



PORTFOLIO AND REFLECTION PAPER

X-Culture Coaching Program

Jennifer Strader

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BIOGRAPHY

When the company that I worked for closed their office I was in my mid-fifties and had no savings to fall back on. While some might look at this as a setback, I saw it as an opportunity to pursue an associate degree in computer support. As part of my program, I had to complete a Career Experience. X-Culture was the option that I chose. That was Spring 2022. That semester I participated as a student. In May 2022 I had completed my associate degree but learned that I only needed 8 more classes to add a second associate degree in Web Development. I am about to complete this degree in May 2023 and am required to complete an additional career experience course. This is what brought me back to X-Culture. This semester I am in both the X-Culture Coaching and X-Culture Administrative Assistantship programs.



Jennifer Strader

COACHING EXPERIENCE GAINED

During the semester I was assigned 6 Coaching cases. In my first case, the student was concerned because his team members were not responding to him, and he felt like he would have to complete the entire report alone. I asked for access to the peer reviews filled out by the team to see how the other members felt about the project. I also asked the student for more details and encouraged him to keep reaching out and working on the report. When I received the team information, there was not much there to work with. I suggested to the student that he try other forms of communication. The student responded to my acknowledgment stating that his team still was not helping, but he provided no more detail than in the initial request. I again asked him for more details and offered to contact his team members to find out how they felt things were going. He did not respond. I had a feeling that the student wanted to be assigned to a new team.



My next two cases were students asking for some pointers. This was at the beginning of the late track. My biggest advice was to communicate with their team, all the way throughout the program. Make sure to exchange ideas and divide tasks. Sometimes it is a good idea to have 2 people working on the same parts to have coverage in case one team member has an emergency. This also enhances collaborative efforts. Make deadlines and set expectations to be prepared when it is time to turn in the work. I advised them to refer to the documentation tools in the training with their team and decide which of these tools works for them.

Another case was asking for advice about the new market that they were going to pursue. The client was EAFIT. I told them that from my review of the challenge instructions, the client was looking for partnerships in the chosen new market. Those partnerships may be with colleges, universities, or even technical colleges. I told them that the decision was theirs to make, but I would recommend that the team discuss this and decide if there is one good school to try to partner with or maybe a group of schools that are affiliated with an honor society such as Phi Theta Kappa.

Most colleges in the US, their chosen market, already participate in an exchange or study abroad program. They might be able to interview these resources to get their recommendations. Whatever they decide to do, I told them to make sure that they make a compelling case for that approach and back it up with facts and details. Make sure that the team agrees on how to move forward so that all the work they do supports the same recommendations.

Another student wrote that they thought that the team was on the wrong track saying, *“Based on my understanding, our team have to look for a new market for our client and I have not seen that as yet. In my opinion, my team is just analyzing our client rather a new market for our client.”*

This is a mistake that many teams make in my opinion. I responded that as a coach, I have seen many reports. Because this is a team exercise there are many different points of view. Each member has their own understanding of the desired outcome. Many of the reports that I have evaluated contain sections that are providing great advice for the clients and other sections that appear to be missing the point. The best reports provide value to the client. The teams that have done all the research and have made specific recommendations to the clients, recommendations that are backed with detailed explanations as to why the recommendations are solid appear to be the best. Team communication is key. I cannot stress this enough. The best reports are consistent in their advice to the client throughout all the sections.

I told the student that they had the right idea. The concept is that student teams act as a consultant to the client. Teams should be looking at ways for the client to enhance their business in some new market. I asked the student if they were the team lead or if another team member assumed that role. I asked if they had some specific ideas to steer the team to a new market. Were they communicating their ideas to the team? How did they respond?

I encouraged the student to communicate their specific ideas to the team with as much detail as possible. If the team is not pursuing a new market for the client try to steer them in that direction. If the team does not seem to want to take that advice, I encouraged the student to do their best in the sections that they complete. Great sections enhance the overall score of the final report. When the final report is submitted, make sure that each team member is given credit for the sections to which they contributed. Report evaluators will be aware of the contributions made by each team member. I told them to make sure to communicate their concerns in their weekly team evaluations.

I had a similar experience with my team. Everything turned out all right in the end. I told the student to just do their very best and be a positive influence on their team, even if they do not see the vision.

"Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up." — Oliver Wendell Holmes

My final coaching request was from a student who sent me a link to the report section and asked me for feedback. I gave specific details about how the team could improve the report with names and contact information instead of telling them to ask for the manager. I told them to choose a message and sell it to the client and to set up a campaign instead of giving the client advice on how to set it up themselves. This scenario ties directly back to the prior coaching request.

When I participated in the team challenge, my team did not meet once. They only communicated on WhatsApp and only told each other what section they wanted to take. Our final report was not cohesive. One section advised one thing and the next section went in the other direction. What I learned through coaching is that most teams have similar issues with communication. In all my advice to the teams, I stressed the importance of communication. I really hope that it helped them.

TEAM CLIENT REPORT EVALUATIONS

During the semester I evaluated 20 reports. Most of the reports were like my team's attempt. There were some very good sections with details and strong advice with solid reasons behind them. There were also sections that read like a textbook, explaining the B2B model when the client clearly did not need that information. Some reports had awesome graphics and looked very sharp but had no clear message. I set up a spreadsheet to help me evaluate the reports.

Report #	Client	Pages	1	4	8	10
	eco blu	23	1 - The report has an in depth analysis of the client, but the section should be analyzing competitors.	3 - Good comparative analysis between Brazil and the US markets. I am not sure that it makes a great case for choosing the US.	5 - Good job listing contact information for the different possible customers.	2 -
	eco blu	26	2 - This section barely mentions competitors.	4 - The team lists all of the markets considered and makes a case for choosing the US market. Good work.	4 - Section make definitive recommendation for a partnership and names 3 possible companies. They could have taken it further by providing contact information.	2 -
	eco blu	25	4 - Nice table and several competitors were listed.	5 - Report makes a detailed argument as to why they chose the US.	2 - This section could have gone into more detail with names and contact information for suggested distributors.	3 - rec info
	eco blu	35	1 - Although several nice charts were provided to illustrate the point, there were no competitors mentioned.	4 - This section is detailed and makes an argument for the US as the chosen market. It could be more concise.	2 - This section names some possible customers, but could have provided contact information for them.	2 -
	eco blu	28	1 - The analysis is on the client. Competitors not named in this section.	5 - Thorough analysis of the US market as it relates to the client Good Job.	2 - Section is very general and could improve with names and contact information for perspective customers.	3 - T "inc
	eco blu	26	5 - Section has great graphics and competitors are analyzed with detail.	5 - This section makes a good case for switching to the US market. Good use of graphics.	6 - Great table with potential customers, contact information, and tips to approach. Concise and organized. Good job!	2 -
	eco blu	31	4 - Section includes more than a handful of competitors, with short descriptions.	2 - section mentions markets to enter, but doesn't really make a strong case for any market.	2 - section recommends market expansion to the US, specifically Orlando FL. They could have provided recommendations of specific companies and contact information.	3 - opp
			3 - The section gives more attention to analyzing the client and only mentions competitors than provides general advice.	3 - Section includes a lot of detail, but only makes a weak case for expanding based on the US.	3 - section provides contact information for possible distributors in the US.	3 -

Figure 1: Section of Scoring Spreadsheet

I read the client section advice and then just evaluated that section across all the reports. Each day I knocked out a few sections to complete the evaluations. When it was time to complete the matrix and turn it in, I was ready with comments and scores in each section, and it was simple to transfer the information that I had compiled to the report.

I believe that I gave more 3's and 4's on a scale from 1 to 7. We discussed this in our meetings, so I know that most report scores are in that middle range. I learned in my one-on one that the students do not see the Weekly Milestone Advice (WMA) until right before they hand in their final report. One possible improvement that X-Culture could make would be to give the WMA to students before they complete the corresponding section. I think that the students would produce better reports if they had that additional guidance. The clients would also benefit by receiving better results that were more on target with their goals.

LIVE WEBINAR RECORDING AND INFOGRAPHIC

I gave my presentation on The Zentangle® Method. The Zentangle method is a kind of drawing meditation. Studies show that repetitive activities such as crochet, playing scales on a piano, or even just tapping your feet have a calming effect. This is why you will see a basketball player bounce the ball a set number of times prior to taking a free throw. Tangling is another one of these activities. It requires a small space, and basic tools. There is a large vocabulary of simple patterns, that when combined transform into interesting works of art. Zentangle art is normally nonobjective. There is no top or bottom. Most importantly, there are no mistakes.



Figure 2: 3-Dimensional Tangle

I am not sure if tangling found me, or if I found tangling. I have always been a doodler. I have worked with pen and ink for most of my life. In the summer of 2016, I was looking for something to keep me occupied on a trip. I needed something portable and small. I was looking through books in a craft store and came across a book about Zentangle Inspired Art. My purchase of that one book started my Zentangle journey. It went through the 8 steps of the Zentangle Method and demonstrated several tangles.

Since then, I have purchased several more books on the subject and I have spent an uncountable number of hours trying to tangle. It has been fun, however I felt like I was missing something. I learned that there were Certified Zentangle Teachers (C.Z.T.'s), but I had never met one, or taken any formal classes. I wanted to become a C.Z.T. but the training was across the country, and it cost more than I could afford.

Recently I decided to take the leap and I attended the C.Z.T. training in Newport, Rhode Island, United States. I am so happy that I did it. I met so many talented people and learned new techniques. Now I feel like an unstoppable tangler. I love to share this fun, simple and relaxing art with people. I used a page on my personal website to demonstrate. Here is the link:

<https://brunhildaandhepcat.com/the-zentanglemethod/>

On my website there is a slide show with examples and a downloadable pdf of the infographic which is also attached here.



Acrobat Document

[Link to Creating Zentangle Bales in 10 steps](#)

<https://youtu.be/eGxYFioa910>

[Link to Zentangle presentation \(begins at 22:00\)](#)




X-CULTURE EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER PARTICIPANT

This semester I volunteered to write 3 articles for the newsletter. I drafted my first article and pasted it into Grammarly. I had never used it before. In the domain section, there is an option to tell Grammarly that you are telling a story. That option is only available for the paid version. The article took me 4 hours to edit. It was about **Jazz** music. There is a rich history behind the birth of Jazz. It is a free-form medium, and my initial article reflected that. Grammarly did not approve. I have learned since then how to work with the free version of Grammarly and how to make it work for me.

The next article that I contributed was on the **Zentangle** method. I drafted the article just before I attended the weeklong training to become a CZT. I was looking forward to the training and completing homework assigned for the training. I was laser focused on Zentangle related benefits, processes, and activities. It was great preparation for the training classes. I benefited from combining activities and completing assignments in tandem.

I used the tandem approach again when I drafted the final article that I contributed to X-Culture Exchange. The assigned subject was a local landmark. I live in the U. S. in Green Bay Wisconsin. Green Bay is famous for the American Football Team, the Green Bay Packers. This is why I decided that the Green Bay stadium, **Lambeau Field**, was the perfect subject for this article. Something that is unique about Green Bay is that it is the smallest town in the U. S. to have a major NFL team. I also used this article as a post on an assignment for my content management class. For that class I was assigned to link a Facebook post to a web page. I used my article for the post, and it was programmed to update the temporary Facebook page when a new post was made to the website. It worked well and my instructor was impressed that I added some creativity to my post.

LINKS TO ARTICLES

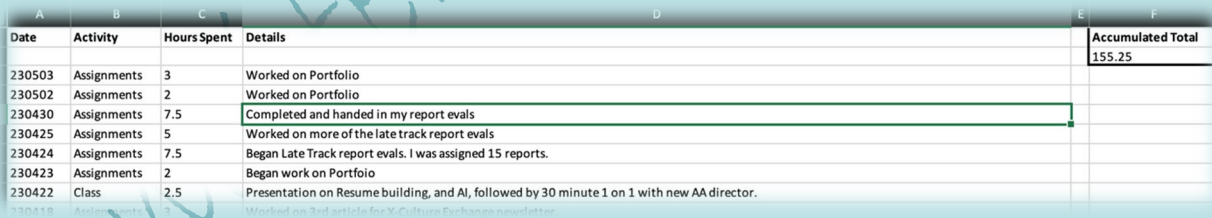
 Acrobat Document	 Acrobat Document	 Adobe Acrobat Document
The Impromptu Art of American Jazz (page 5)	Make Art! Away to Reduce Stress (page 6)	Lambeau Field

REFLECTION PAPER

I participated in the Administrative Assistantship (AA) program and the X-Culture Coaching program; I had a full class load and I worked part-time this semester. In addition, I also had the CZT Training. It was quite a bit of juggling to stay on top of things. I tried to work on my assignments the day that the homework was assigned and hand them in early. This was the only way that I could fit it all in. It worked well until the Webinar assignment. From the day that I signed up for Marketing and Storytelling, I began to do research. I attended a panel discussion on Marketing and AI. At first, I was the only one that chose the topic, then one day another person contacted me in the Slack team channel. He asked if he could take the lead, and I responded that I didn't mind. I shared an outline for a presentation I had given for my IT Training class. I shared my thoughts about the discussion panel. My teammate responded politely but didn't add any ideas. We tried to meet but could never connect to work on the project together. I kept working on it but had no idea what the other person was doing. At some point early on he just stopped responding to me in both the Slack channel and on WhatsApp. In my one-on-one for the AA program, I mentioned that I was concerned about the Webinar. I was directed to contact the Webinar team to see if they could intervene. I also mentioned the situation to my coaching manager. After some discussion, I chose the option to split off on my own and complete my presentation on a topic of my choosing. I feel extremely fortunate that the Webinar team allowed it. This is how I was able to present The Zentangle Method.

With all my other obligations this semester, I was also able to attend training and become a CZT. So, when it came time to do the Webinar, I was very prepared. I practiced over and over on Loom, which is a video recording application. I must have done the drawing part 100 times. I started to demonstrate different tangles. The tangle that I chose to demonstrate in the actual presentation turned out to be the best out of all the tangles I had done in preparation. I feel like the presentation went well.

During the semester I used a spreadsheet to track my hours spent. I sent updated versions to my instructor.



A	B	C	D	E	F
Date	Activity	Hours Spent	Details		Accumulated Total
230503	Assignments	3	Worked on Portfolio		155.25
230502	Assignments	2	Worked on Portfolio		
230430	Assignments	7.5	Completed and handed in my report evals		
230425	Assignments	5	Worked on more of the late track report evals		
230424	Assignments	7.5	Began Late Track report evals. I was assigned 15 reports.		
230423	Assignments	2	Began work on Portfolio		
230422	Class	2.5	Presentation on Resume building, and AI, followed by 30 minute 1 on 1 with new AA director.		
230418	Assignments	3	Worked on 3rd article for X-Culture Exchange newsletter		

Figure 3 Sample section of my tracking spreadsheet

The coaching opportunities that I received helped me to sharpen my skills in giving feedback. I always tried to encourage the students to keep working and do their best. I stressed communication because I believe that it is key to working on a team project. I told them that X-Culture is a great learning experience even if the report does not come together as planned. Different people have different ways of seeing things. I believe when communication is flowing all the different points of view richen the final product.

The Report Evaluations helped me improve my evaluating skills and my organization skills. I learned that most of the reports are just ok. There are very few that are exceptional. No matter the result. The student learns. What they learn is up to them. I learned the importance of communication. You can't just divide the work then piece it together and hand it in. You will not get a cohesive report. There should be brainstorming, meetings, focus, direction, and a whole lot of research.

Writing WMA's, I did huge amounts of research. I learned about marketing, branding, import/export, business models, and logistics, and those things are just the tip of the iceberg. In the early track, my client was Eco Blu. They are a private label manufacturer. I had no idea what that was. I read through their challenge instructions and then went to the web. The first thing that I noticed is that they didn't have a website. I am a Web Development student, so that was something that I tried to suggest in my WMA's. I also tried to think of things that the students might not consider, like writing an article for a trade publication. Only one of the reports that I evaluated mentioned trade associations.



Adobe Acrobat
PDFXML Document

[Link to a sample MA](#)

In the late track, my client was Formula 6000. The company has a great story about a spider that lived in the rearview mirror. She was in the car a lot, so they named her Carlotta. The story is great. I hope that the teams that chose this client thought so too. A great story brings the customer in. Maybe they feel some emotion. That sparks a connection. Writing the WMA's, the second time around was easier. Not only did I know what to expect, but Carlotta depended on me. I prepared a mock-up of a chart that the team could copy to compare the different types of spider repellants. I tried to be creative with my advice. I hope that it helped. I did not see any of the Formula 6000 reports.

	Active Ingredients	Average price per ounce	C	H	A	T	T	R
			e	a	a	a	r	u
			r	r	m	r	v	e
			d	a	a	a	a	a
			w	r	r	r	r	r
			a	z	z	z	z	z
			r	o	o	o	o	o
			e	n	n	n	n	n
and a	Active Ingredients: Bifenthrin (Cis Isomers 97% Min, Trans Isomers 3% Max) (0.0500%), Zeta-Cypermethrin (Cis/Trans Ratio: Max 75% (+/-) Cis and Min. 25% (+/-) Trans) (0.0125%), Other Ingredients (99.9375%).	0.12	x					x
and b	Active Ingredients: Bifenthrin (Cis Isomers 97% Min, Trans Isomers 3% Max) (0.0500%), Zeta-Cypermethrin (Cis/Trans Ratio: Max 75% (+/-) Cis and Min. 25% (+/-) Trans) (0.0125%), Other Ingredients (99.9375%).	0.3	x	x	x	x	x	x
and c	Active Ingredients: Bifenthrin (Cis Isomers 97% Min, Trans Isomers 3% Max) (0.0500%), Zeta-Cypermethrin (Cis/Trans Ratio: Max 75% (+/-) Cis and Min. 25% (+/-) Trans) (0.0125%), Other Ingredients (99.9375%).	0.25	x	x				

Figure 4 Sample Comparison Table

Jennifer Strader

S

Strengths



- Eye for Design
- Assignments are handed in on time
- Enjoys Research
- Able to manage several tasks at the same time

W

Weaknesses



- Short Attention Span
- Sometimes takes on too many tasks
- Chatty
- Can get confused by Time Zones

O

Opportunities



- Availability
- Willingness to Learn
- Open to new Experiences

T

Threats



- Time
- Waits too long before requesting assistance

X-Culture has been a great learning experience. I learned:

- Some new team-building exercises on Zoom.
- I want to experience Holi. It looks like so much fun.
- So many parts of this world are beautiful.
- Working on Global Virtual Teams has enriched my life.
- Coaching and guiding students through this great experience is challenging and rewarding.
- and I am not done learning.

I want to return in some capacity next semester. Maybe as a client expert and a coach again. I can't afford to go to Poland this summer, so I will miss all my new international friends. I hope that everyone returns next semester. But I know that is not possible. Good luck to everyone.