

If I had to choose one word to describe my Global Enterprise Experience, it would be *enlightening*. I am an exchange student from Texas and had absolutely no idea what I was getting myself into when I signed up for Management 317 at Victoria University. On the first day of class, Deb explained how the course is intended to teach us to be innovators, creators, leaders and influencers. Little did I know I would be learning these things on the front lines! When I heard about the Global Enterprise Experience (and that I would be in charge of leading a team) I felt more than slightly overwhelmed. However, I knew this opportunity was too great to pass up and that it would be unlike anything I had experienced at my home university.

Through this competition, I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with incredible people. I did not expect to have built friendships with several of my team members in such a short amount of time. Pratik and I even half joked about actually going into business together one day. We often got into discussions about our separate countries, cultures, economies, social structures, etc. Several of my team mates would poke fun at my lack of geography knowledge and at one point said they would make the report simple so “even a Yankee (meaning me) can understand it!” I was incredibly humbled by the kind emails I received from my team mates after my initial launch letter. Throughout this project, I have also been struck by the high level of respect my teammates had for me. I never dealt with any gender issues and they honestly respected my opinion.

I was immensely impressed by the work ethic of my team. Most of them jumped right in to the project and persevered even as we struggled to decide on our business and work out the necessary details. Pratik and Eerik went particularly above and beyond to ensure our project was a success. Pratik worked extremely hard to gather primary research from individuals in Mumbai where our project is set. He interviewed several people and also verified our work with his professors. I am tremendously grateful for his dedication. Eerik set up our facebook page and had almost everyone on it before I could even friend everyone. Likewise Melanie and Liam were available to complete tasks at the drop of a hat. Diego and Javier put in quite a bit of work on the initial economics of our project. Diego was the first person on the team to message me and urged we begin research right away.

However, I did struggle in various ways as a leader. The time difference between Lima and Wellington was difficult and although I put in a lot of late nights, I often was unable to get in touch with Diego and Javier. When I did speak with Javier and Diego, they assured me they could handle the financial aspect of our project. They told me they had looked at past reports and what we had to do did not seem difficult. However, I made the mistake of not following up with them enough and providing enough direction. In the end, the rest of the team had to pull together the financial information. This “failure” taught me again how vital communication is, especially when working with a team across five time zones. Through this experience, I learned a lot about myself as a leader. Serving in a formal leadership position certainly highlighted my strengths and weaknesses. I faced some unique challenges during the second week of the competition when my computer crashed, but I managed to work around it.

My team struggled for a while to decide on our business topic. At times I felt we were moving at a glacial pace. In the future, I will work to better guide my team through the brainstorming process and delegate tasks when needed. I often feel I am lacking in this area, so I struggled to guide my team through this in a timely manner. We ended up having to overhaul some ideas and work extra hard to make up for lost time. In the end, we ended up discussing several different ideas and created a survey to see which one was the best. The results seemed a bit inconclusive and I learned that it is often more effective to simply speak to individual team members and gauge their opinion. In the future, I will also put more thought into the survey criteria and hopefully receive better results.

Through this competition, I have become more skilled with various networking technologies. I have created more Google docs in the past month than I had in my entire life previously. I also learned the value of websites such as timeanddate.com and trello.com. I know these will be valuable to me in the future when coordinating across time zones.

There were instances over the past three weeks when I wondered if members of my team (including myself) were working too hard. However, through our efforts I know we all learned a lot about what it takes to plan and execute a business proposal. I believe we thoroughly addressed every detail of our business and it has the potential to actually be implemented. We developed every aspect of it to the best of our abilities and worked to get highly accurate information. Therefore, throughout the project, I was less concerned with winning than putting together a fabulous proposal. It took us a while to develop our idea and I felt I was running a marathon to make it come together, but I am proud of our proposal. Overall, this was an absolutely life changing experience. I will carry home with me nuggets of wisdom which will aid me as a leader and team member in the future.

Cheers,

Lauren Gainer
New Zealand
866s
English 1st language

Below is one of the facebook posts I sent to my team to ensure they had all the information they needed.

(April 2, 2014)

Hey guys,

I know this is a long post, but I hope it will be helpful for you. I have tried to speak directly to everyone about dividing up the work but if you have any concerns about it please message me. Although we each have our own responsibilities, we are still writing one report and it must be unified. Therefore, please keep in touch with everyone on Facebook each day and ask questions. I will check in with you a lot over the next two weeks to make sure everyone has the resources and information they need.

Here is the google doc outlining the parts of the report we are each responsible for researching and writing. It follows the rubric used by the judges. I have written a few phrases under each category to elaborate:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tzC4I03uNDF7K7Pm6_Sga4VsQUIwNL7ijLrxaBrFLMY/edit?usp=sharing

Here is a link to past contest proposals and whether or not they won an award. It should help guide you in what you need to research and write:

http://www.geebiz.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15&Itemid=152

I have invited you all to our team dropbox. There you will find contest rules, the rubric/marksheet used by the judges, and information about the one-page journal entry you must all submit with the proposal at the end.

Our proposal is now due in 14 days. I will be editing the final draft and need your parts to me by April 14th.

I am excited to work with you all--each of you have such unique talents and experiences which add incredible value to our team. I know you all have other pulls on your time and I admire your willingness to step up to this challenge. The impact our business could have on the lives of children is well worth the effort! Here's to a great two weeks!

Cheers,
Lauren