GEE was certainly an experience! While filled with many highs, the competition also offered numerous challenges right the way through.

Basic lessons:

- Make sure to develop one on one relationships with team members. This lesson is particularly geared toward leaders. I came across this insight during a tutorial when one of my peers said she had made a point of contacting all of her members individually. Such a simple thing had slipped my mind. I have found this to work very well. While people may read your general messages to the group, it is the personalised ones that they will respond to. With only three weeks, it is extremely important to develop these relationships as personal relationships help encourage buy in when you need members to take action.

- Be ready to repeat yourself. Yes, I have gotten very good at this. Nobody is perfect and not all group members will remember the message you sent a week ago, which outlined your expectations. A big part of this is not assuming fellow members know what you know or think how you are thinking. It is important to always come from a clean slate to really understand what your team needs from you.

- In my experience, it is easier to shift to working late at night… or early in the morning. Many times over the last three weeks, these were one and the same. No it doesn't feel good to do it but it speeds things up much faster. Over time I noticed that members were more active as I went to bed. This won’t be for everyone but it really helped get things underway in the last week. With a last minute pivot, a week until the deadline, this was my saviour.

- Whatsapp was a very useful tool for communication. While I had little experience with it, I found that much like myself, many of my fellow team members would give quick short replies. In comparison to emails where long, tedious replies are expected, Whatsapp become a great medium for just keeping in touch. Through Whatsapp, I was generally aware of where most of my team members were at with their tasks and with their personal life.

Shout out:

I was very fortunate to have a superb team. While there were down times when responses were slow and group members had assignments due or paid work, everyone would come together at crunch time. When it came to brainstorming, all team members contributed ideas, bringing our list to 15 ideas! While have many things I could say about each member in my team, will focus this on one member:

**Udeji Samuel Uchenna:** Sam was a fantastic addition to the team. During GEE I did not ask for a peer leader because I did not need to. Sam is very intuitive, practical and understand how effective teams work. During times of radio silence, or times when communications have been predominantly been one sided from me, Sam would fill the gap (without being asked),
asking how other team members were doing and where they were at. He understands when things need to be serious and finds the time to give uplifting messages to other team members to lift the team morale. Sam is very committed to our team, stating that his intentions were to enjoy and learn from this experience, make new friends and win! Testament to his commitment to the team, rather than his own self pride was his willingness for the team to pivot from his idea to another idea after the last week had been spent developing his idea. He is a real team player. Being the joint owner of a 24 hour mall, Sam worked long hours and yet still found time to help the team. I actually don’t know when his bed time is because he was always online, helping in some form or another.

**Self-reflection**

During the competition, I unfortunately had one of my team members decide to remove himself for the team. While much from this can be left to speculation, here are a number of insights I have drawn from this situation.

- Check on members more frequently, not just when sending out updates. Do not assume members will come back to me when they are ready to begin working. Take a more proactive approach.
- Instead of saying “if you need any help, let me know” engage team members more by saying something along the lines of, “to make sure our team is all thinking along the same lines, I’m finding out what each person is planning to write for their section of the report. Will you please let me know by Tuesday, what you have planned for your section?”
- If they are in the same country, just pick up the phone and give them a call. Much of the underlying message can be picked up over the phone.
- Pay great attention to the underlying message that the other party is saying and seek to remedy these issues. For example, most issues were from the member feeling left out of the group. Instead of addressing each concern that was brought up during the conversation, it could have been more helpful to help the member feel included.
- One of the big issues could have been my use of direct, ‘unfeeling’ messages. I could have spent more time crafting the messages in a way as not to offend. Then again, as Deb says, New Zealanders are scared of upsetting the other party and need to be more direct. So I’m not quite sure where this leaves me.

Phew…. Sleep time!