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New Zealand
English 1st language

The Global Enterprise Experience. A business competition requiring an entrepreneurial spirit and teamwork. Exciting. I have competed in a few before and while there are always challenges, this one looked fairly simple. Only a report. What could be difficult about that?

Before the GEE launch I anticipated the course to be fairly straight forward and I wanted some experience communicating internationally hoping one day to have a career in the art world. Day one of GEE I made first point of contact to the team making sure we were all on the same page. I quickly recognized it took 48 hours to generate a response from our whole team, minus one, still waiting on them. I began to anticipate this may be harder than I thought.

It took me a while to get adjusted to the language barrier. It was interesting being the only person with English as the first language. In an effort to get to know each other profile stalking was all go and team spirit spread by 'likes' and smiley faces, even if in real life we had a confused face. A huge credit to my teammates, I have been learning a language myself for eight years and I still struggle with *bonjour*. I have great appreciation for the courage it must have taken the team to put forward their thoughts.

I had to change the way I asked questions to draw out a response from all team members about the task at hand. I set deadlines after the first week as just asking for ideas was getting us nowhere. I found asking Facebook questions and voting effective. Internet difficulties and delayed response times meant video conferencing was impossible and scheduled Facebook chat meetings consisted of one or two team members.

Though sharing my opinion comes fairly easily to me, I had to be careful to leave the platform open for the team to comment or they would adopt what I had said, like my comment and leave it at that. So I requested an initial research report from each member on the problem of alcohol and drugs in their own country. It was awesome to see what it is like for students just like me around the globe when it is not a news headline or stereotypical view that reaches NZ. It also opened up a dialogue between myself and my friends at University about our attitudes toward drinking, which are quite frankly not that great. I thought we were nowhere near as bad as youth overseas, all overdramatised. But the results of our investigation proved otherwise. Primarily the reports helped identify the skill set of each person in question interpretation and ability to produce a report. Also to get some dialogue going even if it was in the form of research. It was extremely valuable as it set the tone for our business plan. More importantly it helped to inform me how to facilitate interpersonal communication and my leadership style from that point on.

We divided business plan sections into equal parts. When someone required help I would first post the question publicly on our page in case others had the same question. Often the deadlines I had set would not be met, but this was ok, just a little less sleep for me thanks to the time difference! I think General Colin Powell's attitude toward leadership summed up writing the report, "The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them."

And that day has finally come. Team spirit is very high, everyone is proud of their achievement. Using emotive language was difficult for some members so to see their positive comments is very rewarding. I am pleased I was given this opportunity to be faced with the leadership challenges of both the language barrier and technology platform. I have learned the systems, processes and skills I had developed in the past severely needed reworked to be successful in this different context. I hope team 24 has enjoyed the business experience and making new friends. The challenge of being a global leader has been gratifying and I will take everything I have learned with me into the future. It has been a fantastic competition that lends valuable skills a textbook never could. I think the most important thing I have learned is to be patient, and if at first you don't succeed, try and try again!