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First Language – English.

The GEE competition was a highlight in my academic year as it gave me insight into working as a leader with people around the world. The skills I learnt in my International Business and Human Resources Management majors were put to the test when it came to working on this project. At the start, I remember being very nervous. I was worried about my performance as a leader thinking “What if I stuff this up!?” The general fear for me was looking like an idiot in front of my team. I had never done anything like this before so to be thrust into the leader's position was very daunting. But this competition helped me overcome that fear and gave me confidence in leading.

The GEE was beneficial as it helped with my over management skills, especially with time management, which was something I was never really good at! Working with a virtually fragmented team with different people doing different tasks (some of which depended on your output) helped me focus and prioritise important tasks, enabling discipline for the overall project. The competition also gave me the opportunity to contribute creatively to the brainstorming process for new ideas enabling me to think outside the square.

The competition also taught me about commitment and passion. Some of them went above and beyond the call of duty, doing more than what they were supposed to. In class, we were told that some people did this competition voluntarily, and for some, it was as their lives depended on it. This motivated me to be more committed to the project. In addition, the people who were actively contributing were the ones that made the experience worth it. We grew close as a team and this motivated me. The feeling of working with them was something to look forward to every step of the project. This was contrary to feelings at the start where I worried we wouldn't connect well because of the physical distances that separated us.

The first issue was trying to get everyone together. On the first day, I sent out emails to all my members to their Basecamp accounts as well as their personal email addresses asking them to respond with a short introductory comment and a few ideas. I thought all the members would respond to my email (both via Basecamp or their personal addresses) a day after the GEE started. I was slightly worried having seen that four of my members had not been active in a while. Furthermore, some had been on Basecamp since my email to them but had not responded.

The next issue was trying to get people to contribute and actively participate. I asked them to upload them on Basecamp by March 26. I had not received anything for days. It wasn't until the night of Monday 28th March (NZT) that I received the first ideas from Paul Mayuyu in the Philippines. Soon, more ideas followed from a few but were not as inspiring presenting very vague one-worded ideas like ‘Education’ and ‘Healthcare.’

Although there were some really committed members, there were some that weren't as obliging. Four members in my team were not as helpful as the others. A lot of emails and documents were uploaded onto Basecamp and some did not spare the effort to comment or reply. It was really frustrating and disrespectful and sometimes it felt like you were not being taken seriously.

I discovered that as I leader, I wanted everyone to be happy and work well together, but at the same time, I learnt that I was really soft and did not like confrontation. I needed to change that. An example

was when I had to confront members who did not contribute or were not actively participating. I sent a follow up email which said that if they no longer participated or remained inactive during the project, they would be excluded. This was difficult as I didn't want to exclude anyone from the group and wanted everyone to be involved. But then again, they didn't make any effort to contribute, so it was for the best that I let them go. Trying to delegate tasks or push my members to meet deadlines was something I was laissez-faire about. I didn't want to be seen as pushy but I had to persevere with my semi-mean streak!

Multicultural and technical communication was a specific lecture topic. We decided to use Basecamp as the main tool of communication. The software was very useful offering a variety of functions that helped you get organised. For example, 'the milestones' kept track of deadlines and upon completion would allow you to check off the task. The Campfire chat made communication easy as members could discuss issues then and there. We decided not to use Skype as it was too much of a hassle and some people did not have access to it. In regards to multi-cultural communication, all of my team members had excellent English skills so communication was not a problem further facilitating the ease of communication.

There were however moments of extreme frustration. For example, I scheduled a meeting for April 3rd on Campfire to discuss our issues. Four members did not participate in the initial Campfire Chat meeting without any prior notification. Some had not been on Basecamp for days at a time, and when active, didn't bother to comment or send a message or contribute to anything. Some were even rude enough to ask what to do when instructions were given in emails. The members who did not actively participate were the ones who hindered the progress of the report.

Despite dealing with some unsavoury characters, I was blessed to have some really committed members in the team. A special mention to Richard Ruddenklau who joined the competition a week after the commencement, and despite this, managed to really commit to the competition and its aspects. With the remaining committed members of the team, we developed group synergy working really well. We worked under a peer review basis where we each evaluated our work. Towards the compiling of the report, we all had a hand at touching up the report.

Whether we win the competition or not is not my greatest concern, but what I feel is more important is the knowledge that I have taken away from this competition and what I have learnt. The competition was a wonderful overwhelming experience and a great way to further my own interests in international business and indigenous development.