

Guy Davidson, leader of team 38

Wow. What a journey. When I signed up for MGMT 317 I had absolutely no idea that we would be doing a competition like GEEBIZ. When we were first made aware of it in our first lectures I was apprehensive and a little nervous – how was I going to lead a team of international people? How could I make a business that is both profitable AND helps one of the UNDP Millennium Goals? What if people in my team were way smarter or more confident than me? These questions and many more were swirling around in my head going in to the competition, but as soon as we began and first made contact on May 1st (it seems so long ago now!) I knew I had nothing to worry about – I knew our team was going to be great!

In the beginning I made contact with everyone through email and hunted them down on Facebook to add them as friends. When I woke up on the second day I found one of my Colombians – Pabon (Santiago) – had already set up a Facebook group. At first I felt a little threatened as I thought this could be the beginning of a power struggle for leader status, but it didn't take me long to realize that Pabon was just a really helpful “parce” that was just trying to do the best he could for the team.

We then got to know each other a bit better through the great idea of Dani and Pabon to share intimate things to help get a more family feel, such as hobbies, videos of our home towns and childhood photos. Within the first week we had all put forward three ideas each, and did two rounds of voting to get our final idea that we were going to write the business proposal for, and even though all the ideas were outstanding, my Finnish team member Meri (who is living/studying in Scotland) had the winning idea. We also decided to incorporate Ananaya and Afroza's idea (the Bangladeshi's) into Meri's idea to enhance it and make our final idea that much better.

I then delegated out sections of the report for each person to write – and this is where I made my first and only mistakes. The first mistake I made was not thinking about the study backgrounds everyone was from when assigning them sections to write. Ananya and Afroza came back to me very quickly with a draft for the marketing section saying they had never done marketing and wanted to check if they were on the right track. I could see they were putting in a lot of hard work, but marketing obviously wasn't a strength of theirs so, seeing they had studied economics, I suggested they give me the marketing to write, and I give them the financial section. Best decision I made all competition. The financial statements they came back with BLEW MY MIND! I was so impressed with them, and it was such a shame that some of the statements had to be left out due to the page limit.

My second mistake was assuming everyone would be “sweet as mate” with the management style I was displaying by handing out individual parts of the journal to write, then coming back to collaborate on them afterwards. After about three days Dani posted on Facebook saying how she was concerned about the lack of organisation and communication we were having. This shocked me at first, because being a New Zealander I assumed everyone would be fine with writing individually for a few days. This was a cultural mistake as I learned that Colombia is a very hierarchical society, and Colombians love a leader that is constantly providing strong direction. All it took was one very detailed reply about my expectations when delegating sections to everyone, and how I had envisioned we would proceed (which again I had assumed everyone would have just known what I was thinking for some reason...) and that's all it took, not long after everyone's write ups started flowing in and the business proposal came together!

I would like to make a special mention to our Nigerian teammate Mene who moved to another city just for the GEEBIZ competition so that he could access the internet more readily to get in contact with us all, that was a massive sacrifice and definitely did not go unnoticed!

This has been and absolutely incredible journey, and the business proposal was just a by-product. I have learnt so much about international people and their cultures, and how to lead an international team. I feel very close with all my team members and love and appreciate them for all their hard work, dedication and for making leading team 38 so easy for me! I know I have made lifelong friends.