

The experience for me was much unexpected, unlike what I had imagined. The biggest challenge was to build the team. Building the team spirit needs to be conducted even before starting any group work, which takes normal groups a long time to do even with physical availability, not to mention having only virtual communication and time zone difference. I would like to talk about the valuable lessons I learned about teamwork during this wonderful experience.

First attempts to build the team – Start with similarities

Right from the start, our leader James set a good tone of using email to contact with the group, introducing ourselves, our ideas to start the work, ideas about how we communicate, etc. Then, Ikenna and some others suggested Skyping and we added each other, but not much group interaction was conducted through Skype due to time difference. Trello came along as my idea of an interconnected communication of work and management. Although 90% of the group participated at first, Trello failed too because it was not the tool everyone had been using already but Facebook, surprisingly, is the most used platform as everyone checks their Facebook frequently. I learned that the tool to connect people is to start from similarities, either something most of the group is living with like the tool of communication or the interests.

Picking the right idea costs the most amount of time

Yes, indeed. It took us 3/4 of the total allotted time for everything before actually conduct researching on the idea and writing the business proposal: (1) gathering three ideas from each person, (2) voting the most convincing great idea of Darshit, (3) realizing the chosen idea is not appropriate with the purpose of benefiting youth and children, (4) voting to pick another one or stay, (5) agreeing on the other idea of Jennifer for the business proposal.

The key to doing anything is to start doing it

No matter how small or how bad the start is, as long as it still keeps going, we will make it. That's the most important lesson I learned from working with this multicultural group. Everything seemed so challenging and discouraging when everyone is not available and too busy, but as soon as the first person started posting the research and the writing so far, the discussions attracted everyone's attention as there was something to start with. In the beginning, there is almost always a time of delaying and waiting for something, someone to start. The essential part is to start. Anything will be eligible for being the first brick, or grain of sand, to build the most magnificent architecture of the world.

Personal connections build smooth teamwork

At the beginning, most people expect to divide the work and each person only has to take care of his or her business. However, that is only group work. Teamwork is about connecting to each one another with support, help, understanding, and motivating when things get hard. Teamwork is about connections between people, and it starts when everyone reaching out to one another personally, like friends, not just only group talk, work talk, or business talk. I learned that the success of any group work depends on how much teamwork there is, i.e. how much personal connections.

Lastly, everyone deserves appreciation

Appreciation boosts up everyone's mood, no matter how small a 'thank you!' or 'great job!' is. I'm grateful that my team is very supportive. At the end of the day, everyone tries his/her best and, believe it or not, positive feedback plays as a source of energy when things go wrong. After all, we are supposed to be here with and for each other. Some people distinguish 'work' and 'life', or 'fun'. I think life has work, and work is fun, when you are with the team. Real work is when you are in a crazy party and you are still extra-excited thinking about your work. It starts with a positive attitude about work, and teamwork. Cheers to everyone!