

GLOBAL ENTERPRISE EXPERIENCE JOURNAL

TEAM 42: STUDENT - ENTREPRENEUR FINANCE NETWORK

My first experience of the GEE was, well, interesting. When I was first told I would be participating the GEE for my class at university I was excited, the opportunity to meet new people, learn about their cultures and work with them to produce something was really appealing to me. But at the same time, I was apprehensive, I knew that different countries meant different time zones and different languages; different cultures meant potential misunderstanding and conflict at every turn. I had no idea how it was going to play out.

I'm generally a reasonably organized person, so when I'm nervous about something I get organized; I put in place a plan to do what I need to. So at the beginning of the GEE, I sat down and I got organized. I studied bios, I studied past proposals, I studied time zones – I even made little charts with what time it was in my team members' countries compared to my own. Looking at the pin board next to my computer now, I see a schedule that I printed out on day one; ambitious would be one adjective to describe it, naive would be another – but I think laughable would be most appropriate. Back then, twenty two days seemed like plenty time. Five days for creativity and to decide on an idea? More like twelve days. Seven days for research? Try one day. Seven days to write the proposal? Closer to ten days (although seven were wasted). Four days to edit and proof the proposal? Try an hour – maybe two.

At the beginning, I wondered how I could inspire my team. What could I do to get the best out of them? What should I do to encourage them to contribute and collaborate with one another? How could I make them produce a sound business proposal? So I thought about it, I thought about what makes **me** work hard? ... how ignorant was I.

I decided that to have my team perform I just had to give them the resources and the encouragement that I would want, and then naturally everybody would collaborate and produce something great. I'd like to say I learnt quickly that leading a team was not as simple as just creating the environment I like to work in for them, but I didn't. It took me a while. Asking them to 'get creative' and 'share their ideas' was very different to telling them to come up with two ideas, by **this** time, on **this** day when we would share and discuss them, before **deciding** on one to proceed with. But I did learn, and we got their eventually – although it was a pity half the contest had slipped through our hands.

We did start getting some traction, and things started to happen, but setting a deadline for six more days away meant things still happened slow – lesson learnt. Some team members started taking initiative and proactively completing work before deadlines, others worked right up to and even beyond deadlines – one even disappeared for a week (although I think spending that week in hospital is a reasonable excuse). I set the deadline for the first draft of the proposal for five days before the end of the competition, although the first draft wasn't fully completed until about 24 hours before the deadline.

Looking back, I feel as though I should be frustrated that it took so long to produce our proposal. We over stepped every single dead line that we set, surely that's bad! But no, I actually feel proud. Sure, we were 'creative' for far too long, we didn't really spend any time researching, and even though we spent ten days writing the proposal about seven of those days were sitting on our hands, 'thinking' about what we would write.

So what do I have to be proud about? 72 hours. These last three days of the competition, Team 42 rallied, and we rallied hard. 3pm, 3am, midday, midnight it didn't really matter, for these 72 hours we have dug deep and together, we produced something that I am proud of.

As a team leader, I was incredibly lucky. My team only had one team member who didn't show up, a great turn out compared to other teams missing as many as five. Not only that, but my team was full of some of the smartest, hardest working men and women I could've hoped for. I am thankful, because even though I led them astray at times, and it took us far too long to really get traction we produced something together which I am ecstatic to put my name on and submit as our proposal for the Global Enterprise Experience.

Stoked As.

Jake McInteer