MODULE 1: **SELF-MANAGEMENT**
STUDENT´S MANUAL

Objectives:

- Know what **self-management** is, understand its importance in the context of DIGITAL WORKPLACE and know how to develop it.
- Build on **self-knowledge** as a starting point for developing skills and competencies.
- Reflect on **responsibility** when working in a DIGITAL WORKPLACE context, and the need to be proactive.
- Develop **self-efficacy** to achieve goals.
- Learn to formulate **objectives** correctly.
- Become aware of how to use **time**.
- Know which concepts and tools improve personal **productivity**.
- Be open to new knowledge and experiences, i.e. to **LIFE-LONG LEARNING** that is required to stay up to date with our ever-changing environment.

Content:

- Introduction
- Self-knowledge
- Auto-efficacy and Proactivity
- Objectives
- Time Management
- Productivity
- *Life-long learning*

• INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **module 1** of the "**Digital Workplace**" programme, a module in which we will work on **self-management** as a starting point to improve professional performance in any type of working environment: whether it be in the traditional setup or in the digital workplace.

But what exactly do we mean by a professional who possesses self-management skills? These professionals are **self-motivated**(intrinsic) **to continually improve their performance**, knowing how to manage their time in a productive way and always interested in bettering themselves through learning.

This implies a balanced and mature knowledge of oneself (of one´s strengths and areas for improvement), as well as the will and skills to develop one´s full potential.

Self-management **implies taking responsibility for our own reality**. It implies self-knowledge and faith in oneself, being aware of our own power. Our lives are conditioned by many factors, but they are not determined by them! Therein lies our freedom as human beings.

A profound understanding of the following 6 key concepts is required to enable us to "take control" and achieve our goals and ultimately live fuller personal and professional lives.

- Self-knowledge
- Self-efficacy and proactivity
- Objectives
- Time Management
- Productivity
- *Life-Long Learning*

Let´s start working on these!

- ### SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Self-knowledge is the **starting point for any process of personal development and learning**, because it means becoming aware of who we are, what strengths will help us achieve what we want and recognising what our areas for improvement are.

Until recently, in Western culture it was not usual to "*look inward*"; that is, to get to know our very being, what we want from life... We were more focused on exterior factors: more interested in knowing about others so we could lead them, motivate them, etc. However, it is becoming more frequent to hear about **SELF-KNOWLEDGE**, since without it, it is almost impossible to grow, even though sometimes when we do grow, we very often do it in a way we were not expecting to or at a slower rate.

Self-knowledge is part of **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**. If we look at Daniel Goleman´s model, within emotional intelligence we find two components: intrapersonal and interpersonal. We must firstly work on the "*intra*" part to be able to move on to the "*inter*" part. Within the intrapersonal component, the first competence to develop is self-knowledge.

If we are not sure about our own personal attributes, values, beliefs, emotions ..., we will not be able to **manage our ability to influence our results**, nor will we be able to understand or work with others. **Self-knowledge** is wisdom; becoming aware of who we are and who and what we can become (as individuals and as professionals) is a key element for our development and professional success.

There are many tools we can use to get to know ourselves better. One of the best known and used in business is the **SWOT Analysis** which can be adapted to become the **PERSONAL SWOT**. This allows us to analyse our personal situation by looking at what talents and assets we have and recognising our weaknesses (or areas of development). It is equally important to be aware of what is currently going on around us (the economic and political situation) which could help or hinder us from achieving personal goals (i.e. our opportunities and threats). Ideally, we should contrast the results of such an analysis with how others perceive us (our **public image**), to see how much content overlaps and how much does not (we may discover interesting things about ourselves, e.g. some positive things of which we are not aware but also some areas for development that we did not give much importance to in the past).

2.1. How do we develop self-knowledge?

- Whenever you set yourself a new challenge, you should perform a **Personal SWOT analysis** to define the starting point and subsequent action plan. This analysis, internally (Strengths / Weaknesses), should be broken down into knowledge, experience, skills, attitudes, attributes of your personality etc.

- If you have the opportunity to take a **test to improve your self-knowledge** (there are many on the market, and many of them of proven validity and reliability), you should attempt one of them to complete your self-perception.

- If you still have them, pull out all the **performance evaluation reports** you have that current and past employers provided. These are also a very rich source of self-knowledge, and let you see how you have developed and grown professionally over time.

2.2. Self-knowledge in teleworking

Developing your self-knowledge will help you in teleworking because:

• It **highlights the areas you need to improve** in to grow professionally, as well as shows the **strengths that you should enhance**, while maintaining a continuous personal development.

• Knowing what strengths you can bring to your team and company **will improve your self-motivation and your drive towards achieving your objectives**.

- ### SELF-EFFICACY AND PROACTIVITY

We can define **self-efficacy** as the **belief in one´s own success, or one´s ability to achieve success.**

Of course, the confidence we have in ourselves influences our self-efficacy, just as past successes or failures also influence it, especially the "interpretation" we give to those successes and failures.

Our self-efficacy has a very high impact on the results we get. The **expectation of self-efficacy** is: "if I believe I can or I feel I can achieve something, my level of effort and my perseverance, when it comes to achieving it, will be greater and therefore the possibility of achieving it increases." It also works the other way around: "If I believe I cannot or if I feel I cannot achieve something, because of fear or a memory of a previous experience where I have not succeeded, my capacity for persistence or perseverance to achieve the objective diminishes and as such the likelihood of getting it is also reduced."

Being proactive refers to a person who takes control of his/her life; someone who takes the initiative and makes decisions regarding his/her development and the path he/she chooses to take in life.

A proactive attitude **empowers us, it opens up an infinite number of possibilities, it makes us feel competent and "powerful."** Proactive people feel in control and feel responsible for their own lives, they take the initiative to make their objectives a reality and, consequently expect success.

Contrary to this, being **reactive** refers to the attitude of a person who does not consider that he/she has control of his/her life; a person who finds excuses not to do what he/she should be doing. These types often portray themselves as "victims" and tend to feel powerless, helpless, incompetent and never seem to have the opportunities that proactive people always seem to find.

Self-efficacy and proactivity need **self-motivation and enthusiasm** to achieve goals and complete daily tasks, which is absolutely essential when working freelance. This is why Goleman includes self-motivation within his model of emotional intelligence.

3.1. How to work on your self-efficacy and proactivity

- Make a **list of your personal accomplishments**, and detail what helped you achieve them. This exercise will help you self-motivate and move forward.

- **Surround yourself with people who empower you, who believe in you**, e.g. optimistic and proactive people that infect you with their spirit of self-improvement and self-confidence.

- **Check your emotions,** because they will greatly determine your ability to get started and ultimately achieve whatever goal you set yourself.

- **Learn** from every mistake and failure.

- **Celebrate each achievement.** This will help you develop the self-esteem you need to develop your self-efficacy.

- When faced with a challenging situation, or with an objective you want to achieve, **reflect on what you can do, and on what and how you can influence.** Then, **think about what assets you have** to resolve that situation or to achieve what you have proposed. Don't forget to also **think about what you lack, and what you can do to overcome this.**

3.2. Self-efficacy and proactivity in teleworking

- They encourage effective communication and good working relationships with others, even though this is through a digital medium, rather than face to face. **Everything works better when employees interact well together.**

- **They help us work independently and productively,** which is, of course, essential for teleworking.

- They allow us **to objectively evaluate our beliefs.**

- They help us to have a **constructive view of our mistakes and failures,** by focusing on the learning they provide.

- They are two of the **competencies most valued by companies**, since they imply that the employee does not limit him/herself simply to doing the assigned tasks, but also allows the employee to show initiative and interest. Proactive professionals always go the extra mile and add value at every opportunity.

- **Action plans are completed quicker** because of the employees´ focus. **This is because self-efficacy and proactivity facilitate the transformation of ideas into actions.**

- **They encourage generative thinking,** always looking for different options for day-to-day problems.

- **OBJECTIVES**

Setting objectives is closely related to self-management and being goal driven, because **it implies a tendency to constantly achieve the desired results, while maintaining high levels of performance and quality. It also implies the desire to consistently achieve "personal bests", always improving upon past performance.**

Without objectives, it is difficult to design a suitable strategy and action plan to achieve what you need. A good goal or objective must pass several filters in its definition; among them, one of the most important is the **SMART technique** (a widely-known method of goal setting). When you make goals/objectives "SMART", it increases the possibility of achieving them.

S	specific	An objective must be detailed, making sure it is not open to other interpretations. Ambiguity must be avoided. An objective should be clear and specific. *What is it that you actually want to achieve?*
M	Measurable	An objective must be clearly measurable, if not, it will be impossible to find out if you have achieved it. *How will you know when you have reached it? How will you follow up and evaluate when you reach it?*
A	Ambitious	A goal has to be somewhat ambitious. It has to be significant and relevant to your life. How will this goal add something to your life? Does it require changes in your day to day life?
R	Realistic	A goal always has to be attainable, even if it is ambitious and difficult. *Do you have the resources to reach it? Has it ever been achieved?*
T	time bound	An objective must be defined in time. *When do you intend to reach it? On what date?*

In some cases, if the objective is considered a long-term objective and has many tasks associated with it, it may be appropriate to break it down into smaller objectives or **micro-objectives.** This will allow you to make some progress, albeit slowly, so you can celebrate the successes of completing milestones along the way, and thereby increase your sense of self-efficacy.

Finally, it is important that **the objective is written down**. If we express it concisely in a summarised form, and share it with others, our level of commitment to achieving it will increase.

4.1. How to work on setting your goals?

- Whenever you set yourself a challenge, **always use the SMART** technique to define your goals. If the goal is long-term, **set micro-goals** that allow you to make some progress and improve your sense of self-efficacy.
- **Write the target somewhere where you can see it** on a regular basis, so you can stay focused and track how close you are to achieving it.
- If possible, **communicate it to others**. This helps you to persevere and maintain commitment to achieving it.

4.2. Objectives working in a digital workplace

- We can only achieve the goals we set, because **when we set the goal, we set the course.**
- Having a clear objective makes it easy for our brain to give it its full potential; i.e. **we focus on what we want to achieve.**
- **It helps us to decide on action plans,** to analyse the results we get and to evaluate our development/success in whatever it is we are trying to achieve.
- **It increases our productivity,** because we focus on what we have to do.

- **TIME MANAGEMENT**

Teleworking requires self-discipline when managing our time and a focus on the tasks we have been assigned. This is especially important when working from home or with remote equipment, since we may be more exposed to a whole new range of distractions.

Talking about time management involves differentiating between two essential concepts:

- **Planning** involves identifying what we have to do, what decisions and actions to take to achieve our objectives. It has to do with what we need to do to achieve the defined objectives. We can call this "the WHAT".

- **Organising** refers to how you are going to carry out an action; that is, identifying the resources you need (material, people, time ...) for the planned action, distributing them properly and even assigning certain functions to them. We can call this "the HOW".

What **PLANNING** and **ORGANISING** have in common is the dimension of **TIME** ... that is neither created nor destroyed, it is not even managed! This is because in reality what we manage is what we do with time, hence it is so important to learn to give value to the time we dedicate to each activity and task, depending on whether or not it is worth doing; if it is going to bring us closer to achieving our objective.

Planning and organising involve learning to set **goals**, defining **priorities**, allocating the **necessary resources** to accomplish what needs to be done through defined actions, making **decisions**, **delegating** tasks to others when necessary, resolving problems that may arise (which can sometimes force us to reschedule), taking advantage of **opportunities** that arise, **recording results**, and finally, continually reviewing the process for learning opportunities.

Managing time involves reviewing our concept of **procrastination.** This is when we **defer or postpone** something we should have been doing today! This inevitably distances us from our goal and basically discourages us. The good news is that we can all **learn to stop procrastinating** and instead develop habits that allow us to be more productive professionals.

5.1. How to improve your time management?

- **Make SMART objectives**, placing special importance on the time limit (T, according to the SMART acronym).

- For good planning: **define what decisions you have to make and what actions to take, and when.** Keep the sequence of actions/tasks in mind as some will be dependent on the completion of one task before the next can be initiated.

- For an effective organisation: **identify what you need to carry out each action defined in your planning, and check each with what you have and with what you lack.** After that, **think about how you are going to get these means or resources,** because their availability will depend to a large extent on you completing your plan.

- **Be realistic when you estimate how long** each task or action will take you.

- **Avoid or minimise distractions** because they will affect your concentration.

- **Put a deadline (or even a time) on your tasks** but make it realistic.

- **Get started right away!** It will never be a good time to start, and even less so if the task is something you do not like doing. The sooner you get it over and done with, the better!

- **Give yourself small rewards to motivate you** every time you get tasks finished especially those that you do not enjoy.

5.2. Time Management in the digital workplace

- **The better you organise, the more productive you will be. Planning will be key when you co-ordinate with others and when you work in teams, even remotely,** because many decisions and actions will be interdependent.

- Planning and organising **reduces the level of stress**. It allows you **to create both a good atmosphere to work in and a good image,** and it **makes work-life balance** more of a reality.

- Avoid procrastination because it will demotivate **you and the rest of the people you work with.**

Here are a few suggestions if you work from home:

- Have **everything related to work in one place** to avoid having to move.

- **Respect** rest **times**, physical activity and meals. That way you will be more aware of the time you spend on work and you will be more productive during that time period.

- Put deadlines on tasks to allow you to meet **daily goals** and to maintain motivation.

- If you have to do **any jobs away from your home office** (e.g. going to the main office of your company, visiting a client, etc.), try to group these tasks together and do them all in one single day as far as is physically possible to avoid wasting time.

- Ensure the **maintenance of all the equipment** you need to do your daily work is kept up-to-date. For example: internet access, antivirus, printer ink etc.

- Learn to **say "no"** to certain tasks not related to your work during your working day.

- **PRODUCTIVITY**

In his publications, Stephen Covey popularised the **matrix of priorities** created by General Eisenhower during World War II to organise his soldiers. Such was its simplicity and usefulness, that today it is still a basic tool we can apply to our organisational skills and personal productivity.

To be able to use it we must reflect and analyse the **importance** and **urgency** of each task and then decide on the relationship between the effort and time we must apply in each case.

- **IMPORTANT:** That which contributes to the achievement of results (personal or professional).

- **URGENT**: That which demands immediate attention, irrespective of whether it is actually important or not.

The **combination of urgency and importance** determines **what we need to do** with each task:

- **High URGENCY and high IMPORTANCE:** Tasks with this "tag" are important for the achievement of our goals, and we also run a risk if we do not perform them on time. Hence the rush, the burdens ... We feel like "fire-fighters", because we are constantly "putting out fires". These tasks are **essential**.

- **High URGENCY and low IMPORTANCE:** These are the tasks that deceive us, because very often they imply meeting the needs and expectations of others. We usually start these tasks when we have finished the essential ones, because we are already emotionally hooked to the pressure. However, **the ideal way to deal with these tasks would be to stop and think about what is important and what we can do ahead of time,** so that they do not become another fire to put out!

- **High IMPORTANCE and low URGENCY:** These are the important tasks to achieve objectives, but they do not need to be done immediately. If we work on these tasks a little every day, we can avoid unnecessary stress and we will feel like we have things under control.

- **Low URGENCY and low IMPORTANCE:** These are basically a waste of your time. Sound familiar? Situations where you know that what you are doing is neither urgent nor important. You should just "throw them away" because they are **irrelevant.**

You can improve how you prioritise your work (i.e. improve your personal productivity) by using some of the **tools** listed below:

- **CALENDAR:** allows you to set **deadlines**. You can also block time to be displayed as **"closed" time** (meetings, visits, classes ...). It can be shared with other people which is ideal for teleworkers to co-ordinate with other team members.

- **AGENDA:** Apart from showing your availability on the calendar, **you can use it to organise your time every day,** that is, where you decide what to do in your "unallocated" time.

- **SCHEDULE**: helps you to list all the activities involved in a project of a certain complexity, as it allows you to include the deadlines for each activity and order them into a logical sequence. It can include graphics and other elements that make them easier to "read". It is a useful tool when you have different people responsible for different actions. It is also good for following-up incomplete tasks or issues and for co-ordinating the team more effectively.

- **RETRO-PLANNING**: Very similar to "schedule", retro-planning involves planning "in reverse"; i.e. from the deadline or the end of the project (date on which we have to deliver a completed goal by), up to today´s date. We plan all actions from the end time to the present.

6.1. How to work on your productivity?

- Set **time limits on tasks**, and determine how much time you need to complete them. This does not need to be **exact.** Reflect on how important something is and assign a reasonable time to complete it.
- **Group similar tasks together and categorise them**. For example, make phone calls at the same time, or print off all the documents you need at the same time.
- Avoid **multitasking** – doing several things at once. As a matter of fact, you cannot actually do two important tasks at the same time!
- Make the most of your **energy levels**. It is important to know your own biorhythms, at what time of the day you work best, when your concentration and productivity levels are at their highest.
- **Keep in shape**, it will make you feel much better and help you maintain a high work output.
- **Start the day with what you do not like doing first** so that you do it when you are most alert and most focused. Starting with something you like can mean you end up spending more time on it than is actually required.
- **If something quick and easy comes up, do it now!** Do not add it to your "to do list", because you're probably wasting more time on that than actually doing it.
- **Reserve some time on a weekly basis to think, plan, organise and prioritise.** Also, check what you did the previous week, what was not done or pending, what has just recently come up as new tasks etc.
- **Take advantage of the resources and tools you have at your fingertips.** Fortunately, today´s technology offers many applications that you can use to improve your efficiency.

6.2. Productivity in the digital workplace

- It helps us to **focus our time and energy** on the issues that are really essential.
- **It encourages the achievement of results**; i.e. your personal results or those the business set for you; individual and team results.
- **It increases our satisfaction,** which is linked to our motivation and ultimately increases how goal driven we are.
- It makes us **more consistent and more balanced people**.

- *LIFE-LONG LEARNING*

The world is moving very fast and even more so in the professional environment; especially in relation to everything technological, and digital. For this reason, **the professionals who best know how to adapt will be those who keep their jobs in today´s climate; those who are constantly training and developing to keep themselves up-to-date.** Designing our own PSL - Personal Learning Space is key, and thanks to the technology we have today, we have a wide range of resources and online platforms that allow us to be constantly learning.

For the teleworker, this is even more important, because if he/she does not dominate the tools required to be productive, to communicate well and to work as a team remotely, he/she will not be interesting to today´s employers. And what is it that employers are looking for? Well, fundamentally, you need to always be open to learning, have a curious nature, act responsibly and be very proactive.

7.1. How to achieve *life-long learning?*

- Always be **open to learning new things** and be conscious of the importance and need for training and development for keeping you up to date in your profession.
- **Do not be afraid to try new ways of working and use new tools** to work smarter. You could ask other people for advice on what tools and tricks they use and then try them out.
- The **philosophy of the digital world is to share**, so you can take advantage of social networks to find lots of content and free courses for continuous learning. You can find materials on *blogs* and networks like *Slideshare,*

Youtube, Vimeo, among others.

- Your geographic location is not a hindrance when it comes to training. Try **webinars** on online platforms like *MiríadaX, Coursera*, universities' websites etc. You can also do online courses with tools like *Moodle, Go to Webinar, WebEx, Spontania, Adobe Connect and Alexandria*.

- Keep up-to-date by reading **relevant blogs in your industry**. Very often you will discover the latest fads through these mediums, and not by reading a book (the way we used to discover these things years ago).

- Try downloading a **productivity app or a learning app on your mobile device and/or tablet**, and find one that best suits your needs.