(Initial) Personal Technology SWOT Analysis, Goals, and Plan

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Personal Technology SWOT Analysis, Goals, and Plan

Like most people, I currently wear a number of hats. Most importantly, I am a devoted husband and father. I am employed with Christian Life Church on the pastoral staff overseeing the discipleship arm of the ministry. My primary function is as an architect endeavoring to create a successful model of Christian education, much of which will need to exist in a web-based delivery system. I enjoy great creative freedom in this environment and the liberty to explore innovative solutions to communicate what we consider to be timeless truths.

Strengths

I have much going for me that I trust will contribute to my success not only during my University of West Georgia (UWG) course of study, but in my post-graduation career. To begin, I enjoy technology. I am the person who downloads the beta program, takes the upgrade, and buys the smart phone when it first comes out. When the work becomes play my stress level is reduced – on the job or in school. I have a strong work ethic and a real desire to complete assignments with excellence. I have the necessary discipline to knuckle down and grind through difficult projects, long reading assignments, and other necessary grunt work required to accomplish anything worthwhile. Evidently this quality has successfully transferred over from my hobby of competing in triathlons and half-marathons.

I have been very fortunate to have had some amazing learning opportunities during my Masters degree at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). I completed practicums in the Faculty Instructional Technology Center and the newly launched Digital Media Studio in the campus library. In both of these situations, I was exposed to an incredible amount of commercial, educational, proprietary, and open source software that gave me experience in using (and supporting) products for photo and video editing, audio manipulation, screen capture,

presentations, web design, 3D graphics, animation, and research using microtext, microfilm, and microfiche. Some of the more notable packages that I used were Microsoft Office, Adobe CS5, Camtasia Studio 5, SnagIt, Desire to Learn, ScanPro 2000, iMovie, Audacity, Dreamweaver, Gimp, and many others. Additionally, I was trained on the Apple operating system as well as Windows devices. As part of my training, I was required to complete numerous series of video tutorials hosted by Lynda.com which boasts online training of over 57,000 titles of software.

Perhaps more important than exposure to software is the fact that I have been surrounded by people who have helped me succeed through each season of my journey. I enjoy the support of my family, my pastor (employer) and co-workers, and many skilled educators who have significantly invested in my life.

Weaknesses

The most glaring weakness of mine is the fact that I am legally blind. The computer system that I use to work on my degree at UWG was prescribed to me by the Technology Access Center of Tennessee. While a person with healthy eyes enjoys a peripheral field of vision of about 180 degrees, an eye disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa has reduced my field of vision to 10 degrees at this point. The street name for this is "tunnel vision" and more often than not I have difficulty keeping up where the mouse cursor is on the computer screen. I have great difficulty in low light situations. Additionally I find that even with trifocals I have to magnify most things I read on screen. This situation often does not bode well for me in public or social situations where accommodations are not readily available. What all this means to me from a technology perspective is that my daily challenge is dealing with a number of problems that can and do occur when interacting with technology in a variety of settings. So while this is not my only weakness, it is by all means my greatest challenge. Fortunately, I have access to

outstanding adaptive technology (ZoomText software and keyboard, large dual monitors, custom keyboard, etc.). Even though I have listed this in the weakness section of my SWOT analysis, the upside is that my condition has opened doors for me financially to continue my education and train in a field that is generally accepting of persons with disabilities.

Another weakness I have noticed is that although I have been exposed to an unusual amount of software – infrequent, real-world use of these packages can make me rusty fast. Finally, while I am fascinated by the concept of distance education and am an enthusiastic fan, the jury is still out for me if the lack of face time and personal conversations is a negative or not in my learning style.

Opportunities

How cliché to say the sky is the limit but the sky is the limit. I am humbly grateful to be standing at the crossroads and threshold of a brand new career path. The completion of my Specialist Degree in Media and Instructional Technology really is a door-opener. I was counseled before graduating from MTSU by the Director of Academic and Instructional Technology that the combination of a Masters Degree in Administration & Supervision in Higher Education in tandem with a Specialist Degree in Media and Instructional Technology would gain me an interview at their institution. My disability really can translate into an *ability* to interface with visually impaired faculty, staff, and students. I had a stellar experience in my final semester at the James E. Walker Library at MTSU completing a 6-hour practicum as a graduate assistant to the Emerging Technologies Librarian. This year, she and I will be collaborating on publishing an article in an industry journal reporting the results of research we conducted in user feedback systems. These past experiences, along with the expanded

knowledge and skills that I will take away from the University of West Georgia, I believe will

qualify me for outstanding new opportunities in the next few years of my life.

Threats

There are two major threats that come to mind that I hope and pray never manifest. The

first involves the funding of my degree at UWG. I currently enjoy a scholarship through

Vocational Rehabilitation (through the Department of Human Services in the State of

Tennessee). In our strained economy, it is possible that my funding could evaporate. Were that

to occur, my entire plan for the future would have to be revised. Also, given that I am on full

federal disability, this has even broader implications for my family. A second threat is if

something unforeseen (pun intended) happens to my eyesight. Currently, I am in stable

condition and can function even to the point of still being able to (legally) drive a car. If my eye

condition worsens substantially, this too would force me to re-evaluate my entire life course.

Personal Technology Goals

First things first – I want to successfully complete my specialist degree at UWG learning,

gleaning, and growing with every assignment in every class. I am not interested in a fast track or

short cut to getting my degree. I love this field of study; at last classes that I am interested in the

content! My goals include collecting all the tools I possibly can to add to my technology

toolbox. My desire is not to just pass classes and collect credits, but to put new skills to work in

my role at my church for the benefit of hundreds of people. I strongly desire to learn how to

create an online learning environment for my church that is affordable, functional, and

reproducible. I believe it is time for me to focus my energy and commit my time to earning a

quality degree that will open doors for me professionally and give me a skill set that I can test in

real-time in the real-world of church ministry. Upon graduation, working in concert with my

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, I aspire to gain employment as an Instructional Technology Specialist or similar role at the university level, ideally MTSU in my hometown of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. I will then revert to a volunteer at my church hopefully administrating the systems that I have helped birth.

Personal Technology Plan

My personal technology plan for achieving my goals will come primarily through the pursuit of my Specialist Degree in Media and Instructional Technology. I am currently enrolled in two courses: *Issues in Instructional Technology* and *Introduction to Distance Learning*. My plan is to take two courses per semester and graduate in the summer of 2012. I hope some of my future classes will enable me to learn how to podcast, integrate multimedia into my presentations, build eye-catching web sites, and ultimately create a virtual school of online learning for my church.