

Final Reflection (Innovators DNA Portfolio)
Stephen Bushi
Section 0101

Associating:

Associating News Stories: In my revised Innovators DNA self-assessment, I decided one of the ways I could improve my Associating Discovery Skill was to culture and sharpen my associating through the analysis of everyday news stories. I wanted to associate a certain business-related news article to something I have learned or even another news article. I found a few news articles that caught my eye and attempted to associate them in order to foresee a cause-and-effect relationship or any relationship for that matter. For example, I read an article that stated that Marissa Mayer, the CEO of Yahoo, was offering more perks to mothers and fathers of newborns (http://socialtimes.com/back-from-maternity-leave-yahoos-marissa-mayer-offers-perks-to-new-parents_b125911). I quickly associated it with another popular article in which Mayer was criticized for banning telecommuting within the company (<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-02-28/the-excessive-uproar-over-marissa-mayers-telecommuting-ban>). These two articles along with my minute knowledge of Mayer's background in Google led me to one conclusion. Mayer is breeding Yahoo to mirror the culture of Google. The ban on telecommunication and perks given to new parents forces Yahoo employees to involuntarily blur the line between work and life. As seen in the video documentary of Google shown in class, there are various perks offered to employees in their office complex to a point where the employees' only reason to go back home would be to sleep. My association between the recent Marissa Mayer articles leads me to believe she is attempting to do the same thing in Yahoo that she successfully did in Google.

The Marissa Mayer article association is only one of the examples of News Story association that I was able to successfully execute. I learned a lot from the association and it helped me to forecast the changes in the business world. However, it also made me aware of possible exaggerations due to association. One could put two and two together and predict a catastrophe in the future despite a low probability of that occurring. Moreover, I used the skill of observation by picking out details in one article and connecting them to that of another. Practicing associating also helped to further by observation skills in addition to improving my speed at which I could associate.

Associating In Interviews: Although I did not delineate anything regarding interviews on my Innovators DNA self-assessment, I thought I demonstrated association well in a few interviews that I had recently. I applied to various business related interviews and had gotten two interviews with AT&T. One was for a position in the company's MATREX program (<http://att.jobs/student-program/management-transition-exchange-program>). Gil and Michael, two current employees from Middleton, NJ, interviewed me on Skype for two hours. For a part of this time, I was asked a set of behavioral questions that were basically scenarios in which we had to associate relevant past experiences with the question. For example, one of the questions was, "Describe a moment in which you were faced with a deadline to meet and how you met it". I described a deadline that I had for a high school research paper and how I contacted outside help in order to gain the resources

I needed to complete the project. The second interview, which was for Lean Six Sigma group, had a similar set of association questions. I was asked to recollect a scenario in which I was given a set of tools and an obstacle to overcome with those tools. I gave a quite literal example from a Naval camp I attended in which our group had to carry a team-member across an obstacle course without the team member touching the ground.

I believe these scenario questions helped to procure my association skills and develop a quick reflex for association as well. Moreover, I had to use the skill of story telling so as to keep the interviewer interested while maintaining a focus and addressing the question. I also learned the lesson of keeping answers concise, as it is easy to go off on a tangent while answering these types of questions.

Questioning:

Questioning in Class: One of the methods of practice I delineated in the self-assessment was to question in class. I questioned in some classes more than others. One of these classes was definitely Astronomy. It was interesting to see what one question in a science-based class could do to open up a mass of certainties as well as unknowns. A seemingly simple question such as "What is the Universe?" basically unfolded into the material that we consumed over the course of the entire semester. We were given the scale of the universe, the observable universe, the various stellar matter, and almost everything in between. I was able to question my TA about various details. To illustrate, I asked, "Why a supposed black hole in the center of the Milky Way galaxy was not sucking up our solar system into it?". I was given a great deal of information about singularities, accretion disks, and much more.

The important skill that I took from this apparently unrelated activity was the importance of digging for more information. This information can ultimately lead to a better understanding of the subject matter and maybe even lead to more questions. These questions can be even more important in a certain sense. If one was to ask why something couldn't be done a certain way, there is a chance that they could attempt to find a way to do that something in that way. This is essentially innovation and it all stems from the simple yet important task of questioning.

Questioning Employers: While applying for the internships that I had previously mentioned, I spoke with a few potential employers and general managers for advice. I learned the importance of asking questions by doing this. For example, asking a slightly technical question to a manager could demonstrate that you have a knowledge base on the subject and may be a fitting candidate for the job/internship. Furthermore, questioning is not simply asking any questions that come to mind but is rather a skill in asking the *right* ones. For example, I asked a manager for MATREX about what material to read and review if I was to potentially interview for the program. This question showed an interest in the program and also provided valuable information such as the terms, subjects, and methodologies to cover in preparation for the interview that I ended up taking.

Life will undoubtedly provide many opportunities for you to ask questions. As with any opportunity, it is up to you to seize it. Questioning can abet the task of opening up new doors for yourself as well as aiding you in developing a concrete understanding of a certain issue. I learned the importance of this discovery skill by asking real questions in order to open up real opportunities for myself. However, I did ask the wrong questions from time to

time, which showed a lack of understanding on my part. Nevertheless, this was a minor failure in my opinion since it provided a wonderful learning experience in return.

Networking:

Striking Conversation With Strangers: One of the ways I said I would practice networking was to strike up a conversation with a random person everyday. I am not embarrassed to say that I did not come close to meeting this goal but I am disappointed. However, I have improved from the point in time that I wrote the self-assessment. Most of the strangers I picked up conversation with were patrons of McKeldin library. It was especially easy to speak with Strangers at McKeldin since I work there during the week. However, it was a bit uncommon for me to delve into conversation unrelated from library matters. Once I did, it was interesting to meet people with common interests and even more interesting to hear from people with quite eccentric interests. For example, I met a girl Eileen who had an interest in Film Noir. I was completely unaware of that genre on Films but ultimately ended up watching *The Maltese Falcon* after it was mentioned by Eileen. Although this is not networking in a business sense, it can be seen as a parallel to networking in the business world. My simple conversation with Eileen led and procured a new interest. The same could be done with a business field or an idea for innovation.

By speaking to strangers, I was able to build the confidence to speak with others. Conversation can often be seen as an art and the best networkers are the ones who paint masterpieces. I learned the importance of relevance, flow, and body language in a conversation. In the short amount of time that you have to network with a business executive, all these aspects of conversation come into one constituent. Also, I learned that the skill of questioning could be very important in networking and has the potential to make or break a hypothetical deal.

LinkedIn: Though I did not mention this popular business network on my self-assessment, I thought it was an important tool that could abridge the looming task of networking into simpler terms. As we learned through The Start Up of You and through a casual demonstration of the website in class, LinkedIn is quite different from Facebook in a good sense. It provides a professional summary of you for potential employers to see. I initially made a LinkedIn profile but in the interest of improving my Networking skills, I made some overdue changes to the profile in order to accurately reflect whom I am and what I have to offer.

In order to do this, I had to look up the profiles of various professionals in order to see examples of well-formatted profiles. By doing this, I learned what to put on your profile and what to keep out of the public eye. I also learned of my pre-existing connections from people I already knew. This could allow their coworkers and employers to see my profile through the mutual connection and offer opportunities through a virtual form of networking if you will.