

S400

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NZ Leader of Team 5

I heard about GEE through the VILP and Victoria Plus leadership programmes and thought it sounded really interesting. As it's my last year at University I want to try any opportunities I had never got around to before or never heard of.

I got a huge surprise at the first GEE meeting when Deb said that the New Zealanders were the team leaders for each team. I had thought I would be a team member and now I suddenly found myself as leader for a team! It was all a bit of a shock - it seems hilarious now but it wasn't at the time. I'm not a natural leader by nature, although I think since coming to University, participating in Victoria Plus and VILP, as well as tutoring has seen me taken leadership more in my stride. However, I still find leadership really challenging but I think that's the way it should be. With leadership you are always try to push the boundaries and get the best out of people so I think the challenging part of leadership is really just its inherent nature.

I found GEE a good way to reflect back on my leadership skills. I realised I do find it difficult to delegate tasks as I know if I do them myself I will get them done. However, I did manage to delegate tasks out to the rest of my team. The Colombians (Sebastian, Alejandra and Carlos) all came back to me with a really good report on the questions I had set them. Renee also brought some good research to me on the aboriginal people and charitable organisations. I learnt from this success that delegation need not always be thought of in a negative way like I have done in the past. You can rely on others to get things done and it is okay to ask for help. I found time management really difficult during GEE. There was a period of about 4 days when I got out of touch with my team in that last week before the deadline. I'm currently doing 5 papers, three of which are at 300-level, plus tutoring 3 classes, preparing for my taekwon-do grading exam and other volunteer activities so my schedule is extremely busy. There were some nights during this past week when I only have gotten 3 hours sleep or less but I was doing my best to carry on to the best of my ability under the circumstances to make the team run as smooth. Sebastian, I know, was starting to get worried about the deadline approaching and wondering when tasks would be delegated so that galvanised me into action very quickly. While we got everything completed by the deadline, I think I could have perhaps managed my time slightly better so I was rushing at the last few days to get everything done.

My team mostly used Base-camp and Campfire to meet. At the start of GEE I asked everyone to post up on Base-camp what their best form of communication was, but only 2 other team members did that. I then decided that I would just simply have to state the time, and place for our first meeting or we would never decide. I thought that perhaps the rest of the team were more used to that style of leadership because they responded well to it. At our first meeting on campfire I had 6 members show up for it. I was actually really surprised by this because I had got no indication on Base-camp from some of them that they were going to be there. I chose Base-camp because I knew everyone had access to it. Planning the meeting times was challenging. I used the advanced meeting planner device on World Clock to find a meeting time but it sure was difficult getting a time that was appropriate for all our

countries. One of my team members said he communicating via Facebook would be easier for him and asked whether we could communicate via Facebook instead. I was a little hesitant at first, but I ended up biting the bullet and setting up a community Facebook GEE Team 5 page (since I don't have Facebook myself). I then posting on both Facebook and Base-camp so hopefully I could accommodate everyone's needs. However I felt slightly frustrated because the team member who had asked if we could communicate via Facebook never actually posted anything on the Facebook page anyway.

I didn't have to do a lot of chasing of team members. I emailed one team member from Ghana many times and he never replied but I realised that because of his location it may have been because he didn't have access to the internet. As I prepare to hand in my team report, I have had two members who I have not been able to include on the team report because they did not contribute to the team. These two members were around at the start of GEE but have just disappeared in cyberspace since. I kept up a constant stream of emails to them reminding them that I wanted to include their names on the report but they had to make a contribution to the team otherwise it would be a disservice to those who had contributed. I knew one team member might have problems accessing the internet so I plan to wait right up to the deadline to submit the team report. This will give both team members a chance to get in contact with me.

GEE definitely got me thinking. Sebastian produced the idea of drip irrigation and the website that he and Alejandra provided really got me interested. I was amazed to find that Israel could be a major strength in agriculture despite a large proportion of its country been arid lands. Arid lands cover 47% of the Earth's surface and 60% of the world's food insecure people are living in these areas. This means that desertification and poverty are closely connected. Desertification, water scarcity and soil erosion makes it increasingly difficult to maintain agriculture in these areas and this is endangering the livelihoods of those who depend on agriculture for both food and income. The advantage of drip irrigation is that it can be used on uneven terrain and in arid conditions. It also ensures that water is used more efficiently and this subsequently reduces the rate of salinity of soil. This is why I find drip irrigation so fascinating. I think it could definitely be the way of the future for helping communities in developing countries get above the poverty line. Drip irrigation could provide them with food security so they wouldn't have to rely on hand-outs. Of course it would involve a significant investment, but the future benefits would far outweigh the costs today.

I think my team did well. The Colombians on my team made an outstanding effort and definitely get the award for the most dependent and reliable team members. They got themselves together and wrote a 3 page report on their delegated tasks and provided really good information on the finances of drip irrigation. Sebastian came up with the excellent drip irrigation idea after he had come across it in his studies. I was a little hesitant at first, but once I did some more reading I realised that his idea had real potential. Although we struggled with brain-storming ideas, I did really enjoy just bouncing ideas off each other and listening to what other people had to contribute.

Lastly, I want to say a big thank you to the rest of my team for the contributions they made- it was an excellent effort on their part. I'm really proud of the work my team members did

and our final report. I think it reflects the hard work that the team members put into it. I really enjoyed participating in GEE and I hope I might get the opportunity to do so again next year if I'm still studying.