May 3rd. The day I learnt the importance of securing leadership and handling a team.
With my launch letter sent, I set off to work. Three hours later I returned to a WhatsApp chat in full swing, led by a confident young team member. Reclaiming my leadership was crucial to my personal success, specifically in these first few hours of the competition. While other peer groups where waiting for replies, in my team suggestions (or in some cases, demands) were being thrown left, right and centre, and daily Bible verses indicated I was in for a cultural treat for the next three weeks. I knew straight away I had been gifted an amazing team: enthusiastic, involved, imaginative, and that management was key to keeping them under control.

May 9th. The day I learnt about cultures, participation and creativity.
With new friends in check, I took on the task of brainstorming. Thank goodness for Google Docs. My theory was to contribute first, to lead by example. Nothing. Had everybody vapourised as soon as we needed to get into the work? Turns out they just needed a few more reminders then we were off and away, with every idea larger than the one before, one liners to one page essays! Well, most of us were off and away; I learnt that these reminders did not trigger everybody. Some required a little more conversation to get ideas coming through. But we made it. A great brainstorm, with contributions from everyone.

May 14th. The day I learnt that everybody in my team was as indecisive as myself.
We had decided on an idea. Private vote meant for a fair and easy decision. A clay oven and some power. Solar? Kinetic? Wind? We couldn’t decide and time was ticking. I think the initial problem was that this was not my idea. I lacked vision and couldn’t generate passion within myself for this project, let alone within the group. I had to bring the initial enthusiasm back to the group and remove the confusion. A private message to each member asking for permission to roll with a new idea led to a viable project led with a vision and passion and a supportive team.

May 15th. The day I learnt to tell Coordinated Universal Time.
The internet is amazing these days, how hard can communication of a global team be, right? Don’t answer that. I learnt that we couldn’t wait up to 12 hours for eight people give feedback on an idea. Thankfully the stars aligned. Well actually time zones and skills aligned. Using member bios, I was able to make smaller groups of three or less and delegate tasks for the groups to work on together. This strategy worked a treat. No confusion between eight people and no loneliness that individual tasks bring. I also got over my “nana tendencies” and decided staying up past my bed time would not kill me, but would improve my leadership.

May 17th. The day I learnt I needed reinforcement.
Waking up to notifications and more notifications. It was draining the patience out of me. I had been hesitant to appoint a co-leader at the start, especially prior to an idea choice, but that was well behind us and the work was piling up. I had a particularly great member, Themba, creator of the WhatsApp group. My concern was over-enthusiasm would lead to over-taking of leadership. But it was necessary. Themba, newly appointed Deputy Leader accepted with grace and “led the ship” while I slept.

May 20th. The day I learnt the Hurricanes could thrash the Cheetahs.
The next few days sped by, and suddenly I found myself with a lot of information and ideas to fit into six pages. I also realised that a few people had been absent due to exams and a concussion - “but I know that’s no excuse”, he said (bless you, Aiken). A private message got them right back into the game, helping me to finalise ideas and get stuck into the finances (ew). Wanling, after taking a humble backseat, alongside Aiken, became my finance savours in the last three days. That night, amongst a few drinks with friends, I sent Themba a message, I was watching the Hurricanes vs Cheetahs rugby match. A little banter back and forth following a 61 – 7 win to us. This was the real reminder I needed that these people were more than their photos on my phone screen and the words they write in messages. Everyone has a life to live. Things to do,
people to see. It’s amazing how the world works. Such different lives, different places, different times, yet the same moon, the same sun, the same use of emojis. I realised the true meaning of diversity and culture.

May 24th. The day I learnt, truly learnt, there is no I in team.
On reflection of the last three weeks, I’ve realised there have for sure been some ups and downs. But as I was finalising the report I realised the hours and hours of work everyone had put in. Some earlier on, some in the last few days; everyone had contributed something of true value and help. Thierry’s help keeping the group spirit alive was an unexpected bonus and Susan’s situational analysis brought focus to the report. I cannot fault my group, and am so thankful I was not in the position of many of my friends in having to remove members or deal with other unfortunate challenges. I wondered at times how to gauge the contributions of such a large team and whether I would notice whether someone didn’t actually contribute. However, going through the team, I can specify specific contributions from everyone – some more stellar than others. I’m not sure I will ever experience anything like this again. However, one thing I know for sure, is that I hate finance even more than before!

Eight people. Three weeks. One team. An adventure of steep climbs and summit views. With wrong turns, stragglers and enthusiasts. The value of this experience is summed up by collective messenger requests from the team to keep the group alive post submission!

Anna Hinderwell 592s
New Zealand
English – 1st Language