities for employability:** content creation skills are becoming increasingly relevant in a series of abilities looked upon by hiring personnel and companies. Without these skills, young people may see their chances to land a better **job cut** and consequently **decrease their competitiveness** in the job market.
- **Hindering self-expression:** being able to create and share engaging content online represents a powerful form of self-expression for young people. Moreover, it brings closer **like-minded people**, enhancing dialogue, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **Reduced ability to engage with awareness of digital media:** the lack of content creation skills hinders the general understanding, awareness and **active participation** of young people in digital settings or in activities where it is needed. Additionally, it jeopardizes the ability to benefit from its usage and might result in a **lack of consciousness** towards online content and dangers.



- **Reduced opportunities for digital entrepreneurship:** if you are thinking of setting up a business, being able to create engaging content online is essential to establish your online presence and directly interact with customers. It creates a **bridge between online and offline**, bringing closer producer and user, keeping a sense of humanity, beyond machine-passive interaction.
- **Limited ability to contribute to online communities:** the digital world, as the face-to-face world, has developed its own communities. Being able to communicate online can be a powerful way for young people to participate, contribute and belong to online communities while sharing their knowledge and expertise. Without these skills, they may be less able to participate in **online conversations** and contribute to the collective knowledge of their communities.





How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

How to develop this skill

According to the platform used, rethink and readapt the content creator's experience and representation. Due to the ever-changing features of the platforms, the content creator needs to keep track of **eventual changes** and how to exploit them to their own advantage.

Content creators' **objectives** might vary according to the phase they are experiencing: from primarily dealing with identity building and representation to dealing with the platform's new opportunities as a structural change occurs or new trends emerge. This shapes the way a content creator "sells" (in its literal and figurative meaning) online or markets their content. Indeed, a crucial role is played by the **development of platforms, features, and algorithmic configurations**. It influences how the content is created, shaped and adapted to the platform and the audience.

This reveals why it is important to proceed with structure. The following lines will define the **structure** and the **skills** a content creator needs to put into place to create authentic and engaging online content.

First of all, the starting point consists of defining the main idea. Since content creation is the process of generating content, it is essential to identify the **field of interest**. Thus, the question that content creators should ask themselves is: what do I want to write about? What is my area of expertise or the topic I can contribute to the most?

When starting your path towards the content creation process, choosing an angle and perspective in the content presented will differentiate your "product" from another one. Merely adding a **description or static data**, it won't make your content emerge. Considering that the Internet overflows with content and data, a content creator should add value, and bring a new and fresh perspective on the material they are preparing. The content is not a presentation, indeed it is **quality information** that enriches the users, going beyond pitching and self-appreciation content.

What do I want to write about? What is my area of expertise or the topic I can contribute to the most?

Once defined the main idea, it is time to inspect your environment. A content creator should analyze **different factors**:

- **Competition:** who are your competitors? To peek at what experts or famous content creators are producing will provide the content creator with two relevant pieces of information: **what to do and what not to do**. In this way, the content produced won't be a copy of someone else but will provide guidance and inspiration on how to structure your content, how to talk with your audience and what it is visually and content-wise appealing.
- **Resources:** To peak on the competitors will also show which resources are currently in use and start considering which resources a content creator will need. This definition will cover not only the economic part but for instance tools, time, and additional resources that might become handy for the **quality of your content**.
- **Trends:** What are the current trends in the field? Quick research on the Internet will show what are the **current matters**, helping in identifying areas that a content creator might be involved with and spot opportunities.
- **Platforms:** what is the most suitable platform that will help the content creator to attract and communicate better with the **audience**? Which platform will help the content creator to convey the **message** at its best?

During this phase, a content creator might find it useful to resort to a **keyword planner**. It is free of charge and is offered by Google. Through this tool, a content creator can discover and monitor the keywords related to their business. It is possible to see how often a word is searched and what are the different options related to the topic.

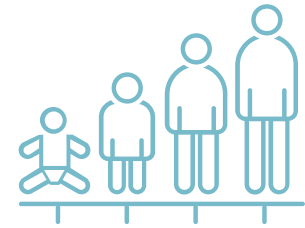
For the content to be more engaging is also crucial to identify and learn whom the content creator is referring to. The identification of the audience will contribute to the definition of the idea and the development and shape of the content. In this way, the content creator enhances their chances of meeting the needs of the target group, creating authentic content that will engage the audience and create traffic on the platform.

Moreover, the identification of the audience will also help in the **selection of the platform**: for instance, e-commerce seems to be particularly successful in TikTok and Instagram.



Things to consider in this regard are:

- age
- education
- geographical location
- income
- interests

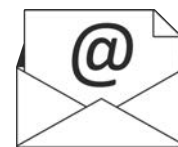


This phase is going to help in building a **potential profile of your targeted audience**, consequently supporting the draft of a content plan. Indeed, Google Analytics applied to a website or social media will provide the content creator with useful insights into getting to know the audience and what content is more engaging for them.



Now that the target group is clear, it is beneficial to **set goals** to measure the trends and performances of the platform. This new phase consists of setting goals. Once clarified these two aspects comes the moment to decide how and what you are going to measure the performance. For instance:

- website traffic;
- numbers of new “customers” in a time frame;
- engagement;
- email subscription;



In this regard, it is resourceful to think of your goals according to the **SMART methodology**. The acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.



In this regard, it is resourceful to think of your goals according to the SMART methodology. The acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

SPECIFIC	Well-defined and precise	Rule of the 5Ws: - who is involved? - what is the final precise goal? - where is this goal to be achieved? - when do you want to achieve this goal? - why have you set this goal?
MEASURABLE	Establishment of criteria that will keep track of progress or stall towards the goal	How much? how fast? How often? Which amount? How are you measuring?
ACHIEVABLE	A challenging but pragmatic and reasonable goal	Do I have the resources? If not, what is missing? Is it feasible?
REALISTIC/ RELEVANT	Realistic and relevant goals that are pertinent to the main goal you want to achieve and are result-oriented	Are the goals realistic, considering time, space, money and other factors limitations or considerations?
TIMELY	It has a timeline and deadlines for its completion	When is the deadline? By when do I plan to achieve it?

Later on, building a content strategy will become necessary to ensure the **achievement of the objectives**, to engage with the audience and to create a public of affectionate users.

Probably, there will be times in which a content creator runs out of time to create something brand-new, but this might happen when a blog or platform already has some publications. Thus, having a content plan will facilitate **time management** and organize the idea of what to produce. It is a time-saving strategy, and a life-saver for creativity when writer's block emerges.

Certainly, a content creator might resort to AI tools to help in the creation; but it might constitute a good option to benefit from user-generated content. In any case, there are some **key points** that might guide its development, such as:

- What is your **format**? How are you going to shape your message?
- What is your **message**?
- Who is your **target group**?



Additionally, a 6 or 12-month plan will help show the platform's direction and inform the audience, keeping them informed and affectionate to the publications. In this way, a content creator will have the chance to experiment and **diversify the content**, without the pressure of last-minute deadlines.

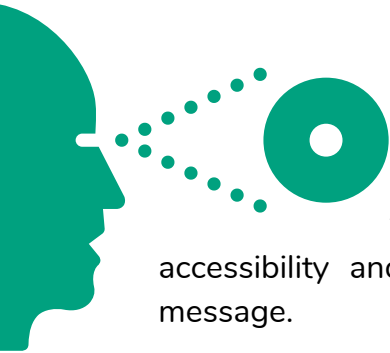
Last but not least, the content created needs to be promoted. Finding and building a **promotion strategy** is also one of the successful ingredients for the satisfactory outcome of your efforts.

Once a future content creator defines the area of expertise, the target group, the goal and the content plan, the following steps are part of **tips and tricks** on how to create engaging content online, keeping the audience interested without losing your authenticity:

1. Connect: you can find relevant influencers, experts, and trending authors and engage with them. Being able to connect with them will work to your own advantage in attracting new users and creating traffic on your platform.



According to the 80/20 Pareto Principle, you should be spending 20% of your time on content creation and 80% on promotion.”



2. Be visual: visual communication plays an important role in attracting new users. Images, videos, graphics, logos and any kind of visual material need to be **eye-catching**, not only to attract but also to ease accessibility and the fruition of the material offered, reinforcing or enhancing the message.

3. Quality matters: a good content creator that aims to build a **loyal niche of passionate readers and users** should live according to the rule “quality over quantity”. Do not rush: a post, video, or article with mistakes and inaccuracies will convey a wrong message on the level of expertise, lack of passion and commitment to the platform.

4. Sharing is caring: sharing tips and tricks and your knowledge will build a relationship between the content creator and the public. It constitutes also a way for the users of getting to know the person behind the screen and contributes to **raising your prestige**.

5. Humanity: in a digital world with blended lives, many users struggle to distinguish between true and false, real and artificial, online and offline. Showing traits of humanity will reduce some of the gaps between the two worlds and will help users to relate to the content provided. Engaging and authentic content online is a kind of content that maintains the originality and authenticity of the content creator while engaging with the public. But how? Being **relatable**, being **approachable**, being **friendly**.

Your tone and style should match the target group you are addressing and the content created.



6. Interact: invite your users to participate, interact, and answer. For instance, you can interact with your audience asking them to **vote, disseminate, leave a comment, or ask questions**. Great interactions might start by directly referring to the users, and asking for their opinion or suggestions. This will not only bridge and boost the traffic, but also will help the content creator in evaluating which **topics** are more “triggering” for the audience. The interaction can generate food for thoughts convertible into posts or further content for your platform.

7. Be sure your content is easy to share: this evaluation should be done during the selection phase of the platform that the content creator wants to use. For instance, if you are creating a **video channel**, you need to be sure that a user can share and deliver easily the message in the preview of the content. If this process requests further steps, elaboration or some changes, this means that the content might be discouraging for a large-quick portion of users in a fast-changing and resourceful online world.



How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

Workshop 1: Creating together

Duration: 2 hours (30 minutes explanation and introduction + 1 h 30 minutes development)

Objectives: The workshop aims to stimulate brainstorming among the participants that are moving the first steps in content creation development or what to improve their reachability. Through the workshop participants will gain useful insights on how to define their online content creation through the main steps abovementioned.

Materials: Pc and Internet connection

Development:

- Divide the participants into groups of maximum 4 people and ask them to identify:
 - Which **topic** they want to work on (travels, nowadays issues, hobbies, etc. the topic has to be concise)
 - Describe potential **target group** (age, education, geographical location, interests)
 - Define a **platform and format** (videos, pictures graphics and text, etc.) they want to use.
- Lastly, they will prepare a draft of what they have envisioned (i.e. if they imagined a blog, a Word document with highlights, sections, colours, font, space for the picture or additional resources).

Assessment:

After every group presents their work, the assessment can consist of **two phases**: in the first instance, the groups will provide suggestions and feedback. Secondly, the facilitator should observe and provide feedback on the decision-making process, visuality, content and strategies that might be improved.



How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

Workshop 2: Organizing and growing: plan-management

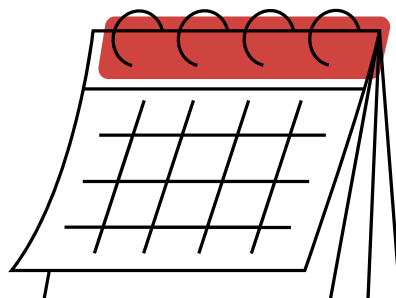
Duration: 1 hour and a half (30 minutes explanation and introduction + 1-hour development)

Objectives: The workshop wants to reflect on the variety of content that might be created online to encourage participants' creativity and the ability to adapt to different means of communication and to plan in advance the work.

Materials: Pc, Internet connection, printed calendar

Development:

- According to the size of the classroom, the facilitator might decide to implement the workshop in groups or without splitting into groups. A calendar will be provided with on top written the **platform used** (Youtube, Snapchat, blog, Instagram, etc.). Print 1 or 2 copies, so that half of the participants can start.
- Set a **calendar publication** (every week, every 2 weeks or monthly -according to the pages provided) and a timer. Every 2 minutes whoever is writing on the paper should pass it to the participant next to them. Every participant will provide a content idea that is related to the main idea suggested by the first participants who wrote in the paper.



Development:

- Rule: it is allowed only 1 pass and 1 comment after two contents.
- Example: if the first participant wrote in the paper with Youtube calendar the topic “travels”, the second can suggest an example of content related to the topic (i.e. video publication of my trip to Berlin; food tourism; funny traditions in X country, etc.). The third might suggest another topic and if the fourth runs out of creativity, they can write a comment from which the following participants should write a content idea.
- The **content *should*** vary.



Assessment:

At the end of the activity, the facilitator gives additional **15 minutes** to circulate the final result around the class. Then, they encourage participants to express their feelings and if they have encountered challenges or interesting ideas. Additionally, invite the participants to reflect on the content suggested: it will provide an overview of the trends and environment (above mentioned phase of “inspect the environment”).

The idea is to reflect on the **planning of the calendar** amongst time constraints, but also under pressure of respecting deadlines for keeping the audience engaged.



How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

Conclusions

The module presented an overview of the most common **types of content online** and **tricks and tips** to capture users' attention. It included two workshops to implement with youngsters interested and involved in this topic, but also adaptable to self-paced learning.

In conclusion, the creation of authentic and original content online requires a **combination of skills** (communication, organizational, critical thinking and especially digital) and strategies (from topic identification to setting the goals, strategy and deciding the platform use). The process of content creation is not merely related to writing, taking pictures or a set of images. It entails a **phase of analysis** and understanding of your audience, their needs, and their expectations, but also **environment screening, goals setting and strategy**.

- One of the most relevant phases in creating engaging content is **defining your idea** and how you can communicate at its best. In this first phase, the content creator needs to define what they want to talk about, how (which format) and then in which platform. At this moment it is possible to define and evaluate the chance of success of your idea through a screening of the environment.
- Remember: **authenticity and originality** are essentially combined with entrepreneurial skills and mind.
- Another important skill is understanding the **nuances of different social media platforms**. Each platform has its own unique audience, format, and style, and content needs to be tailored according to these factors.
- Indeed, you might need to choose if you want to write a **blog** (showing a precise area of expertise), a **listicle** (helping, giving pieces of advice or guiding the users), **e-books** (always available, just a click away from the users), **infographics** (to catch the eye and communicate a message in a limited space), **videos and podcast**.



- Do not forget to: **connect** (with other experts or influencers in your field to have more visibility and to perfect your content); **be visual** (catch the eye through visual communication, images, colours); **prioritize quality** (users will notice mistakes or inaccuracies, staining your online reputation); **sharing is caring** (talk and share tips for your audience that might help them); **humanity** (among all the digital world, to feel human feels good, for you and for your audience and creates a feeling of proximity); **interact** (engage with your community, ask questions, invite them to actively participate in your platform); **create content easy to share** (the online world is a fast environment. If there is a registration, links over links and different tabs to open and close, users will lose their patience and interest. Be fast and easy).

Finally, creating engaging content requires **ongoing experimentation and analysis**. Sometimes you will get new ideas from your users or interactions. Other times, you will need to refresh your look and try something new, test different formats and strategies, and monitor your progress.

By constantly learning and analyzing, you can always improve, grow and build a **loyal audience** over time.





How to create and utilize authentic and engaging content for effective interaction online

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CHAPTER IV

HOW TO ESTABLISH VIRTUAL TEAMWORK, IMPROVE ORGANIZING AND SHARING RESOURCES ONLINE FOR BETTER ONLINE COMMUNICATION



R3: DIGITAL SOFT SKILLS GUIDEBOOK'S FRAMEWORK

2021-2-TR01-KA220-YOU-000047996



How to establish virtual teamwork, improve organizing and sharing resources online for better online communication

Euronet (Italy)

Introduction

Remote working and teleworking have never been heard of more than in this period, associating this with the need to maintain contact with one's company reality, in order not to lose or at least strengthen the cohesion of the workgroup and of course a chance for NEETs to explore a new way to **find new jobs**.

Here then is that the solution seems to be found in virtual teamworking, but, what are we talking about specifically?

Remote working is a model destined to develop even further and for this very reason, it is essential to ensure that the right balance and dialogue between colleagues is maintained.



Remotely creating links between employees and managers of a company guarantees **greater productivity and collaboration** within the team, inevitably favoring the development of ever stronger relationships, based on the trust and satisfaction of all members of a group.

Virtual team building activities, in fact, thanks to the use of online platforms, have precisely this purpose: to foster personal connections within the team to improve communication and the quality of work of all participants.

Once you understand that physical distance does not necessarily have to translate into work individualism, it is, therefore, essential to commit yourself so that there is never a lack of moments of exchange and dialogue in the work group.

How to establish virtual teamwork, improve organizing and sharing resources online for better online communication

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, you will learn the following aspects:

- **Streamlining cooperation** – simpler ways of working and effective virtual meetings
- Creating a **communication cadence** that engages team members when communicating through technology
- Creating trust remotely and **balancing trust, empowerment and control**
- Building **community and visibility** remotely
- Balancing **productivity** with sustainable well-being and **resilience**
- Staying **creative** when working remotely.





How to establish virtual teamwork, improve organizing and sharing resources online for better online communication

Virtual Team Building

In the social context in which we live, large companies with offices located in different geographical areas: there are many reasons why sooner or later, on the part of a company, the need to bring together remote teamwork arises.

But how do you keep alive the sense of group and collaboration between physically distant colleagues? Working from home has its **pros and cons**: if on the one hand, this translates into a farewell to the endless hours of **traffic** to reach the office or desperate rushes to catch the last train of the day, with an evident improvement in the quality of life; on the other hand, it also means the **emotional distance** between colleagues, absence of those moments of exchange during a coffee break, which can even turn into isolation and a sense of loneliness.

Resorting to virtual team building can be of great help in encouraging **interaction** between people who, despite the absence of human contact, manage to form social bonds and work together strategically and productively.

A valid alternative method to the traditional one, therefore, virtual team building is an effective tool for stimulating remote work, making the delegation of activities more efficient and making employees feel more **connected, appreciated and motivated**.

But as in the last period, virtual team building has been taken into consideration so much, probably due to the tendency to prefer experiences that require contact and physical presence; but, as often happens, it is precisely in situations of necessity that the foundations are created for **new opportunities**, destined to function over time even once the crisis has passed.





With a **different approach** to the traditional one, remote team building is characterized by the fact that each member participates from home at their desk, in front of their computer!

The latest forms of technology are essential to start this type of business, which aims to recreate a **positive work environment** and maintain contact between all colleagues, even behind a screen.

It will therefore be necessary to connect to a **web platform** for meetings and connect with the rest of the team: the team building activity, in fact, can be proposed in different formats and, for success, it will undoubtedly require the direction of an expert professional, able to coordinate the timing of each experience and the interventions of the individual participants.





How to establish virtual teamwork, improve organizing and sharing resources online for better online communication

Impact and benefits

Is it really effective to recreate moments of collaboration and sharing at a distance? Well yes!

Giving up socializing is difficult, just as it is complex to create solid bonds of trust when you find yourself having to carry out a work project with colleagues located who knows where.

In this sense, therefore, **online team building** represents an important opportunity to increase the **team spirit of a virtual team**.

Let's see some of the **major benefits** of virtual team building:

It offers the possibility for workgroups to collaborate for innovation, productivity and efficiency.

Create an atmosphere of trust among the various members, even of different levels.

Strengthen relationships and increase employee satisfaction.

It stimulates the creativity and imagination of the participants, reducing the stress caused by the absence of human connection during working hours.

Helps confirm a team culture.



How to establish virtual teamwork, improve organizing and sharing resources online for better online communication

Consequences

Everyday digital skills, such as social media and web browsing, often don't match those thought to be critical in the workplace and needed by companies to enable recovery and growth.

According to Salesforce's Digital Skills Index, more than two-thirds of all Gen Z respondents (64% globally) say they have **advanced social media skills**, supporting the stereotype of digital proficiency among younger generations, but just under a third (31%) believe they have the most advanced digital skills businesses need right now.

The difference is even clearer in Italy, where 81% of Generation Z respondents believe they have an advanced level of social skills, but only one in five (19%) think they possess the digital skills necessary for the world of today's work.

The skills of **e-leadership**, or **e-business**, are the ability to make the best use of digital technologies within any type of organisation and to introduce digital innovation in the specific market sector in which it operates. Digital skills are closely integrated with the **soft skills typical of the leader** and with the specific skills of the sector. They also include 'digital skills for the job', which must be possessed by all workers, as all jobs require the ability to use digital technologies. So they are extremely important for young people, especially the NEETs who have to enter the world of work.

Specialist digital skills concern professionals and future ICT professionals and are in demand in both the private and public sectors. The e-CF European e-Competence Framework 3.0, the European reference tool of the Digital Agenda for defining the competences of ICT professionals, defines ICT competence as "a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve observable results". The development of adequate specialist **ICT skills** is a crucial condition for **digital growth**, in the sector of online public services, the evolution of manufactured products, as well as for the efficiency and evolution of services.



How to establish virtual teamwork, improve organizing and sharing resources online for better online communication

How to develop this skill

Workshop and activities for virtual team building and engaging online meetings

Duration: 60 minutes

- Objectives:**
- Understand the tools and familiarise yourself with their use
 - Read the practices of Management in the context of virtual teams
 - Reinterpret Leadership in the context of remote people management
 - Identify tools and techniques to effectively manage a virtual meeting
 - Learn the practices managers to create climate and context suitable for Virtual Collaboration
 - Outgoing knowledge Knowing and choosing among the tools available for virtual collaboration
 - Effectively managing a virtual meeting Effectively managing a virtual team Didactic Program
 - Virtual Collaboration: critical issues and opportunities

1

Ice breakers for virtual team building

Online meetings can take time to get comfortable with, particularly for teams who are just transitioning to remote working. Communicating with colleagues in an online environment can be challenging because of the lack of physical cues, non-verbal communication and all the potential distractions one might have when working from home or in a remote office. And just like any skill, it needs practice.

Breaking the ice and getting people comfortable with interacting with each other is a vital part of any **effective working session**. This is particularly important if you have a new or freshly formed team to deal with where people don't yet know each other as much.

One of the first barriers many people face in online meetings is speaking up – by starting with an **inclusive online icebreaker**, you can get everyone over this hurdle right at the beginning. Furthermore, helping your team get to know one another and become comfortable working together virtually helps lay the foundation for deeper team development exercises.



Break the Ice with The Four Quadrants Activity

The Four Quadrants activity is a creative, visual exercise that is a great way to help your group get to know each other and encourage personal responses. You can use this with any four questions that will help a virtual team align, get to know one another or outline challenges or working opportunities. It's super flexible and works with teams of any makeup.

In an online environment, this exercise works well using an online whiteboard like Mural or Miro to collect responses and have people participate in real-time. You can use digital drawing tools or invite participants to draw on paper and upload photos to the shared whiteboard.

2

Openers to align virtual teams

One of the challenges of building an effective team is **alignment**: if your group is not pulling together in the same direction or if they have fundamentally different ideas of what they are trying to accomplish, this can lead to ineffective conversations and frustration. This is even more important in remote work environments where virtual teams don't have the **same communication channels** as in an office. Aligning an online team should be one of your first priorities and creating dedicated space in your agenda for team alignment is well worth the time and effort.

The following exercise is designed to help distributed teams get aligned right at the start of your virtual meeting and to help set the tone for the session ahead. Let's take a look!

Check-in check-out

Effective virtual team building requires the **presence and engagement** of everyone in the room, whether that's in a video conference room or real life. Failing to get everyone onboard early or have an opportunity to share how they're feeling can make the rest of an online workshop difficult.

Encouraging team members to reflect and mentally process what they've done during your session with a check-out is also useful to encourage change and **self-awareness**. Check-in Check-out is a great way to bookend your virtual workshops and encourage everyone to share and bring themselves to the session in full.



3

Activities to improve virtual team collaboration

Great teams make it a habit to reflect on projects, group processes and how they work together as a team. Unstructured discussions on subjects like working processes or team dynamics can escalate in the wrong direction if not properly framed and facilitated.

Using **team games, exercises or activities** to facilitate the **team reflection process** can help ensure your team moves forward productively. In an online environment, taking the opportunity to reflect as a group is imperative to building bonds and improving the awareness of each member of the team.

Strength building exercise

The members of a team will invariably get to know one another as a by-product of working together, but is this enough to build the kinds of **bonds and relationships** that can make a successful remote team? Dedicated time to encourage participants to share, reflect and celebrate success should be a part of your virtual team workshop.

With the Strength Building Exercise, you'll encourage positivity, mutual appreciation and respect among your team and help build a **productive team culture**. This method is great for boosting positive energy and creating space for your virtual team to celebrate one another and build a **confident, self-aware group**. Many of the best remote team activities have benefits that extend beyond the workshop and this exercise is up there with the best of them!

4

Group processes to improve virtual team development

Solving problems or engaging in a complex process as a group can be a great way to strengthen your team, resolve issues and improve team dynamics. Goals which involve the whole group can encourage **cohesion** as participants work towards a common target, and encouraging more in-depth teamwork is a good idea too!

It can be especially effective to include these kinds of exercises alongside some of the lighter virtual team activities. Moving from getting to know one another better to spending dedicated time on team development can be a surefire way of developing your team and having **concrete takeaways** at the end. Let's take a look.

Team Canvas Session

Looking for a **team alignment** framework that helps a team go from zero to a hundred as well as outline how they wish to grow and work together in the future? The Team Canvas Session is a group process that is designed to align teams, increase cohesion and performance and to create a productive team culture, fast.

This session can be run as a standalone team workshop or be part of a larger team culture and definition session and it adapts extremely well to **online environments** using an online whiteboard. If you're trying to help a team align and come together around shared goals and values and do not have an existing playbook, Team Canvas Session is an effective way to kickstart that process and cover all bases.

5 Virtual team communication activities

Anyone working in a team knows how important communication is: when it's good, your team works like clockwork and you feel like you can achieve anything; when it's bad, tasks take twice as long, things get missed and people get frustrated.

Virtual teams whose primary **method of communication** might be Slack or email especially need to consider how they communicate and work together. Some things which may come across easily with verbal communication might not be clear in text, and when working together online, good standards of communication are important to keep things moving effectively.

Proper and transparent documentation, kick-off meetings and retrospectives are only one part of the puzzle. Combine these with **experiential learning** and **remote-friendly communication exercises** in order to get real results. Team communication activities like the below are great for helping virtual team members think about how they might better communicate.



Blind drawing

Whatever the organisation, teams invariably have members with different skill sets and knowledge bases. One of the challenges of team communication comes when one team member tries to explain an **unfamiliar concept** to another team member. If teams aren't great at communicating, this process can be frustrating for both parties.

In Blind drawing, one person has to **describe an object** while another has to accurately draw it from this description alone. The rule is that the person describing the object cannot say anything which clearly gives away what the object is or is closely related to. For example, if describing a tree, you might say, "It's a tall cylinder with lightning coming out of each end, one set of lightning spreading out into the air, the other going into the ground. It has rough, weathered skin, and at the ends of each fork of lightning there are hundreds of children that grow until they're ready to fall."

It's a **fun exercise** to see how people interpret abstract instructions, but it also shows how what might be obvious to one person is not obvious to another, and underlines the need for clear, effective communication.

6 Fun virtual team activities

Most of the exercises and activities you'll facilitate during an online session will have **definitive goals and outcomes** in mind when you run them, such as building particular skills or solving problems.

When designing workshops, remember that **improving team connection** is a viable and worthwhile outcome. Having fun and connecting with your teammates is a vital part of being a productive team member, and it's worth remembering that there is value in having some enjoyable exercises with your team to de-stress, connect and get to know each other a little better.

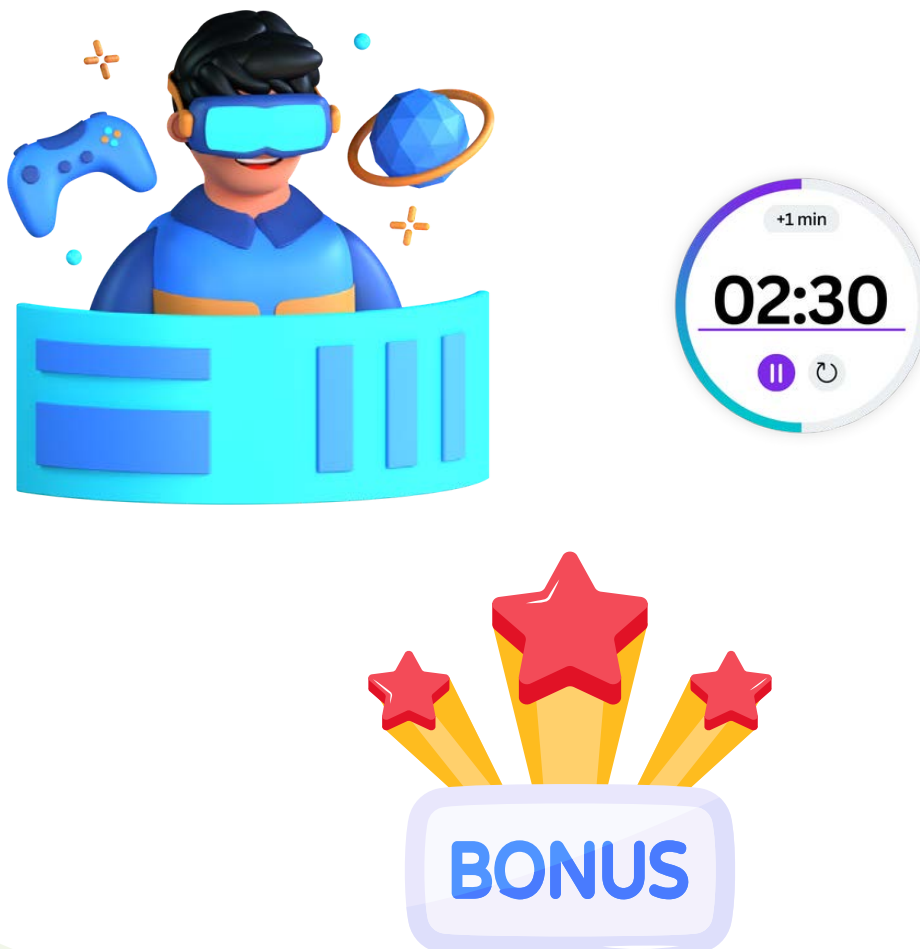


Virtual Scavenger Hunt

Working towards **shared goals** and demonstrating team values in the course of an exercise is great practice for tackling complex business projects – if you can have fun while doing so, even better! The Virtual Scavenger Hunt is a great team activity for Zoom and an online whiteboard – encouraging teams to be creative, gently competitive and work together to get the best possible result.

Start by creating a **list of items** to be found online. Then, split your team up into groups to go and find those items and collect them in the allotted time. Bonus points for encouraging the use of different tools, forms and media, and to allow teams to be creative in finding the items for the online scavenger hunt.

We've found that having a **debrief section** and also creating a list that is almost undoable in the allocated time frame helps keep the stakes high and ask that a team prioritizes and communicates effectively. It's also fun to see what different groups came up with at the end!





How to establish virtual teamwork, improve organizing and sharing resources online for better online communication

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is essential to adapt **team-building strategies** to address the specific needs of young NEETs who are part of virtual teams. While virtual teams have become a common practice in today's workforce, they often lack the regular face-to-face interactions that facilitate team building in traditional collocated projects.

Recognizing the unique **challenges** faced by young NEETs in virtual teams, it is crucial to provide targeted training and learning materials that cater to their needs. These materials should not only focus on building technical skills but also emphasize the importance of soft skills such as effective communication, collaboration, and relationship-building within the virtual team environment.





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CHAPTER V

HOW TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE ONLINE TIME MANAGEMENT AND ACHIEVE THE GOALS?



R3: DIGITAL SOFT SKILLS GUIDEBOOK'S FRAMEWORK

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How to achieve effective online time management and achieve the goals

Euronet (Italy)

Introduction

Nowadays, our working day is continually interrupted by tools, notifications, emails, social media, you name it. In the age of the economy of distraction, chaos has become the norm.

It's virtually impossible to focus on the important things or know if you're prioritizing the right tasks at the right time.

The intentions you have for your workday are sacrificed in favour of high-priority activities, messages that seem urgent and continuous notifications. 80% of knowledge workers said they keep an eye on their inbox and other communication apps to keep up with work tasks.

The result is that employees are **less effective**, leading to missed messages, missed actions and missed deadlines.

Time management templates can help you reclaim time and become more aware of your daily routine. Instead of letting your to-do list tell you how to spend your time, you can use time management strategies to intentionally set your daily priorities and focus on what matters most.

There is no universal method for managing time. In this chapter, we'll look at eighteen **different tips, strategies, and quick fixes** to help you regain control of your activities and your time.

Time management is the **practice of managing activities** in a way that ensures that time is used as intentionally as possible. Time management can increase productivity, but the biggest advantage of doing it effectively is being able to better manage your day's priorities and have time to rest and take care of yourself.





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Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, you will learn how to:

- Implement more time into your day;
- Define the boundaries between **work and time** for yourself;
- Transfer to the participants a **methodology** to define their own priorities;
- Develop **models and scenarios** through which to target one's decision-making process;
- Improve **self-organization skills**;
- Clarify the **role of habits** and how to overcome them positively;
- Understand how to identify and manage "**weather vampires**";
- Individually define an **action plan** for the application of what has been learned;
- **Reduce stress**;
- **Increase productivity.**





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Time management skills

Time management skills help individuals work more productively, lower stress and improve overall results in academic situations, work, business and even leisure time. By building **better time management habits**, it's possible to be more intentional about how you spend your time and learn to prioritise and work more effectively. You can learn how to be more productive in this chapter, which might also come in handy for time management.

During the pandemic and the subsequent rise in home working, managing time effectively has never been more important for people. As the line between work and home life blurred, it became even more essential for workers, students and families to be able to plan their days effectively. **Working smarter**, not necessarily harder became the goal for many.

Students, especially those with other commitments such as family or work, benefit from embracing time management techniques to keep their studies on track. Improving these techniques helps to **build confidence** in their studies and allows them to develop lifelong skills in learning to prioritise tasks that are urgent from those that can wait. This is beneficial not only to their immediate studies but also later in their working life.

Time management can be approached from **two different points of view**, the one that teaches us to manage all the moments and behaviours of our day and the purely organizational one which is fundamentally based on efficient agenda management.

In the first case, the worker, the manager and even the student, each adapting the method to their own needs and particular characteristics, must adopt a series of virtuous behaviours which should allow us not only to improve our working day but also our entire existence.

Basically, it can be summarized by saying that at the beginning of each day, in addition to having a limited number of minutes at our disposal, we also have a certain amount of mental energy to use correctly.

The primary objective of time management techniques, therefore, becomes that of putting in place a series of virtuous behaviours that allow us not to waste our mental energies, obviously avoiding all those bad habits that dissolve our energies, making it difficult to **achieve our professional and personal**.

In addition to putting in place a series of daily routines that allow us to start our days in the right way, with the greatest possible charge of energy, the objective of time management techniques is aimed at reducing the waste of such energy. Our mental energies and our time are daily devoured by various "time eaters" that Time management techniques teach us to avoid or manage.

Stress and virtual distractions are certainly not the most common "time eaters" that prevent us from having a full, productive and fulfilling day and life. Stress causes an excessive expenditure of nervous energy, increases fatigue and makes us inefficient at work and dissatisfied in life.

It is a **psychological and physiological response** that the body puts in place towards tasks, difficulties or life events judged as excessive or dangerous. The feeling one gets in a stressful situation is of being faced with strong mental and emotional pressure, of not being able to cope with events and of being overwhelmed and helpless in the face of commitments, perceived as greater than one's possibilities of management.

All this sometimes happens due to a temporal distortion of how our brain perceives the time available to carry out the tasks assigned to us. Our mind thinking intensely about all the activities we have to do convinces itself of having to do all the work at the same time and generates strong emotional reactions in our body.

To **fight stress effectively**, you need to try to have a realistic perception of the commitments and activities to be performed. We need to make sure, at the beginning of each week and working day, that we perceive our commitments for their real size and importance.





Let's try to reduce the **commitments on our agenda**. We can prepare a list on a sheet of paper in which to list all the activities, professional and personal commitments that we have to carry out in a given period of time. We assign a score from 10 to 1 (therefore from very important activities to those not at all important) to everything we have written on the sheet.

The very fact of having transferred our commitments to paper will make us perceive them more rationally. By identifying the important projects and those that are not, it goes without saying that we already have another solution to our stress problem. We remove from the **list all the activities** to which we have assigned a score lower than seven. This will allow us to deal with the truly important activities of our lives with greater awareness, reducing the sense of stress that makes us deal with our time in an unproductive way.

Finally, for the commitments that we have not crossed out, we understand when they must be completed, we define how many **working hours** their proper performance requires and finally we also define their importance in the context, not only of our work, but also of our life. The moment we manage to identify each of our commitments in its real temporal dimensions, the sense of overwhelm diminishes.

Time management strategies

One of the easiest ways to develop time management skills is to adopt a proven strategy into your daily routine. Time management strategies can help you **set time limits** on tasks and tackle them one at a time, as well as give you the ability to plan your day with more intentionality.

1. Timeboxing

Timeboxing is a goal-based time management strategy, where you have to complete tasks within "timeboxes". This strategy is especially effective if you're not sure how long it takes to complete a task and you want to approach your to-do list with more intention.

Timeboxing helps you break bulky tasks into **smaller chunks**, to get them done in a reasonable amount of time. Each activity should have its own timebox of up to three hours. For example, if you're writing a blog post, you could create a two-hour timebox to write down your general ideas. After a break, you can create an additional three-hour timebox to start writing your first draft. By breaking down the activity into smaller parts you can reach your goal step by step over the course of days or weeks.

2. Time blocking

Time blocking is similar to timeboxing but instead of **scheduling the duration** of each individual activity, you will train yourself to block defined periods on your calendar to complete activities. When you use time blocking to schedule your activities, you're effectively dividing your work week into periods of time that you'll use to work on projects, communicate with colleagues, take a break, or even exercise. Time blocking can help you work more fluidly and in a state of absolute concentration, called deep work, allowing you to focus without interruption.

To create a block of time, start by understanding what your **daily and weekly priorities** are. Later, group similar tasks together so you can work on them in a block of time. Finally, train yourself to schedule blocks of time in your calendar where you can focus, so that you can stick to them.

3. Pomodoro technique

The Pomodoro Technique is similar to timeboxing and time blocking and helps you tackle work by breaking it down into short periods of time, after which you can take breaks. This time management strategy is especially helpful because it actively encourages you to **take regular breaks**, which has positive effects on intrinsic motivation and your brain. In fact, there are studies that claim that taking breaks makes people more creative.

To use the Pomodoro Technique, you'll need a timer, a prioritized to-do list, and the ability to "mute" notifications. Start by setting **25 minutes** on the timer and try to spend that amount of time working on just one activity, trying to avoid reading text messages and checking social media. Once the time is up, take a **five-minute break**. Ideally, you should try to get some physical activity during your break, such as getting up for a snack or stretching, but it's acceptable to have a look at your devices or see if you've received any important messages while you've been working on the activity.

Repeat the cycle of 25 minutes of work followed by a five-minute break four times. After the fourth working session, take a longer break, about **20-30 minutes**.





4. Bite the bullet

Mark Twain once said, "If you have to bite the bullet, make sure it's first thing in the morning." The time management strategy called "swallow the bullet" is inspired by this quote and encourages you to **tackle large or complex tasks early**, before starting work on less important or less urgent ones. This strategy is especially useful if you divide your days between regular, daily, high-priority activities.

By using the bite-the-bullet method, you can ensure that you get the most important things done every day. To get started with this time management strategy, make sure you track your tasks and priorities with a **centralized tool**. Look for a way to link your daily activities to business goals. This way you can better identify priority tasks and make sure you get them done first. Then, once you bite the bullet, you can start doing the rest of the work.

5. Pareto principle

If eating an early morning bite doesn't appeal to you, you might prefer the time management strategy called the Pareto Principle. The Pareto Principle is the opposite of the method described above, in fact this strategy encourages you to **complete the tasks that require less time first**, so that you have a sense of accomplishment and motivation at the start of the day.

The Pareto Principle, also called the "80/20 law," has one basic rule: Spend 20% of your time on 80% of work. If you can complete 80% of tasks quickly enough, you'll have more time to tackle the 20% of tasks that take up 80% of your time.

6. Said, done!

The method Said, done! It was invented by David Allen in the early 2000s. According to Allen, the first step to completing a task is to write down all the steps needed to complete it. By avoiding overloading your brain by using task management tools, you can focus on getting things done, rather than remembering what to do.

To use the Said, Done! method, collect all your **upcoming activities** in one place. Then, once you've written down everything you need to do, sort and prioritize. For example, there might be tasks you don't need to do anymore (which goes into the "trash"), tasks you need to do but not now (which goes into a project or folder called "Later"), tasks that depend on others, etc. The tool should show all the details, your job is to complete the tasks instead.



How to achieve effective online time management and achieve the goals

Impact and benefits

Having quality time management strategies can help you organize and prioritize tasks to have different benefits, such as the ones noted below:

- 1. Feeling like you have more time in your day.** If you organize your time intentionally, you may be able to limit the number of unnecessary tasks, de-prioritise tasks that don't need to be completed in a day, and get more done in less time. It doesn't mean that you will have more time, but that it will be easier to get more done at the same time.
- 2. Define the boundaries between work and time for yourself.** Improving time management does not only mean optimizing every second in favour of work productivity. Rather, these strategies can help you finish the most important tasks and identify those that can wait until tomorrow. By prioritizing work that needs to be completed today and making it clear which tasks can be postponed, you'll also be able to define the boundaries between work and time for you.
- 3. Reduce stress.** Without effective time management, it may feel like you never have enough time in your workday. You may feel like you are running back and forth to solve problems, a situation that could lead to increased stress and ultimately burnout. In fact, according to the Anatomy of Work Index, 71% of knowledge workers felt burnout at least once during 2020.
- 4. Increase productivity.** There are several time management tips that will help you reduce procrastination and increase productivity. By identifying your day's top priorities, you'll not only improve your productivity, but also your sense of being working on the right tasks every day.
- 5. Eliminate bad habits.** No one wants to procrastinate. However, over time bad habits can take root and get in the way of high-impact work. (Believe us, we've been there before). Time management strategies can help you identify bad habits and kick them.

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Consequences

In a world of work where the pressure for **high levels of competition and higher expectations** in terms of performance and hours is increasingly high, the risk of work-related stress represents one of the most important challenges in managing health and safety in companies.

One of the factors that contribute to raising the level of work stress is related to **time management**: the difficulties we encounter in planning work tasks can lead us to anxiety, fatigue, depression and physical ailments.

Correct time management is essential to maximizing **effectiveness, efficiency and productivity** in a business environment





How to achieve effective online time management and achieve the goals

How to develop this skill

Workshop and activities for time management

Duration: 90 minutes

- Activities:**
- The Money Value of Time
 - The Mayo Jar
 - \$86,400
 - Ace of Spades
 - “Big Picture” Puzzle Challenge

1 The Money Value of Time

If you only have one hour – and especially for a business audience – focus on creating a new conceptual mindset called the “money value of time.” Have participants break down their activities into cost and profit centers, and then focus on investing their time in those activities that yield the highest value for them personally and for the firm.

2 The Mayo Jar

Divide the group into teams and give them each a large glass container. The Mayo Jar is to be filled with as much material as possible. The material can be rocks, stones, gravel, sand, etc. (But you can use anything.) The larger materials should be placed in the container first and then followed by the next to the largest, and so on... In this order, you should be able to fit the most into the container.

You can come to your own conclusion for the activity based on your need. The rocks (due to size) would be the most important items to complete. (Can be home activities... work/life balance.) Gravel can be the project that needs to be completed. Sand could be the extra work that was just assigned to you.

I allow the groups to fill their own container without detailed instructions. I tell them to fill their containers with as many materials as they can. And then we talk about the order they selected. If they had an order...and what the materials represent to them...etc. I use this communication to lead into training.



3 \$86,400

Tell participants they have \$86,400.00 to spend any way they wish. The only restrictions are that they cannot bank any money and if they do not use any of the money they lose it.

We then discuss why and how they spent the money the way they did. I then tell them that 86,400 is the number of seconds we have each day and that as often as possible they should consider spending their time on things that are important to them as they did with their money.

4 Ace of Spades

This exercise requires two volunteers and two decks of playing cards. I give one deck of cards to each volunteer and then have them race to find the Ace of Spades. What they don't know is that one deck is in order from ace to king, in the correct suits, and all facing the same direction. The other deck is all mixed up and some cards are facing forwards and some backward, making it a lot harder to find the Ace of Spades. They have fun racing, but usually, the person with the mixed deck gets frustrated or complains that it's not fair. It's fun and a good way to relate good organization skills to time management. "Suited" for all ages;

5 "Big Picture" Puzzle Challenge

The Challenge: Divide your group into teams. Give each team a puzzle with a similar level of difficulty. Don't give them the "Big Picture" of what it will look like when completed.

Encourage them to complete the puzzle as quickly as possible. Interrupt the process after about 3 minutes and ask, "What's missing? What's making this difficult?" Likely they will identify the absence of the completed "Big Picture" to use as a guide.

After you give them the big picture, ask them to complete the puzzle. They will do this much faster now.

Debrief: Explain that having the perspective and clarity of the Big Pic helps one to plan weekly and day-to-day activities much more effectively. If NO Big Picture is available, then time is spent on urgencies, likes, and what others want one to do.

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Conclusions

Whatever time management strategies you use, take time to evaluate how they have worked for you.

Do you have a **healthy balance between work and home life**? Are you accomplishing the tasks that are most important in your life? Are you investing enough time in your own personal well-being?

If the answer is “no” to any of these questions, then re-evaluate your time management strategies and transition to ones that will work better for you. Successful time management leads to **greater personal happiness**, more accomplishments at home and at work, and a more satisfying future.

This chapter presented strategies for time management and it presented various strategies for implementation on training the benefits and learning material to improve this skill mainly for a target of NEETs.





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