

s364, Jessica Ch'ng Hui Ting, first language speaker, New Zealand

What an intense three weeks it has been! When I first joined this contest, I did it because I was attracted to the idea of being a part of a global team working on a common issue, meeting new people and learning from different cultures. I never dreamed that I would actually have to lead! I only learnt that I had been assigned to lead a group the day before the competition. This made me very anxious because I had no formal experience in business and was fearful that this would be an impediment in inspiring the team's confidence in me.

I spent the first week trying to get everyone to introduce themselves and brainstorm for ideas. I never appreciated how difficult it was to be creative! One of my more motivated team members, Bora, proposed using cashew nut farming to aid the indigenous people in Cambodia. Initially, I was hesitant of accepting his idea as the majority of the team were from Spanish speaking countries and may not be as enthusiastic as he was about his idea. However, as the contest deadline grew nearer and no one seemed to contest or were interested in contesting his idea, I had to make the decision to move on and start working on his idea.

With less than two weeks to the deadline and still receiving little to no responses from the team with the exception of Bora, I finally wrote a firm letter asking for everyone's commitment to the team. I explained what strengths they had listed in their bios that I hoped they could contribute to the team, asked them to at least inform me of their situation and finally highlighted how Bora and I were just as busy as they were. I have Deb's leaders' support sessions to thank for the inspiration for that letter. I finally got responses, feedback and explanations of disappearances from the team. We were a team again!

The last week in the contest was a huge rush of sourcing for information and just writing the report. As it became more and more difficult to organize group meetings, what I found useful was to learn which online instant messenger everyone was most comfortable with and contact each of my members personally on it. I learnt to empathize that not everyone had the time to log onto Basecamp to respond, so I had to find them on the instant messenger instead. This way, I was able to get valuable contributions to the project even from the less committed members. I also found it useful to have everyone using Googledocs to work on the report together. It was very motivating for us to see the report being continuously modified and added to.

Finally, working on the business proposal was an educational experience! I was already aware of some of the injustices and issues suffered by indigenous communities all over the world. However, this contest challenged me to actually take one of those seemingly insolvable issues and break it down into smaller components that I could actually do something about. The more I researched on possible solutions, the more impressed I became with the many creative and practical endeavours already used. It was also very exciting to work out all the practical steps needed to make our business proposal successful in helping our target community.

By the end of the contest, I had long forgotten my initial fear of being unable to lead an international team in a field I was unfamiliar with. It is possible to lead a team without needing to be the expert on everything because it is your team members' knowledge and

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skills that should complement each other. Now, not only have I gained a repertoire of possible ideas for solving social issues, I also know a lot more about planning a business and as a bonus, have gained lifelong friends in the process. Lastly, I am very grateful to the Global Enterprise Experience for showing me that some global issues are not as impossible to overcome as they may seem.