

GLOBAL ENTERPRISE EXPERIENCE SUMMARY REFLECTION

The Global Enterprise Experience has taught me many things about myself as a leader and a person. It has opened my eyes to skills and knowledge I was not aware of, and it has provided me with new skills and knowledge that I did not have going into this competition.

I was feeling very optimistic and positive about this challenge, and was quite excited to see what we could do together. After sending out a launch letter to my members, as it was my assigned role as a leader, I immediately thought: "have they seen my email? When will they see it and reply? Why have they not replied yet? My New Zealand team member has surely seen my email, because she added me on Facebook; why has she not replied?" Then it hit me that they would most likely reply in their afternoon, and maybe some of them had trouble accessing internet. So I decided to be a bit more patient. As the leader I constantly felt the pressure of being one step ahead of everyone else, and constantly thought of what to do next. As the days went by, they eventually replied that they agreed on using Facebook as a main communication source, but things happened in slow motion. I had to remind myself that this was normal, and we would make progress eventually. As the leader, I saw it as my duty to share my idea first to get their ideas rolling, but my expectations were too high; I expected my idea would lead to a discussion that would explode, but only two Nepalese members showed enthusiasm by saying they were building on an idea, so I remained optimistic. However, if I were to be a leader in this context again I would definitely post some links as to how we can inspire our creative minds. I just thought my idea would be enough for them to think of something. But apparently everyone was feeling quite stuck, so I should have done something to help everyone.

For almost two weeks I had not heard from two of my members from Nigeria and Rwanda. Among other assumptions of technology issues and practicality issues, it suddenly occurred to me that they might not respect me as a female leader who also has very blond hair! I assumed this because I have grown up in Ethiopia myself, and know that many African countries see it as a male's role to be the leader, and women are only there to help them reproduce, not to have a voice, so why would I expect them to listen to me; a white, blond and young woman? With that assumption I contacted another male member to ask if he wanted to step up as our leading 'male voice' in the group to try and engage them. He never replied to that message, and after two weeks the Rwandan member took us all by surprise, as he had come up with a business idea that was quite unique! They all seemed to show me respect as the leader, which was a very positive experience for me. When we finally decided to go with the Rwandan's idea, I made the right step to ask my Otago member to be my

coleader, and together we made a phone call to Rwanda to interview him about his idea to give us some insight of this product. And after that we eventually reached our goal! It has been a great experience for me; I have learnt how to write a business plan with people from other cultures; I have learnt how to not panic and show respect and be patient with my team members, keeping in mind all the difficulties they might have faced during this time. I am very pleased with what we managed to achieve together in the end.