

## HANNAH ANGUS – TEAM 39 LEADER

And exhale. I can finally breathe again. It has all finished and I feel like I am in a state of limbo and the last three weeks have flown by in a blur. I think time stopped in the last three weeks as although I had other commitments, projects, and work – my entire life became GEEBIZ. Staying up until 3:00am on a regular basis and checking my email, Facebook and Google Documents as often as possible became a priority. It would roughly translate into checking every hour or so and in the last two to three days every 20 minutes or less. My life took the backseat. I could not fail my team as the leader.

Trying to effectively summarise this experience is near impossible, I have learnt so much about working with other cultures, managing a team spread out across the world, problem solving, fostering creativity and ultimately about myself. The Global Enterprise Experience was my first time leading a team and it has definitely been a learning process. Everything I had read, learnt in class and furiously made notes on in order to be as prepared as possible immediately went out the window. There is no rule book or “how to...” I needed to find my feet, try out different things and work out my own leadership style.

Creativity and leadership, although I have been told they are intertwined, it was not until I had experienced it, that I knew it. Whether it is to create a project, fix a problem, or how to work effectively with others, creativity is an integral aspect of effective leadership. It is also crucial to be respectful of others and be sensitive to their various backgrounds. We have been a great team, despite some challenges and I am amazed at all that has been contributed and achieved in such a short space of time.

Facebook was our primary form of communication which worked incredibly well. Everyone had access, it was a fast and everything was recorded which could be referred to if necessary. When it came to writing the report, we used Google Documents. I am not sure I would use it again. Some of my team had trouble accessing it and it was always interesting when I was halfway through editing a sentence or paragraph and one of my team from Colombia or Dunedin was also working on the same area. Google would even get confused! Next time, I think I would ask everyone to email me their section and take it from there.

After the initial responses and the “let’s win this” attitude from many, it was often difficult to get some people talking and sharing ideas. To overcome this I posted several links to foster creativity and motivate the team, I also posted some of my ideas (ridiculous ones included!), and I let everyone know that they were welcome to message me directly and I would share their ideas in confidence. The ideas that everyone eventually shared were great and all had so much potential.

All of my team were from such a variety of cultures and personal experiences. As I read through each of their bios, I was emotionally moved by some of what they had experienced and it was then that I realised I had no right to complain about my obviously first world problems. Working with people from different cultural backgrounds has given me a new awareness of cultural differences and what others have experienced.

We held several really productive meetings pushing the boundaries of ideas and generating new ideas from ideas put forward. One aspect I found difficult was that although I would set a time and attach a link with the time it would be in my team members respective locations, many would still be significantly late or just not turn up at all. I can be a stickler for punctuality and pride myself on being organised. I found I needed to remind some of my team of our meetings but I also learnt that I needed to be patient and tolerant.

My team! Brooke in Dunedin has been spectacular. She had the ability to diffuse tension and also had a great grasp on what we needed to achieve in this experience. She contributed so much and has been an amazing 2<sup>nd</sup> in command. Linda and Kamala in Bangladesh had some amazing insights into the lives of women in Sri Lanka which was eye-opening and I admired their ambition to empower women in developing countries. Patrick in Scotland, was very much “seen and not heard from” during the majority of this experience which did create difficulties at times. I kept emailing him to make sure everything is ok but would often not hear back and when I did hear from him, he said he had exams and would contribute afterwards. Eventually he did contribute to the proposal and did all the finances. This was really great and his contribution was very well received by my team who had all noticed

his absence. Daniela and Maria from Colombia had great ideas and although they would sometimes sit back in the meeting, when they did contribute, it was invaluable.

I truly loved the passion everyone had for our project idea, however, Mathias from Uganda (whose idea we chose), felt possession of it and sometimes became disrespectful in how he addressed members of the team. I messaged him directly, reminding him of our goal and that we were a team. I am not sure he intended to be disrespectful but I asked him to be more careful. Furthermore, it was pointed out to me by one of my team that he had also copied word-for-word from a website his contribution to the report. After confronting Mathias on this, it was quite difficult to help him to understand why this was wrong and unacceptable. To solve this problem, I sent out a group email to the team explaining plagiarism and academic integrity. It was hard to keep the email upbeat, non-judgemental but also tough. I have found that the general response to this was positive and it meant that we could all check each other's work (a problem shared, is a problem halved – thanks Deb!). Although I am still not sure Mathias understands that it is not ok, I know I did all I could to try to solve this tricky situation.

One of the best moments during this experience that really stands out, was when we as a team were trying to come up with a name for our project. We had shared ideas before, but it was at this moment that I truly saw the creativity of my team and everyone genuinely enjoying themselves, having a laugh and being crazy. It was amazing watching it all unfold – and all on Facebook chat! Even now as I reflect upon it, I smile and laugh to myself. This time of fun and laughter could not have come at a better time, we were all so stressed trying to complete our proposal, and it helped to relieve the tension and pressure.

It is difficult to comprehend that this experience has finished, the last three weeks have been phenomenal. There have certainly been challenges but also lots of laughter, and amazing teamwork. The numbers of project ideas are endless and this experience is one that I would sign up for again in a heartbeat and I know it would not be the same. The people I have worked with have really made this experience great. Although the Global Enterprise Experience is technically finished, I am friends with all of my team on Facebook and hope to keep in contact with everyone as we have all formed such a connection during this experience.

***“THE SKY IS THE LIMIT. YOU NEVER HAVE THE SAME EXPERIENCE TWICE”***

**– FRANK MCCOURT**