

## Global Enterprise Experience (GEE) Journal

I was incredibly nervous in the lead up to this exercise and now here we are, it is all over and I can go back to my normal sleep patterns! Personally, I prefer structure and organisation so for the duration of this competition, I tried to create as much of that as possible for my team so that expectations and deadlines were clear for every one. The familiar comment of “no matter how organised you are, it never goes to plan” with respect to this exercise, now resonates very strongly with me upon my reflection of the whole experience.

With the adaptation of a detailed action plan, containing lots of contingencies surrounding the potential management of any issues should they arise, and a friendly and motivating introductory letter with a greeting in each participant’s native language, we were ready to begin. Given all of the academic resources the New Zealand students had been given prior to the launch of the exercise, I thought it might also be worthwhile trying to stimulate some social interaction at the least! A new message was created on the second day with the subject line “Chat” in which I proceeded to write all about my day in New Zealand. To this bait, I got a bite!

Next, a “Questionnaire” was uploaded in order to gain more information about each participant that could be useful during the exercise, and I was happy to see these completed. There was a strong acceptance of my position as the leader, but to an extent I was not expecting – the team were hesitant to make any kind of decision without my lead. As such it was important to make sure decisions were made quickly and communicated to all, with a brief form of consultation within a limited time frame to still encourage members to have their say.

The situation was unrealistic in terms of a professional working context in that there were no specific accountabilities typical of an employment situation. This definitely made things more difficult when trying to encourage individual inputs from each of the team members. However, this stimulated much more opportunity for creativity to work around the difficult situation, for example, the creation of a ‘prioritisation tool’ to help the group to choose a concept from the range of ideas that were put forward. Transparency in decision making created focus on the task at hand, and made sure everyone felt empowered to be having an influence in our work together, a very important part of encouraging participation. Unfortunately it seems that deadlines were not important to anyone other than my Colombian team member – which really surprised me!

With reference to the focus of the competition, it was very interesting to note the confusion surrounding what is termed a developed vs. developing country. There seemed to be a certain level of clarity that had to be worked through. What may have been lacking in understanding was certainly not lacking in enthusiasm! All participants had a passion for the development and future success of their respective countries. It was fantastic to see the level of excitement and enthusiasm for concepts that may have had the potential to develop local infrastructure or increase employment within their home countries, particularly Nigeria.

While naturally, given my humble “kiwi” upbringing I was at first hesitant in my potential to lead an international team, I emerged from the experience much more confident in my ability to adapt quickly to a range of different challenges – specifically, developing an effective working understanding of the different cultures of my team members. Lastly, the experience has left me with a strong appreciation for the quality of education we receive in New Zealand, which is often taken for granted. In post-GEE reflection, and with this renewed appreciation, it really does come as no surprise that New Zealand punches well above its weight in producing high quality, forward thinking, and entrepreneurial leaders in a multitude of different disciplines.