

s445 Zandra Johansson Journal New Zealand (Team 42) English as a second language

I am originally from Sweden and moved to New Zealand in 2009 after spending a year travelling and exploring the country. I ended up falling in love with the country and found the love of my life. As difficult as it was to leave family and friends back at home, it was the best decision I have ever taken. I have grown as a person and found a lifestyle I really enjoy. I might have lived in a developed country with all the possible benefits of great schools, opportunities to go to University etc, but that does not mean that I had an easy upbringing. I was brought up with always being in the shadow of everyone else. For a while I thought my purpose in life was to help others and be a shoulder to cry on when life was tough for others. I got really good at listening to people and people's stories and it made me happy that for once, even for a minute, feel that I was somebody else, had a purpose in life to help others. As I left school I started to meet new people that thought me that I was important and that people were actually listening and caring about me. I learnt to stand up for myself and travelling really helped me to connect with myself again and that's when I meet my partner. In the last year or so after have settled down in New Zealand with my partner, friends and found the life I never could have dreamed of having, I have started to feel like something is missing in my life, something that is holding me back.

When I started this project I realised that what I missed the most was to be around people and to hear their stories and backgrounds. It made me understand that people and their passions, life stories and personalities is what makes me happy. I might not be the best entrepreneur or innovator but I do believe in people and people make me passionate about life. So this project has really helped me find my way back to my passion, what really held me back and what really makes me motivated in life.

My team and my team members have really helped me to understand that my passion and mission in life is to care for others. I have made friends for life and found back to my roots. Even though there were times when I was about to pull my hair out during the project, I really enjoy sharing ideas and insights. Communication is very different from country to country and the hardest thing I found was to find the balance between involving people and still be a leader. Some of my team members were very happy to share ideas and be involved where as others were just waiting for me to tell them what to do. I have learnt that creativity and ideas does not just happen and that you cannot force people to create ideas or come up with solutions. But what you can do is provide them with the tools to be able reach the goal. When I realised this and changed my approach and thinking process, I found that people were more responsive to me too. Being a leader has really put me to the test in so many ways and even though I have managed teams before, it was very different manage such a diverse team.

I spent many long nights and early mornings just emailing and chatting to my team members and monitoring if there were any questions or anything else they needed help with. I found that using basecamp was great in the beginning of the project where everyone could share ideas, thoughts and get to know each other. However I found that I could be much more personal and more open with people through Facebook, Skype and email. I think that Skype, Facebook and email really helped me and my team build trust for each other and also be able to trust each other and not be afraid of asking for help. So overall this experience has really been a great opportunity for me to learn more about leadership, how hard it could be, but also how rewarding it could be to work with people across the world.