

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Masters Degree in Management from the NOVA – School of Business and Economics.

MANAGEMENT CONSULTING LAB – PORTUGAL TELECOM

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## Abstract

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This paper presents the main developments and learning taken from the Management Consulting Lab at Portugal Telecom. The main purpose of this consulting project was to assess the potential of a specific technology and how could Portugal Telecom maximize the value created. By identifying and evaluating all the business sectors where this technology would have impact, the team was able to address the initial hypotheses stated by the client regarding the importance of the technology and elaborate a set of recommendations based on the main findings obtained through field as well as desk research.

**Keywords:** Portugal Telecom, innovation, telecommunication, consulting

## 1. Brief Context

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### 1.1. Client and its industry

Portugal Telecom, SGPS is the major player in the Portuguese telecommunication market and a Global operator with international experience, mainly in Brazil and some other Portuguese speaking countries, such as Angola, Macau and Cape Verde.

The Portuguese operations are divided in three main segments: (1) Residential, by providing fixed phone services, internet access and a pay-TV service – MEO; (2) Personal, by providing mobile services (e.g. TMN), and online applications and services (e.g. SAPO); and (3) Enterprise by acting at the SMEs and Corporate Institutions.<sup>1</sup>

The telecommunication industry is characterized by a tough competition between the main operators, as this market is featured by high customer churn rate\* and high levels of capital investment in R&D in order to attract and retain customers (Gupta, 2008)<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, innovation is a priority for these operators as well as for Portugal Telecom, being present in almost every aspect of the strategy definition.

### 1.2. Current situation and potential complications

As the company aims at “*establishing a balanced portfolio of projects*”<sup>3</sup> it has decided to create the Open Programme in order to foster and encourage a structured approach to innovation. It defines three main action areas within the range of activities to be developed: (1) **incremental innovation**, which consists in the development of the business as usual and it is composed by areas which have an immediate impact and low-risk associated; (2) **planned innovation**, where the business development occurs in solutions considered to be

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\* Churn rate: when applied to customer base, it refers to the proportion of contractual customers or subscribers who leave a supplier during a given period of time.

implemented in the medium run; and (3) **exploratory innovation** for potential long-term solutions and areas where the company could operate in the future, thus facing higher risks. The constant concern with innovation is translated in the continuous research for ways to improve the business and the reformulation of the strategy and key areas where the company should focus during the upcoming years. It was in this context that Portugal Telecom approached NOVA's Management Consulting Labs in order to develop a consulting project and assess the value of a specific innovation and its possible applications in a wide range of business sectors. Due to the complexity of the technology at stake, the team was called to **evaluate and determine the opportunities in the short and medium term** as well as defining **how Portugal Telecom could maximize the value created** by leveraging on its core resources to capture a higher portion of this value.

## **2. Reflection on the content done for Portugal Telecom**

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### **2.1. Problem definition**

As mentioned before, the telecommunication industry is highly competitive, thus the need for constant innovation and improvements in the business segments are the key to differentiate the company's products and services and to strengthen its sources of revenue by retaining and attracting customers.

When asked to identify the main driver of the project, one can state that it was strictly related with the fact that the client needed to introduce in the internal discussion an external perspective to define the key areas of value creation by applying this innovation in several business areas, i.e. to **determine where the value for Portugal Telecom is allocated**.

This broad and complex problem was then decomposed in two main action areas. Firstly, the client stated that it needed help in the **identification of the major opportunities for**

**Portugal Telecom within the scope of the specific technology.** Secondly, it needed help in the **definition of the most appropriate go-to-market strategy to be taken by the company** by describing the best method to approach the market and maximize the portion of the value created that could be captured.

Regarding the first area identified, the company realized that it needed an external view in order to ensure a more concrete and unbiased analysis of the different applications. As Portugal Telecom believed that the value created will be significant for every stakeholder involved, it asked for help in the identification of the main drivers of value creation.

Afterwards, and to solve the second issue raised by the client, the team was asked to define, for the short and medium term priorities identified, a possible go-to-market strategy by providing some advices about the best way it should position itself in the market. These recommendations would be focused in the ability of the company to differentiate its services through its core resources and achieving a competitive advantage.

Therefore, one can state that the project could be summarized in answering the following questions: (1) «*Where is the larger amount of value created?*», i.e. identification of the key business areas where the technology will have a higher impact; (2) «*How much does it worth?*», i.e. assess the value created by this innovation by evaluating the improvements in the business areas identified previously; and (3) «*How can Portugal Telecom maximize the value captured and improve its presence in the value chain?*», i.e. determine and evaluate all the possible alternatives to approach the market and capture value.

The approach defined helped the team to better understand the best position and the strategy to be adopted by Portugal Telecom for each opportunity identified during the first assessment of the potential applications. First of all, one can state that this assessment was

relevant because there is the need for telecommunication operators to diversify their business. As connectivity is starting to be seen by many industry experts as a commodity and no longer as a source of differentiation<sup>4</sup>, the operators' goal is to increase the range of services provided and to expand the presence in the value chain. Secondly, by looking and evaluating the different areas, the team was able to determine where the value is concentrated and ensure that Portugal Telecom could develop the required capabilities to operate and milk the market. Finally, this technology is starting to become a major concern for the telecommunication companies, since the costs associated are becoming more favorable to the implementation of this innovative technology and the benefits to the stakeholders are relevant and, in some cases, already requested by them.

## 2.2. Hypothesis, Analysis and Work

### *The initial hypothesis and the approach planned*

As stated previously, the team's main goal was to assess the veracity of the hypotheses defined by Portugal Telecom. According to the client's initial assumptions, it was clear that the company believed that (1) **the technology would have a significant impact in several business areas**, and that (2) **Portugal Telecom was well positioned to provide a large set of services**, thus improving its attractiveness and importance for the firm's strategy. These two assumptions led to the final hypothesis to be tested. As the company is capable of expanding its presence in the value chain, it will be able to (3) **implement a value-based pricing, which will increase the portion of the value created to be captured**.

By defining the main tasks to be developed during the 13 weeks, the initial work plan, as described below, was used as a tool that would help and guide the team during the project in the assessment of the truth of the client's initial hypotheses and assumptions.

0. Introduction to the main concepts of the industry and analysis of the strategies of some telecommunication operators and actual cases already implemented by Portugal Telecom;
1. (a) **Identification of the range of possible applications** and business areas and group them in logical clusters; (b) **development of methodologies and frameworks to prioritize** the applications according to the criteria defined;
2. **Deep analysis of the priorities identified** in the previous stage and assessment of their immediate value to Portugal Telecom by appraising the main drivers of value creation;
3. **Definition of a go-to-market strategy** for the priorities identified and elaboration of the general recommendations about the best position for the company for this technology.

The stages were critical to assess the accuracy of the initial hypotheses. While stage 1 and 2 had as main objective the analysis of the first and second hypothesis, the last stage was defined to check if the firm could increase the Average Revenue Per Unit (ARPU).

### *Adaptation was needed*

As the project evolved, the team decided to change the process defined in the beginning to meet client's expectations. The changes were also influenced by some restrictions and by the fact that the team felt that it needed to strengthen the main conclusions.

### *0. The first step in the industry [Pre-kick-off – week prior to the kick-off session]*

In order to ensure a proper comprehension of the major concepts of the industry, the team decided to make an initial research, mainly through documents provided by Portugal Telecom. In my opinion, and despite the importance of the learning taken from this research, the recommended readings shown to be too technical instead of focusing in the major business areas already developed by other operators. Looking back, I believe that the



team could focus its initial attention in some core concepts and start searching for possible business cases from day one, which would ease the analysis in the next stages.

***1. Identification of potential immediate opportunities for Portugal Telecom [From kick-off session to the 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Review – week 1 to week 4]***

The main purpose of this stage was to define the methods that would help the team and the client to determine the main opportunities to be analyzed and explored in the next stages.

This step had two distinct, but not totally independent, work fronts. On one hand, we needed to identify and group the applications in logical clusters; on the other hand, and while grouping the applications, we also planned to work on the development of frameworks and methodologies that would help us to prioritize the logical clusters defined.

In my opinion, this was one of the major successes of the project because the team was able to exceed the client's expectations and was capable to build a great team environment that fostered the group discussion and the achievement of higher levels of productivity. I believe that the success was strongly related to the fact that the members complemented each other.

It is also relevant to mention the importance of the relationship built with the client. In order to get the client's approval, we decided to organize a brainstorm session to get the collaborators closer to the project and include them in the decisions taken by the team.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Review and to exceed the client's expectations, we have also decided to provide some initial insights about potential opportunities to be analyzed during stage 2.

***2. Deep analysis of the potential valuable applications for Portugal Telecom [From 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Review to 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Review – from week 5 to 10]***

After applying the frameworks and methodologies developed during the previous stage, we defined a set of 9 business areas (approved by the client) that would be subject to a deep

analysis. To assess the value of the several opportunities we worked on desk and field research (i.e. interviews with experts, industry players and field trips) as a tool to evaluate the impact of the technology in the main business areas. The study done through field research has shown to be crucial as the best method to analyze the specific characteristics of the potential customers and to evaluate if there was an emergent need in the market. By assessing the main drivers of value creation and characterizing the industry (e.g. potential competitors and possible partnerships), we were able to develop an initial recommendation for the positioning of Portugal Telecom in what concerns the new technology.

During this stage, and due to the large amount of information to be analyzed, we decided to allocate the different work fronts by each team member “mathematically” and according to their initial preferences. Looking back, I would change this approach. Firstly, the division of the work had a negative impact in the general productivity of the team, because the team members needed to focus only in their specific work fronts, thus the team lost the performance levels achieved until then due to the misalignment generated by the tasks’ division. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Review, every team elements felt that the last 5 weeks were not as productive as the initial ones. In my opinion, the division of work fronts should be made based on potential synergies within the different applications and the 4 members could be divided in groups of 2 to encourage problem solving moments and achieve complementarities between the different members as we shown in stage 1.

It was also true that, despite the importance of the field research to the conclusions, the client was always resilient regarding the interviews and as this process was based on contacts obtained through the team’s networks it took some time to have access to the required information and insights from industry experts.

Additionally, at the final days prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Review, the team was not able to elaborate and communicate the overall picture, as it was more difficult to put all the pieces together in order to define a global recommendation for Portugal Telecom. The lack of consistency and team work to develop the general recommendations was the main symptom that led to a low relatively performance during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Review in terms of communication when comparing with the others (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> Progress and Final Review).

***3. Definition of the strategy to approach the market to maximize the value captured and the positioning of Portugal Telecom in the implementation of the technology [Until the Final Review – from week 11 to week 13]***

After defining the top priorities for Portugal Telecom in the short and medium term, it was time to elaborate the most correct approach to the market and clarify the client about the best way to come close to the potential clients in order to increase the value captured by the company. This assessment was based on the previous analysis and was a consolidation of what the team presented in the previous meetings with the client.

Due to the time scarcity between the two progress reviews (only 3 weeks), and after some discussions with the client, we agreed not to present an analysis of the possible go-to-market strategy (as stated in the initial proposal), but to improve the previous analysis by reinforcing the role played by Portugal Telecom in the value chain for the three opportunities defined. The last weeks were also spent in the development and strengthening of the final recommendations for Portugal Telecom's broad position in the wide scope of this new technology in order to maximize the value creation for all stakeholders.

As the 3 immediate opportunities were uniformly distributed by the three members, the allocation of the work fronts was easy to do. While three members worked at the

development of the approach to be taken in the priorities identified, the other one finished one deep analysis that the client agreed that it should be done during the last weeks of the project as the time was short to perform 9 deep analysis before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Review.

Although we have decided to allocate the work fronts uniformly, it was clear that the team was motivated to exceed the performance of the previous stage. I truly believe that all the members were able to understand and apply in an effective way the feedback given by the advisor at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Review. As the time run, the team was more focused in the collective objective rather than the individual performance and the meetings began to be more productive as the problem solving moments were seen as team work and, once again, we started to complement each other as observed in the stage 1.

### **2.3. Value added and main recommendations**

By describing and analyzing the large set of potential priorities for Portugal Telecom in the short and medium term, we were able to come up with a set of interesting insights about the potential of this technology and its importance for the company's strategy.

Regarding the initial hypotheses and assumptions stated by the client, we were able to question their application. Concerning the value of the technology, the team reached the conclusion that it was concentrated in the long run, mainly because we have identified some potential substitutes of the technology that provided similar benefits at lower costs.

On what concerns the client's second hypothesis, it was our belief that it would be difficult for the company to achieve this objective. On one hand, there were already some specialized players in the business sectors, with the required know-how, that were willing to control the value chain. On the other hand, the level of specificity of some applications

and the characteristics of industry itself would reduce the potential value to be captured, thus impeding the presence along the value chain.

As a result, the team has recommended the firm to **focus its attention in a specific, but essential, segment of the value chain**, as the company is well positioned to leverage on its core resources to achieve an advantage. However, if requested by the other stakeholders, Portugal Telecom could also support their business in other complementary areas.

We were also able to support the argument that Portugal Telecom is not well positioned to shape and consolidate the market (i.e. influence the stakeholders' decision). Thus, we have recommended the company to **position itself as the preferred partner of the major players** acting in the business areas considered to be attractive and **leveraging on its core resources to support customers' requirements and needs**.

Lastly, and based on the previous recommendations, we believed that the company should be **proactive in building awareness and start acquiring some of the competences and capabilities required** in areas where the impact of the technology is only important in the long run, by developing piloting tests. However, as Portugal Telecom could not ignore immediate opportunities, it must **act proactively in the business areas where the value created is already realistic and achievable**.

After the Final Review, it was clear for all the team members and for the client that the **value added provided by this project was the change in the client's perspective about this technology** as some of the analysis shown that the client's initial hypotheses could not be realized so straight forward. This project made them rethink its strategy in relation to its action within the large scope of the technology. It was clear that the company would need to re-assess the piloting tests already implemented.

Although we set aside the truth of the initial hypotheses stated by the client, I truly believe that Portugal Telecom would take in consideration some of the arguments that we have presented during the project, mainly in future internal assessments of the technology in question. In my opinion, we were able to establish a good relationship with the client and build an image of credibility and reliability not only during the progress reviews, but also in every interaction with the client. This was one of the key factors that contributed the most for the communication of the main messages in spite of the conflict with the initial beliefs from Portugal Telecom's main collaborators.

Just as a final remark, I would like to emphasize another important issue that has also contributed to the success of the project, which was related to the fact that we have developed our approach by building on their initial assumptions. In my opinion, by being truly insightful and zero based, rather than departing from the assumptions of previous projects developed, we were able to generate a second thought in the client's mind. As stated by the client at the end of the Final Review, they have agreed with us in several aspects and believed that they needed to step-back and assess some of the current projects that were already in an advanced stage of materialization as well as the ones that were in the pipeline ready to be launched.

### **3. Reflection on learning**

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#### **3.1. Previous knowledge and Masters' contents applied**

During my Masters Program I was introduced to the major concepts of strategy and to some practical implications of those concepts. From the knowledge acquired, I can highlight some courses that contributed to the development of several tasks through the project.

In **Analysis of Industry and Competition**, I learnt how to analyze a specific industry structure by assessing its characteristics and attractiveness. The main concepts helped me to assess the attractiveness of some business opportunities defined during the project.

I also applied various concepts from **Competitive Strategy** such as the identification of the relevant competitors, the different strategies followed by them and how the company could act accordingly to the competitors' decisions. The learning from this course was complemented by several concepts taught in the course of **Corporate Strategy** where I had the chance to understand the distinction between business unit and corporate level strategy and the interrelation between them. It was also very useful the insights about the advantages of leveraging on the company's core resources in order to achieve the desired success through exploiting the identified opportunities.

Additionally, I would also like to highlight the importance of the case-studies used in majority of the courses, such as **Entrepreneurial Finance and Venture Capital** and **Human Resources Management**. The cases were an important tool to strengthening my problem solving skills as well as issue decomposition. However, I believe that the approach used in those courses could be relatively different in a way that it could be introduced a more practical analysis, because the students were only asked to answer specific questions about the issues taught in the classes rather than trying to think outside the box and solve more complex and broad problems that companies face in the real world.

### 3.2. New knowledge acquired during the project

The main stages of the project have shown a clear evolution of the work performed by the team, mainly when comparing across the 3 progress reviews. This difference was only possible due to the introduction of some of the concepts and methodologies in group

discussions and the implemented improvements when solving a problem. At the end of the project, every team member have used the majority of the methodologies intuitively, which was reflected in better achievements at the problem solving moments, development of the documents to be delivered, communication skills and effective management of the main tasks to be done.

### ***1. Methodologies used during the problem solving moments***

During the different stages of the project, I have learned a set of tools that helped me to improve my problem solving skills. By applying them, I was able to simplify the analysis when looking to complex problems or dealing with excessive information to be analyzed.

*Hypothesis-driven* – Due to the intense pace of the project, I truly understood the importance of being hypothesis-driven since the initial stage of the problem solving. By stating our hypotheses, we could easily detect potential flaws in the arguments, as those hypotheses worked as a map that helped the team to focus on the road planned and paying less attention to minor issues that would not change the overall picture. In the early stage of the problem solving, this methodology was most of the times materialized in the elaboration of a *storyline*, which is going to be described in the next section.

*MECE, Mutually Exclusive, Collectively Exhaustive* – This method was introduced by the advisor in the first team meeting and, in my opinion, it has led to the success of some progress reviews, while the lack of consideration for this “*acid test*” led to some of the major problems, mainly related to the conclusions presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Review. By structuring our thinking when solving complex business problems we must ensure that we are being complete in the analysis (i.e. exhaustive) while avoiding confusion and overlap



between the issues analyzed. The use of this methodology enabled us not to waste a precious resource (time) and to focus on what really matters for the solution of the problem. I consider that the lack of group discussion and the complexity of the deep analysis of the opportunities identified during the stage 2 were the major reasons for the non-application of this methodology, which conduced to some uncovered aspects in the arguments presented to the client and confusion when presenting the main findings (in terms of slides presented and oral communication during the session). Nevertheless, the team based itself on the feedback received from the advisor, and as such was able to be “*MECE*” in an effective way during the last weeks of the project, which led to the success of the Final Review, in terms of communication and presentation of the major conclusions.

*Issue Prioritization* – We have applied this technique several times during the project as a tool to rank the large set of issues to be developed during the analysis, as it allows us to focus our attention in the most important issues of the problem statement.

When asked to identify the opportunities for Portugal Telecom in the short and medium term within the scope of the technology, we have used this prioritizing technique. Defining a set of criteria to implement it helped the team and the client to compare completely different business areas by placing them in a matrix of prioritization. This matrix was very helpful for the effectiveness of communication, due to the clarity of the presentation.

*80/20 Rule* – This is a common rule of thumb applied in many areas, such as business and economics (most known as Pareto Principle). This rule is used in management consulting and states that 80% of the effects would come from 20% of the causes; therefore, we must focus our attention on the major causes that led to the explanation of 80% of the effects, because the remaining 20% of the effects will have a smaller impact on the conclusions.

Looking back, it is clear that this rule of thumb was present during the entire project. In my opinion, I was able to improve my ability to use it by looking for the importance and the potential impact of the analysis before spending time working on them.

This rule was also evident in the tasks developed in the different work fronts where I was involved, and was pointed out by the team members and the advisor as one of my major strengths but also a development area as it is going to be described further.

*Triangulation Principle* – This approach helped the team in the estimation processes at stage 2. As we were assessing the value of the opportunities identified, we needed to simplify the approach by applying triangulation and computing several methods and reached a similar value at stake for the specific business areas. With this principle, we were able to cross-check the results obtained and ensure higher levels of consistency.

## ***2. Production of the main deliverables and communication***

Regarding the work developed for the meetings and the performance of the team during these sessions, we have applied several principles and methodologies that helped us to improve the way we have exposed the information, both written and orally.

*Pyramid Principle* – During the progress reviews I was introduced to a new method of exposing and presenting a given argument. Instead of communicating all the details followed by the conclusions and main thoughts, sometimes the communication is more effective if the presentation starts by referring the main conclusions and/or recommendations and, only afterwards, by explaining the arguments and main findings that support the conclusions. This approach was important in all the meetings with the client, having a major effect during the Final Review, since the audience was composed by some senior members from Portugal Telecom. By presenting the important conclusions in the

beginning, we were able to capture the audience's attention for the rest of the presentation and we were able to increase their willingness to stay longer at the meeting as the topics that we covered shown to be interesting for them.

During the experience in the Consulting Lab, this was one of the most important tools that I have learned. I finally understood that the audience values much more the main conclusions and their impact in the business rather than caring about the complexity of the analysis.

*Wordsmithing* – This capability was built during the several stages of the project by practicing. It was important in the development of the main deliverables as we needed to present them by ensuring clarity on the arguments used in order to avoid confusion.

*Storyline* – As stated previously, this tool was important when building the initial hypothesis to be proven (see *Hypothesis-driven*). The storyline was produced before starting the main document in order to make sure that we would cover the most important issues and avoid spending time on unnecessary topics.

Despite the effectiveness of this method, it was identified by being one of the major development needs must work in. By being too logical and structured in the problem decomposition, it was difficult for me to define the road to be followed prior to the development of the document itself and dismiss some analysis done, which would not have a bigger impact in the main conclusions presented.

*Draft of the Master document* – Before starting to work on the PowerPoint slides, we needed to work on a hand draft version of any document that would be delivered to the client. As the production of slides is a process that ended up by being very time consuming, this method shown to be really useful by reducing the time spent on unnecessary slides.

The main objective of this draft document was to detect, in an early stage of the document elaboration, potential flaws in the way we presented the arguments, as we needed to guarantee that the flow of information tells a story along the document. It shown to be very helpful in periods where we had several team members working on the same document, by safeguarding consistency in the flow of information presented.

### ***3. Project and team management***

Since the beginning of the project, the team worked on the main aspects that would affect the way we manage the main tasks. During the different stages, we have also adapted the approaches taken given the evolution and characteristics of the assignments (e.g. working in groups during stage 1. and 3. and “*divide-to-conquer*” during stage 2.).

*Set the team rules and the right environment* – In my opinion, the first internal kick-off meeting, prior to the kick-off with the client, was extremely important to start building a good team environment. During this session, each member stated its major strengths and development needs and the team defined a set of rules that helped us managing the project and balancing the lifestyle outside that. We have also defined administrative tasks, such as team leader and accountant.

*Work Fronts* – This concept was important when dealing a multiplicity of tasks. By defining a work plan at the beginning of each stage, we were able to allocate the responsibilities among the members by matching the their preferences and distributing the workload equally.

*Feedback* – One of the major advantages and differentiation points of the Management Consulting Labs is the constant feedback that we received from the advisor with recommendations regarding our performance and how could we improve it. I would also

like to underline the importance of the constant feedback from the peers. As we have been able to keep a good environment, we were able to foster a culture of constant recommendations and opinions about each one's work developed.

*Leadership* – Each team member had the chance to sense the role of team leader in different occasions of the project in order to work on the organizational skills as well as the ability to guide the team towards the same objective.

#### ***4. Management of the relationship with the client***

In what concerns management of the relationship with the client, I believe that the team was able to build a relation based on trust and empathy with every member of the client's team. We adapted to the way they were used to work and we were able to call their attention to the major discussions of the project (e.g. brainstorm session in stage 1).

*Follow ups* – One of the requests of the client was the follow-up emails sent by the team after any meeting. This simple procedure was very useful in order to sum up the outcomes from the discussion and to document the next steps to be followed by each part.

*How to conduct a meeting* – The importance of the progress reviews made me realize about the relevance of planning in advance what I want to cover during the meetings to ensure that the communication is *MECE* and the relevance of communicating with confidence but always coherently.

*Building trust* – In my opinion, it is essential to understand that trust is affected by the empathy created, the credibility, the reliability as well as the self-interest demonstrated. During the different stages of the project, we were able to build credibility and show that our work was reliable and the importance of our analysis started to gain relevance at the eyes of the client as we needed to prove the value added of our work.

### 3.3. Personal assessment on the individual performance

Above and beyond the intense experience in terms of knowledge acquired, the project was a unique opportunity to improve my soft and hard skills. The different feedback sessions with the advisor and peers allowed me to identify the major areas to be developed.

#### *Major strengths identified*

According to the feedback that I have received at the end of the project, everyone emphasized my sharp and logical mind as well as my written and oral communication skills. Moreover, my organizational and leadership skills were also highlighted, mainly in situations where the team was under high pressure to end the work properly and on time.

Regarding **problem solving**, it was useful to learn a large set of possible methodologies to decompose and solve a given problem. This area shown to be one where I believe I have contributed the most for the team performance and achievement of a better result. As stated by the advisor, my sharp and logical mind helped the team to structure the main ideas, as I was called many time to act as “*acid test*” to identify, in an early stage, the flaws in the arguments and ensuring that they were solid and relevant to communicate the main findings. As I will describe further, I must continue developing myself in order to strengthen my problem solving skills and overcome some development needs.

Furthermore, I was also able to structure a document in an autonomous way and ground it on a clear story flow, by creating ease-to-read slides. The **written communication skills** were observed when the team needed to synthesize the main ideas based on the identification of the relevant “so what’s” to communicate in each slide.

Regarding my **oral communication skills**, I have shown good control on the major content presented and conveying maturity when dealing with the relationship with the client during

the progress reviews. By having good presence in the sessions, I was able to captivate the audience's attention to the main messages that I was trying to transmit. However, there is still room for improvements, as I need to work on my ability to listen carefully the audience's arguments and incorporate them in my presentation which is an important factor as it increases people's attention and should be used as a bridge to present the main conclusions and make the audience contributing to the flow of the presentation.

I have also shown evidences of my **aptitude to be constantly organized and to take the role of leader**, mainly in the last days prior to the Final Review. The fact that I work well under pressure forced me to set in advance a specific course to be followed. Looking back, I noticed that I was able to achieve a good performance as team leader during the last week of the project by multitasking and being able to guide and trying to keep the team motivated under such demanding conditions in order to maintain the productivity.

### *Development needs*

As stated before, in spite of my sharp and logical mind, I need to develop some skills in order to improve the problem solving capabilities. I must continue to work on the **hypothesis-driven from day one and start to work autonomously**. It was also clear that I am far less productive when working in the absence of pressure. These were the major weaknesses that led me to a lower performance during stage 2, when we needed to work on the deep analysis. In the last stage, I was able to apply the feedback given by advisor, which resulted in the achievement of a better performance. In order to overcome these issues I need to establish and force my own milestones and deadlines as a way to increase the

pressure faced as well as force me defining the initial hypothesis to be proven on the first day of tackling it.

Additionally, I need to **avoid getting stuck in irrelevant issues** that will not have a big impact on the conclusions taken from the analysis by applying the *80/20 rule*. This aspect could be easy to change if I improve the ability to be more hypothesis-driven as it will force me to identify the importance of the analysis for the hypotheses defined and its impact.

The last point that I want to underline is my propensity to be **deductive and introverted in the reasoning**. This could be seen as an advantage as I prefer to think in the arguments, by mentally working and assessing their relevance before stating them. However, it could also damage the communication, as I tend to present the entire process that lead to the final conclusion rather than going direct to conclusion and elaborate in the most relevant issues.

#### 3.4. The future as business consultant

When asked about a future career in the consulting industry, I usually like to answer by stating that it depends. However, this project took me to a different perspective. Now I see myself working as a consultant as I am motivated by constant challenges and for the team work experienced in consulting companies.

As everyone knows, the environment present in this industry is characterized by high levels of pressure, hard work and exponential learning curve, which make me believe that a career in this area is the best way to start a professional life, as it opens the doors to a completely different world of multiple project and industries, while helping organizations finding solutions for their main problems. In my opinion, entering in the consulting industry means constant development, not only by contacting with different industries and scenarios, but also because it would help to build personal capabilities and create a network for the future.



## References

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