Video Transcript

Title: Self-Knowledge Tools: Enhance Your Competitive Edge
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Slide 1
Welcome to “Self Knowledge Tools: Enhance Your Competitive Edge.” This session is presented to you by two members of your Walden Career Services advising team.

Slide 2
We developed this graphic based on the concepts from Herminia Ibarra’s book, *Working Identity*. This visual represents our holistic approach to proactive career management. Our career identities change as we gain new experiences, meet new people, and tell a new story about our academic and professional endeavors. We hope that you find this framework helpful as you progress through your academic program and start your next career chapter.

A first step in the career management process is to enhance your self knowledge through career assessments, the focus of this session. **Through this self-evaluation process, you'll uncover personal attributes to include in your “professional story.”**

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Throughout this session, we will discuss the benefits of self-assessments, explore various assessment tools, and wrap up by identifying ways to maximize your assessment results, and communicate your strengths to potential employers.

Slide 4
Self assessments are essential to career growth as they help you to gain further insight about yourself – your personality traits, interests, values, and key strengths, which in turn:
- Validate and reaffirm what you already know about yourself;
- Motivate and build confidence by highlighting your talents, skills and areas where you shine;
- They also empower you to articulate your strengths on your career marketing documents and social media profiles;
- And finally, allow you to identify areas for improvement and provide you with activities and ways to develop these areas.

Before we introduce you to some specific assessment tools, let’s review some transferable skills employers look for in a qualified candidate.

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First, Leadership experience. This could be leading people, an organization, a project, or even organizational change.
Next, have a global mindset, which is knowledge and openness to other countries and cultures.
Adaptability and flexibility – the ability to learn new skills and try on different hats, which often entails extending beyond your comfort zone.

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Critical Thinking – one of the foundation skills expected of today’s professional and a key problem-solving skill. This skill involves the ability to analyze, synthesize and provide solutions to organizational challenges.
Innovation/Creativity – these skills are key to any successful organization’s ability to maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace. You want to be able to provide value through creative problem solving.
Communication – in order to be a successful professional in today’s world, one needs to be a savvy communicator. This means the ability to speak, write and present in a clear and concise manner using a variety of mediums, including social media and video.

As you embark on your career journey, it is important to keep these desired skills in mind.
Now, we will provide an overview of some specific assessments to help you to discover and validate your own skills inventory.

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Self-assessments are broken into four categories: personality, interests, values, and skills and strengths and there are formal and informal assessments for each of these categories. Formal assessments, in most cases, will require a certified individual to interpret and share your results with you.
The Myers Briggs Type Indicator and Keirsey Temperament Sorter are personality assessments. They are used to reveal your behavior and preferences, and from the results, make recommendations on possible career paths. To assess your interests, you can take the Strong Interest Inventory, or reflect on a set of questions such as, “What do I do well?”, “What are my favorite classes?”, and “What job interests me most?”

Your values make up your core beliefs, and can push you to work hard and thrive in your work environment. There are multiple assessments you can complete, some as simple as completing a values checklist found online. You can also imagine your future story by thinking about your career 20 years from now and writing an article on the successes you have had.

Finally, you can assess your skills and strengths. This category focuses on developing and enhancing your natural strengths and abilities. StrengthsFinder and SkillScan are two assessments to help identify your strengths. You can also complete a SWOT analysis, a self-reflective assessment, to discover the strengths and weaknesses in your career planning.

For the remainder of this session, we are going to focus on the skills and strengths category and provide you with a deeper understanding of the SWOT analysis, SkillsScan, and StrengthsFinder along with ways to maximize your results.

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As we explore these assessments, take note of your transferable skills, which are the skills carried from one position to the next. Regardless of your professional background, you have a handful of these highly desirable skills that are applicable towards your career goal. Teamwork, communications, flexibility, organizing, problem solving, and so on.

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First let’s take a look at The SWOT analysis, which prepares you to play to your strengths and manage your weaknesses. In using this informal, yet powerful assessment, you will be able to uncover new opportunities for professional growth.

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The SWOT Matrix is a visual representation of the SWOT analysis. Your strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, whereas opportunities and threats are external factors.

To complete a SWOT analysis, first, take an inventory of your strengths and weaknesses. Strengths and weaknesses include relevant professional skills, education, additional training, your networks, unique experiences or opportunities, your values, technical skills related to your career field, transferable skills, and your various personal characteristics. Once you have identified your strengths, play to them. With your weaknesses, work on managing them or finding opportunities for enhancement.
On the other hand, opportunities and threats in your career field are factors outside your control. Once they are identified, you can capitalize on them or lessen their impact. Take an inventory of job availability, trends in the field, competition from other candidates, opportunities for advancement, additional education or training, volunteer opportunities, or ways to grow your network. Perhaps you can conduct research, get an article published, or assume a leadership position. Take full advantage of opportunities and find ways to manage the threats.

Slide 11
This SWOT analysis highlights a MBA student seeking a management position. The student has effectively identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This Walden student has the benefit of international connections in her classes. She is strengthening her time management skills by possibly balancing school, work, and her personal life. She is gaining virtual collaboration and technology skills. Through actively using LinkedIn, she is quickly increasing the size of her network. Next you can see she has also identified her opportunities to seek out volunteer positions, join toastmasters and associations, and secure a mentor. The threats, however, are a shortage of job opportunities in her area and competition from those more qualified.

Taking the time to identify your strengths and opportunities should be a positive experience and motivate you to seize the opportunities and lessen the impact of your weaknesses and threats.

Now we will take a closer look at 2 skills assessments.

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Skillscan and Strengthsfinder are two assessment tools you can use to identify your skills and strengths.

Skillscan is an
• intuitive-based online skills assessment which helps you to discover your top transferable skills
• It also, Identifies key skill areas needing development and
• Provides you with key skill vocabulary essential for selling your strengths on your career documents

StrengthsFinder is an
• Online assessment that identifies your top 5 strengths and
• Provides dozens of strategies to put your strengths to work for you

These assessments focus on providing results to help you to develop and enhance your natural strengths and abilities. They will also help you to identify key skill areas needing improvement
or development. While you mostly want to focus on communicating and enhancing your strengths, you may find that some of your core transferable skills essential for you to perform successfully in the professional world need development as well. Now, let’s take a look at some ways you can maximize the results of your assessment and work on developing some of these skills.

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Whether or not you are in a leadership role in your current position, there are always ways you can develop this skill both inside and outside of the workplace. You could offer to lead a team project or chair a committee. This could be at work, in your community or through your professional association. You could also serve on a non-profit board.

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Public speaking is an essential skill used by all professionals. It is also one that almost everyone can develop. You can improve in this area by joining a local chapter of Toastmasters International, the premier professional association for those wishing to improve their public speaking skills. Also consider opportunities to present in the workplace, in your community, or at a professional conference.

Slide 15
We use critical thinking skills for decision-making every day. When making organizational decisions, we have to consider different perspectives, factors and possible outcomes. In our data-driven world, we also need to analyze large amounts of data for strategic decision-making. You can develop this skill by offering your talents to help organize and structure the data for clearer understanding and reporting.

Once you have conducted a thorough SWOT analysis and skills assessment, the final step is to communicate and showcase your strengths as a professional.

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Starting with your resume, we recommend you create a strong, branded career profile or core competencies section. This will highlight your strengths and skill sets front and center for the reader.

Use your LinkedIn profile to highlight your strengths and skills in both the headline and summary sections.

Your elevator pitch is a 30-second introduction, and should help you to make a positive and memorable first impression. Your goal is to intrigue the listener to want to know more about you.

Finally, during an interview, you want to tell your story. In the typical opening question, “tell me about yourself” think about your elevator pitch, your brand, and your strengths, and how you are the best candidate for the position.
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In closing, here is a list of references used throughout this session. Please feel free to refer to them for further information.

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We would like to wrap up with a final thought about the importance of knowing your strengths and weaknesses.
“You are more likely to succeed in life if you use your talents to their fullest extent. Similarly, you’ll suffer fewer problems if you know what your weaknesses are, and if you manage these weaknesses so that they don’t matter in the work you do.”—Mind Tools