

GEE Group 13
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Participating in the 2005 Global Enterprise Experience has been a really eye-opening venture. Of course one expects certain difficulties to arise from this type of cross-cultural undertaking, especially with regards to language, work ethic and time differences. It is in the valuable lessons learnt and knowledge gained that the GEE really comes into its own. From the perspective of a student from South Africa, a country that is in the relatively early stages of emerging into the global economy, much of what the GEE was about, was incredibly pertinent to us. The underpinning notion of unity in diversity is a concept that is well-embodied by the South African experience in our move towards a democratic "rainbow nation" over the last 10 years.

One cannot however, dismiss the trivial and expected difficulties indicated above quite so lightly, it certainly was not easy balancing a full university workload and keeping up with midnight meetings. In a sense, the variations in work ethic also provided for some harrowing last few days (perhaps even hours). South Africans by nature tend to be very laid back, and my counterpart will most definitely agree that we fall quite comfortably into that stereotype. As such, we tend to "leave things to the last minute", adding greatly of course to the stress levels of our international counterparts. In the end however, it all came together quite successfully and professionally, and we certainly are very proud of our concept and presentation. Surprisingly it was the members from "deepest, darkest Africa" that had the better grasp of the English language so it was left to us to do most of the final editing and compiling, something we were quite happy to do.

Our team members were really in themselves quite unique and the whole experience reflected what our proposal was all about. Briefly, our proposal dealt with ways in which challenges that globalization brings about can be alleviated. As we all came from different countries and had different cultural backgrounds, we brought with us our own unique solutions to problems we encountered. What was quite surprising was not just the differences we encountered, but more so the similarities. It seems a sense of humor goes a long way no matter what language one speaks, and the ability to communicate one's ideas no matter what one's first language may be, is always aided by a joke or two. In addition to the universality of humor, we also found that we were able to agree on certain universal maxims regarding the manner in which a business should operate and the manner in which a proposal should be drawn up. It was in the details that our diversity was able to provide a rich source of ideas and opinions. As a proud South African it gave me great pleasure to be able to share my experiences and the experiences of my country with students from the rest of the world.

If one takes a step back and really considers just what such a competition entails, one is left with a real feeling of awe and humility. It certainly is incredible that technology has brought people from all over the world to a point where we can simply log on to a computer and communicate in real time, not just via text, but via voice and video as well. The ease with which we were able to communicate ideas and upload files was really quite invaluable. I honestly don't believe such a competition would even be plausible without the advent of Internet communications.

I would like to thank those involved in organizing the GEE competition this year, it has truly been a wonderful experience and has given me the opportunity to make not just acquaintances, but hopefully long-lasting friendships. The ideas and concepts that have emerged will most certainly stay with me as I pursue a career in international business, and will no doubt enrich my approach to global business in general. In fact, I feel quite privileged to have been given the opportunity to be made aware of these so-called holistic business principles before I enter the real market. This can only count in my favour. Thank you again.