REFLECTED BEST SELF



REPORT *for*

Arish Ballana

MICHIGAN ROSS

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BEST SELF REPORT FOR ARISH BALLANA

The Reflected Best Self Exercise™ (RBSE) is a personal development tool that helps you see who you are at your best, engaging you to live and work from this powerful place daily. Created from research at the Center for Positive Organizations (Ross School of Business, University of Michigan), the RBSE has helped thousands of executives, managers, employees, and students discover new potential.

Research shows that a strengths-based self portrait correlates to extraordinary leadership. Unfortunately, most of us are more keenly aware of our leadership weaknesses than our strengths. The Reflected Best Self Exercise™ shifts this.

Designed for teams and individuals who want to leverage their strengths and flourish, the RBSE supports you to grow further into your best self, both at work and in life. We can strengthen our best-self portrait with insights reflected to us from significant people in our lives. Colleagues, friends, family members, and others have different perspectives on who we are at our best, and offer unique and valuable insights into the ways we make contributions. Some of these insights are shared in the pages that follow. Stories are presented as they were received - typos or phrasing have not been edited.

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Self Reflection 1

Context: While working as a Software Engineer and Scrum Master at Cisco Systems, I was assigned the responsibility of mentoring two new interns. They had little experience with Agile methodologies or enterprise-level development tools. Actions Taken: I created a 6-week onboarding plan that included hands-on technical training, Agile ceremonies, and weekly learning checkpoints. I tailored the program to their pace while ensuring they remained engaged and challenged. I conducted regular 1-on-1s to understand their goals and adapted my mentorship style accordingly. Skills Displayed: Leadership, Communication, Empathy, Agile Coaching, Technical Mentorship Results: Both interns became confident contributors by the end of the internship, with one receiving a full-time offer. I received positive feedback from my team and managers, and it reinforced my passion for leading and developing people.

Self Reflection 2

Context: During my time in India, I identified a gap in basic computer knowledge among school children in under-resourced areas. This sparked the idea of launching a free computer literacy program at my work city - Bengaluru (Silicon Valley of India). Actions Taken: I organized weekend classes, partnered with a local school for space, and developed a simple curriculum that covered basic computer operations, typing, internet safety, and Microsoft Office. Skills Displayed: Initiative, Community Engagement, Program Management, Social Responsibility Results: Over three months, more than 250 students completed the program. Some went on to use those skills for academic projects. It was one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life and highlighted the impact of giving back.

Self Reflection 3

While working as a Senior Software Engineer at HP Inc., I was assigned to maintain and enhance legacy cloud-printing services (Gen 1) used by millions of customers. At the same time, HP was beginning to transition to a more scalable IoT-enabled platform (Gen 2) for their latest line of smart printers. The challenge was to bridge the gap between the old and new systems without disrupting existing users. Actions Taken: I took the initiative to lead an internal task force that mapped out the core dependencies of the Gen 1 system and identified potential bottlenecks in migrating certain features to the new Gen 2 platform. I collaborated with cross-functional teams including firmware, cloud, and DevOps engineers to build a middleware service that allowed backward compatibility and staged data migration. Additionally, I created thorough documentation and onboarding resources to support the adoption of the new system. Skills Displayed: Strategic Thinking, Systems Integration, Cross-Functional Collaboration, Problem Solving, Cloud Architecture, Documentation Results: The

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middleware enabled a seamless transition for over 1.2 million active devices, reducing downtime by 40% during the migration period. It improved service reliability and allowed the Gen 2 platform to roll out five months ahead of schedule. My contribution was recognized in the quarterly innovation roundtable and paved the way for other teams to adopt a similar hybrid-migration approach.

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AMAN PATHAK

Story 1

Working with Arish throughout our MBA has been a truly rewarding experience. As batchmates, we collaborated on several group projects, and he consistently stood out for his initiative, reliability, and calm under pressure. Arish naturally takes the lead, whether it's organizing tasks, aligning timelines, or guiding the team forward. One moment that really stands out was during our Strategic Management project. We were approaching the deadline and the team was in a panic. Arish stepped in, quickly restructured our plan, delegated tasks efficiently, and kept everyone focused. Thanks to his planning and execution, we submitted the project on time without compromising on quality. He's detail-oriented, ensures high standards in all work, and handles conflict with fairness and diplomacy. Above all, Arish demonstrates strong integrity and consistently makes timely, well-informed decisions that keep the group on track. It's been a privilege working alongside someone who brings both character and leadership to every project.

Story 2

Beyond being a fantastic teammate during our MBA, Arish has been a constant support system for me personally. Since we both migrated to Canada around the same time to pursue our MBA, we naturally shared the challenges that come with adjusting to a new country. Arish was always ready to help, guiding me through unfamiliar systems, and offering practical advice when I needed it most. One great example of Arish's helpful nature was when he referred me to a volunteer role at Mission Thrift Store. He didn't just suggest it casually, he really thought about what would help me learn and grow, and found an opportunity that also matched our MBA practicum in the non-profit sector. This shows how thoughtful and supportive he is. Arish always looks for ways to help others succeed, which says a lot about his character and leadership. Beyond academics, Arish has stood by me during difficult times and is someone I turn to whenever I have questions related to compliance, local processes, or navigating technicalities in Canada. His clarity, knowledge, and patience have been truly reassuring. Arish brings more than just intelligence and professionalism, he brings empathy, reliability, and genuine care. I'm grateful to have had him as a friend on this journey.

HARMANDEEP SINGH

Story 1

Back in 2022, I was preparing for a major presentation at work. The presentation had to be run on a shared system, and just 15 minutes before it was due, the file wouldn't open. I panicked. Arish was visiting me that day—pure coincidence—but it turned out to be a blessing. What Happened: Seeing

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my stress, Arish calmly asked me to send him the file and within 10 minutes, he not only recovered it from a corrupted backup but also restructured the animations so that it looked even better than my original. Skills & Traits Shown: His technical expertise was incredible, but what stood out more was his calm presence. No panic, no show-off—just quietly focused action. His ability to work under pressure, with a helpful and reassuring demeanor, showed me how grounded and effective he is in crisis. Impact: The presentation went on smoothly. My boss was impressed, and I landed the project. But what really stayed with me was how Arish used his skill not for credit but to help—purely out of heart.

RANJANA GUPTA

Story 1

I still remember the first time I met him in HP Bangalore. I was a tester and he was a developer in the same team. But when I first spoke to him, I honestly thought he was a manager. The way he spoke – so calm, confident, and clear – and how he carried himself, gave off that leadership vibe from day one. In our daily scrum calls, even though he was a developer, people always listened to what he said. He never spoke just for the sake of it. His points always made sense, and even the senior team members appreciated his logic. He was always so serious and positive about his work. One day, there was a very critical issue that came up in production. That day, he was on sick leave. Everyone was trying hard to find the root cause, but no one could figure it out. The next day, when he joined back, a big meeting was scheduled with around 15 people including onshore and senior members. To everyone's surprise, he found the exact root cause during that call itself. It felt like magic – he connected the dots so quickly and clearly. Everyone appreciated him so much that day. Right after that, he fixed the issue, deployed the changes, and we testers validated everything. By the evening, the fix was in production. That whole situation showed not just his technical skills, but also his leadership, even when no one had officially given him that title.

Story 2

When we moved to Canada, life was not easy. He started his studies at Laurier and was fully loaded with assignments and group work. I came to Canada a bit later, and once I landed, my biggest worry was finding a job as a Senior Automation Engineer. I applied to more than 300 job openings and didn't hear back from most of them. The few I did hear from ended in rejections. Then finally, I got an interview call from RBC. I cleared two rounds and we were both very hopeful. We even started planning what we'd do if I got the offer. But the final decision was a rejection due to budget constraints. That broke me. We didn't have much money left, and both of us were not earning. I was on the edge of panic. But he held me together. The way he handled that moment still stays with me.

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He calmed me down, made sure I didn't lose confidence. He became more than just my partner – he became my guide. He made a full plan for me – how to prepare, what to study, and even set daily goals like a mentor would. And guess what? That effort paid off. I cracked the interview at TD Bank soon after, and we both knew it wouldn't have happened without his constant support and leadership during those dark days.

ALI SYED

Story 1

You are a natural leader, and are considerate and aware of people's circumstances around you. I've done many group projects with you and observed these traits. You take charge and are able to listen to others opinions and change when needed. You are are also considerate of others like when you took the lead on releiving our classmate during a busy time, and distributed the work load among other group members.

Story 2

You have great presentation skills. You command the room's attention when you speak and try to be as engaging as possible. You are able to speak confidently in front of a crowd and answer questions on your feet and improvise effectively if you don't know a certain topic.

SHIKHAR BAGHLA

Story 1

Summer vacations were always special for me. Every year, my family – my mother, father, sister, and I – used to visit my maternal aunt's house. But the highlight of those holidays, for me, was Arish Bhaiya – my cousin brother. Arish Bhaiya's affection for me was no less than that of a real brother. Every time I visited, he would take me for rides on his bike. Those little trips felt like grand adventures to me. While others might dream of beaches or hill stations during vacations, I only wanted to go to his place – because there, I felt truly cared for. He had a personal room that no one was allowed to enter. But me? He welcomed me inside, showed me his belongings, his favorite books, toys, and even that big keypad phone – which I adored. When he let me use it, I felt like the most special kid in the world. There was a gentleness in his voice, and a warmth in his gestures, that made me feel safe and loved. Every moment I spent with him added color to the canvas of my childhood. Even today, when I think of those times, a smile comes to my face. Arish Bhaiya wasn't just a cousin – he was one of the most beautiful parts of my early life. I feel truly blessed that my childhood was touched by such love and care.

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UDITA JINDAL

Story 1

Arish had always been one of those colleagues you could rely on no matter what. He had a quiet confidence about him—always getting things done, but never drawing attention to himself. But what truly set Arish apart was his ability to bring people together. He wasn't just good at his work; he understood people and knew how to manage relationships within the team, which made him the go-to person for team events and outings. He organised multiple team lunches and outings

SHABDIKA ARORA

Story 1

You are a really really kind person, i would like to start from that, because that's what highlights your character for me. My first fun official "trip" trip was with you and akshita and i still can't forget, how caring and kind you were towards me. I sprained my foot and you made me feel like it's a trip about "taking - care- of- my-foot" You literally said and i quote -" koi bat nahi pahad dikh rahe hn na , bahar jane ki kya jarurat hai" You really stand out from all of my cousins because i feel that warmth when i am around you. That comfort of not getting judged. Your giving personality, your protective aura , your kindness is what makes me think that i am lucky i got to live those memories with you. (FYI biscuit memory will still top them all because dipping them in water and making puddings was not really a good idea...we all agree hehe)...i know it feels like it wasn't enough, but i am treasuring the all i have.

Story 2

This is about that hug you gave me when we saw each other last. I was about to cry because in that moment you didn't say much , just something a big brother would say to his sister but you said a lot in those two lines. You wished the best for me and didn't give me a chance to wish you back for your completely different journey. you never made me feel cornered, small or ignored and that stayed with me. You actually know how to steer the ship with everyone on board because i know almost everyone if not all, have felt like this around you.

BLESSY NARANG

Story 1

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There was incident at my work place Okay, here's a story: It was a Tuesday, and I was at the coffee shop, working on some stuff. I saw this girl, Maya, who I knew from the gym, sitting alone looking upset. I went over to her, and asked if she was okay. She told me she was having issues with her boss, who was constantly taking credit for her work. It was clear she was frustrated and felt powerless. I listened to her vent, and then I asked her, "What do you want to happen?" She said she wanted her boss to stop, but she was afraid of the consequences. I understood her fear, but I also knew she deserved better. I helped her brainstorm ways to address the issue. We talked about documenting her work, having a direct conversation with her boss, and if that didn't work, going to HR. I helped her rehearse what she wanted to say, focusing on her accomplishments and the value she brought to the team. The next day, Maya texted me. She had the conversation with her boss. It wasn't easy, but she stood her ground. Her boss was surprised, but also seemed to take her seriously. Maya was proud of herself, and so was I. Seeing her take a stand and feel empowered was the best part. felt good helping someone

Story 2

I met this guy, Rohan, at a career fair. He was a bit lost, unsure about what he wanted to do. He had a passion for technology, but he wasn't sure how to turn that into a career. We talked for a while, and I asked him about his interests, skills, and what he enjoyed doing in his free time. Based on our conversation, I suggested he explore different paths within the tech industry. I told him about software development, data analysis, and even tech sales, explaining the pros and cons of each. I also mentioned the importance of internships and online courses to gain practical experience. I even helped him find some online resources and courses that matched his interests. We kept in touch, and I helped him with his resume and cover letter. A few months later, he landed an internship at a tech company. He was thrilled. I continued to offer advice and support as he navigated his internship and started his career. Seeing him grow and succeed was incredibly rewarding.

Story 3

It was a busy afternoon at the dental clinic. I was there for a routine check-up, and as I sat in the dentist's chair, Dr. Anya walked in. She was a whirlwind of energy, with a warm smile and a genuine interest in people. As she began the exam, we started chatting. I asked her what made her choose dentistry. She explained that she loved the blend of science and art, the ability to help people, and the satisfaction of creating healthy smiles. I shared that I was still figuring out my career path. She paused, looked at me, and said, "You know, it's okay not to have it all figured out. The best thing is to explore and find something that truly excites you." We talked about different fields, the importance of following your passions, and the challenges of finding the right fit. She shared her own journey, the ups and downs, and the importance of resilience. By the end of the appointment, I felt not only like I had a clean bill of dental health, but also a dose of career advice. It was a reminder

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that sometimes, the most unexpected conversations can leave the biggest impact.

JJ SUN

Story 1

What impresses me most about you is your drive of being the best you can be. You always take the initiatives to voice yourself, and for others, too, and to lead. I can still recall you are the person who started the first ever Laurier whatsapp group 'Laurier-Fall 2024' I've ever joined. Also, I enjoyed our time together as group 3 of BU655 - it had been effortless to work with and learn from you. If I am to give a suggestion, I would say to keep doing what you're doing, but do take a step back before you jump in to take the wheel. When you find yourself having to do some explaining just to get your meaning across, that means it's time to yield space to others and get them to help move the process along.

HARVINDER SINGH

Story 1

Arish has demonstrated high leadership and collaborative skills in many of the projects I was involved in with him. Arish has always been a great group member to work with. As I recall, during our first project, he was quick to gather all group members and establish a group chat, which made communication efficient for us. He is also organized, as he always likes to set up tasks and give deadlines, which makes it easier for everyone to stay on track. He is always willing to help out as well for anyone who needs help, which shows great collaborative skills. Arish maintains a good balance of keeping the meetings professional and casual, which gives everyone a chance to be less pressured. Arish has always shown its best self while being in group projects.

AKSHITA AKSHITA

Story 1

RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTWORTHY This is from the time we went on a family trip to Manali. I was still in school at the time, but arish bhaiya had started earning. While we both were studying, our parents were always busy taking care of us, earning money about our tuitions. Each year, during summer vacations, kids used to go to vacations with their family to different places, but we never could because our father had to work during summer vacations. This was the first time, as far as I remember, where we went someplace other than visiting our maternal or paternal relatives. Manali,

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basically is a hill station in India with very steep slopes on the way. Most people, who aren't native to the mountainous regions would be scared to drive to such place, but arish bhaiya has always been a skilled driver. He would watch multiple YouTube videos to watch the road, or what people do in particular situations when driving in mountains. Nonetheless, I could always worilessly sleep in the backseat whenever he drives, not only because he is a good driver and a dependable person, but also because he is my brother and I trust him endlessly and undoubtedly.

Story 2

CARING AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL This story is about when I was in kota for my high school studies. It was either my birthday or rakshabandhan (a festival between siblings) and he sent me a gift. It was a white mug with a note, that had a very sweet message written on it. I still have that note. Kota is an 18-22 hours train ride from our hometown. Before, I went to kota, it was tough to convince my family to send me there. My family, including arish bhaiya, wanted me to convince another classmate to go with me to kota because they wanted me to have someone around me, I guess. They were probably thinking of my safety, but at the time, I was a 16 year old teenager who knew what she wanted to be in life and wanted to try and clear this exam to get into as good of an institution as possible, and I hated my family for this because I still remember asking, and even trying to convince all my friends to go to kota with me to study because otherwise my family wouldn't let me. It felt like they didn't trust me. For context, kota, as a city doesn't have a very good image or history. This sadly, was also the age I started to hide my weaknesses and emotions from my family because it would be used against me if i showed it. Anyways, I got into touch with a classmate, who was also going to kota and my family let me. I was a confident person, who knew that I would give my 100%, but I wouldn't be discouraged if I don't clear this exam, because I knew my potential. But before, I went to kota, or even after I was there, it was a mess. My family was behaving as if I am nothing if I do not clear this exam. Long story short, this is where I had started to hate them but that gift kind of reminded me that they are still my family and they care about me.

Story 3

A GOOD LEADER Third story is about when we went to Triund Trek in mcleodganj. This happened in the third or last year of my undergraduate degree. This trek is where I started loving my brother again, like i used to as the little akshu loved her big brother. Connecting from story #2, I did not clear the test, that I went to kota for. Towards the end, my mental state was so bad. Hate is an understatement for the emotion I had for my family. My family did not let me pursue the career that I wanted to, and put me into something, that even a single cell in my body wasn't interested in at the time. They broke my confidence, made me feel like I was nothing because I did not clear that exam. Just to give an overview of the situation, I would talk to my family over phone, once a day for like 2-5 minutes, and I would force myself to do it, and while other kids in my college were always excited to

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go home, it felt like a task to me. A day before going on this trek, we went paragliding, and while landing, I think I put pressure on my light leg in a weird way, and I started aching. But I am a travel travelholic, and arish bhaiya knew this. I still wanted to go on this trek. We hid it from our parents, and went to the trek. Throughout the trek, I was slow because of my leg. Arish bhaiya, had trekking shoes on, and he probably wanted to go faster that he could, or could have gone way further than we did, but he kept walking with me throughly the trek. At night, in the tent, the zippers of our sleeper bags weren't proper and we didn't carry much of blankets. It was cold, and my leg hurt throughout the night, and I couldn't sleep until very late. Arish bhaiya made sure to cover my legs properly with shawl, and extra socks. He even carried me for a some distance during our trek, but he never complained once, or made me feel weak or a burden. That trek, was crucial in rebuilding my trust in him and our bond. He acted like a good leader would.

VAIBHAV SONI

Story 1

Arish, When I look back at my time in our previous company, you are one of the first people who come to mind. You were my senior, and I was just starting out — not just in that company, but in software engineering itself. It was all new to me. Coming from a different background, I had so much to learn, from technical skills to how to actually survive and grow in this industry. You played a big role in helping me with both. You didn’t just teach me a few topics (which you did, and very patiently), but you also showed me how to learn — how to think, break problems down, explore on my own, and find answers when I was stuck. That was invaluable. It gave me confidence that I could learn anything over time, and I still use that approach today. One of the most special memories I have is from when we moved to the Cessna campus of Cisco. I remember how after lunch, we used to go play badminton. That wasn’t just a game for me — it became a small, joyful routine that gave me energy for the rest of the day. You were always so motivated and excited about it, and somehow, even with the pressure of work, you never let that energy drop. Watching you manage work and life like that — handling deadlines, staying calm under pressure, and still making time for fun — taught me more than any technical guide could. I also remember how many times I used to stress about some part of the job — whether I was doing well enough, whether I was missing something important (or whether it was about the manager or his manager ;p) — and every time, you had this calm and sorted way of helping me refocus. You’d tell me what truly mattered and help me let go of the noise. You were never preachy — you shared things through real work, practical projects, and honest conversations, and that’s why it stayed with me. You’ve always seemed like someone who knows how to balance things. You made a big difference in how I started my career, and I just wanted you to know how much I appreciated that. Those days — the badminton games, the learning, the talks — are memories I’ll always carry with me.

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DI JIN

Story 1

You've demonstrated strong leadership throughout the BU610 consulting project. From the beginning, you established a clear direction, always organized in setting up regular meetings and maintaining timelines. One of your key strengths is your responsiveness; whether coordinating with clients, answering team members' questions, or resolving issues, you consistently respond quickly and thoughtfully. Your proactive communication style creates a transparent and supportive team environment. You also go out of your way to support others, regularly checking in to ensure each team member has what they need and offering help when someone is stuck or overwhelmed. Overall, your leadership has been critical to our progress, and your commitment to the project's success and the team's well-being has made a meaningful difference.

Story 2

You consistently demonstrate exceptional empathy, making you an invaluable colleague. You readily share your knowledge and insights, ensuring everyone has the information they need to succeed. Beyond this, you go out of your way to support classmates facing difficulties, offering assistance and guidance without hesitation. This genuine willingness to help others, coupled with your insightful contributions, truly highlights your best self and fosters a collaborative and supportive environment for everyone around you.

DAIYUN LIU

Story 1

During our Capstone project, I had the opportunity to work closely with Arish, who naturally emerged as our team leader. From the very beginning, he approached the project not just as a task to be completed, but as a real opportunity for learning, collaboration, and impact. We were a group of students with diverse strengths, and the challenge was to work with a real-world client, manage expectations, and deliver a data-driven solution under a tight timeline. Arish impressed me with his calm and structured way of leading. He brought clarity to complexity by breaking down the project into clear milestones and always ensured everyone knew what they were responsible for. What stood out was how he made each team member feel valued—he listened, asked for input, and gently guided discussions without ever imposing. His leadership wasn’t loud, but it was strong and steady, which made all the difference when we hit challenging moments or faced ambiguity in client feedback. He was also incredibly comfortable with digital tools—whether it was leading the analysis

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in Power BI, organizing our team's workflow on Notion, or presenting results through polished dashboards and visual storytelling. He helped us bridge the gap between technical depth and business relevance. It was through his guidance that we shifted from simply analyzing data to crafting a compelling narrative that resonated with the client. What I appreciated most was the way he communicated with the client. In our meetings, he was professional, articulate, and empathetic. He asked thoughtful questions, captured feedback accurately, and always reflected back the client's needs in a way that showed they were truly heard. Because of this, our relationship with the client was built on trust and mutual respect, which I believe is a large reason why the project was ultimately successful. Looking back, Arish wasn't just a leader who got things done—he brought out the best in us, balanced high standards with kindness, and showed what it means to lead with both competence and care.

ZEWEN ZHANG

Story 1

During my first semester, I failed a course called Strategic Management. At that time, Arish and I were classmates, but we hadn't really gotten to know each other yet. Shortly after the results came out, I happened to run into him on campus. Even though we weren't close, Arish took the initiative to talk to me. He gently asked how I was doing and shared some practical suggestions that might help me recover from the failed course—things like options for retaking it, talking to the professor, or seeking academic support. What struck me most was not just the advice, but the way he delivered it—with genuine kindness. He reassured me that failing the class didn't mean I lacked ability or potential, and reminded me that everyone struggles sometimes. It wasn't a long conversation, but in that brief exchange, I felt seen, understood, and supported. His words and demeanor left a deep impression on me. Arish showed empathy, emotional intelligence, and a willingness to uplift others—even those he wasn't particularly close to. That moment helped me move forward with more confidence, and I've carried the memory with me ever since.

Story 2

In our second semester, Arish and I were placed in the same group for a course called BUS 610: Capstone Applied Business Research. It was a challenging class where student teams acted as consultants for a real company. Our task was to identify a business issue, conduct applied research, and deliver strategic recommendations. From the start, Arish naturally stepped into the role of team leader. He took charge of organizing our efforts, ensuring that everyone had a clear understanding of the project goals and timelines. He coordinated meetings, created detailed work plans, and followed up regularly to keep things on track. Arish also served as the main point of contact between our team

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and the client, maintaining professional and timely communication to gather key information and present our findings. What impressed me most was when conflicts or confusion arose, Arish stepped in calmly to facilitate discussion and find solutions without making anyone feel dismissed. His leadership created a collaborative and respectful team environment. Through this experience, I saw Arish demonstrate strategic thinking, strong communication skills, and the ability to motivate and support a diverse team under pressure.

Story 3

One of the qualities I admire most about Arish is his exceptional time management and planning skills. Studying at Laurier is demanding, not only because of academic responsibilities, but also because of the many other commitments we juggle outside of class, such as job applications, certification exams, and post-graduation planning. During our third semester, Arish and I took an elective course together: Personnel Analytics for Managers. Once again, we were assigned to the same team. By that point in the program, many of us were feeling overwhelmed. It was a particularly busy time. We were preparing for graduation, applying for work permits, studying for professional exams, and actively job hunting. Despite all this, Arish remained calm, focused, and well-organized. He always had a clear plan. He would break down the project timeline early, anticipate potential time conflicts, and communicate proactively with the group. If someone had limited availability, he'd adjust the schedule accordingly or help redistribute tasks. Working with him felt smooth and efficient because he brought structure to the chaos.

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