**Tuesday May 1st, past midnight. The calm before the storm.**

I remember the exact moment before a rush of overwhelming excitement and terrifying fright kicked in. I grabbed my phone and double checked my launch email. Making everyone feel welcome was the most important thing in my mind.

**Wednesday May 3rd, past midnight. Happy hour starts.**

Within the next 12 hours of the launch email being sent, I knew I had a lot of hard work on hand. Key strengths of the team were to be pulled together. We have a lot of late birds in the group but the early mockingbirds kept it balanced. We decided that good old Google Doc was ideal for writing and ideas and the ever so famous WhatsApp was going to be our instant messaging medium. The major challenge here was including Miranda who was from China to be part of whatever medium we decided, popular chat groups Messenger, Telegram and WhatsApp were out of question but we finally figured out that WhatsApp on VPN connection could actually work.

**Thursday May 4th, afternoon. Hopping on the learning bus.**

The most helpful part of the journey were our tutorial assignments. We would come together in small groups discuss our little achievements, ongoing battles and give each other positive boosts. A lot of feedback and tips were taken from these tutorials to apply to our team. For instance, minute but helpful details like having a different font colour for everyone that adds information to the group Google Doc and ‘face saving’ tactics such as tagging individuals in group chats with questions.

**Saturday May 5th, midday. Not so much of bombardment of ideas.**

Upon realisation that this team needs to be pushed beyond limits, I decided to employ the creativity techniques that were used in class and assignment. I created a mind map to have everyone’s creative juices flowing. This was indeed received well. Within the next few days I had two great ideas we could work with.

**Monday May 7th, late afternoon. Finally, our last person said ‘Hi’**

During the process, I have come to realise that everyone is at different points in their lives and this is the reality of most practical situations. Zjeer was on holiday at the start of the project and the first ‘hi’ was just the last we heard from him, another two members Caroline and Xiaofan were battling assignments and exams but still managed to contribute. Then we had individuals like Patty who used to make sandwiches early in the morning to sell. We also, had a full-time worker, Patrick. On the other hand, Miranda was our serial hard worker and energy booster whereas Emma brought in motivation.

**Thursday May 10th, evening. Last of our ideas flowed in and it was poll time.**

I had learnt in tutorial a trick with polling to get more insightful data. So, I set up a poll on Survey Monkey with each idea given points of 3, 2 or 1 in that particular order. Our polls indicated top two ideas with equal number of votes. I had already started my research of the ideas as they came along in terms of practicality and profitability.

**Sunday May 13th, late night. Help!**

We decided on getting insights from Deb, she pointed us in the right direction of approach for our most feasible idea. Hurrah to reusable status bags. We received links that she managed to find to help us kick-start our business proposal.

**Wednesday May 15th, early morning. Slow and steady.**

The template for key ideas and subheading was created the night before. Early morning the team was divided into 2 main components that is a marketing and finance team according to the skills mentioned in their bio.

**Friday May 17th, Midday. Panic mode.**

Panic is on the horizon as the countdown begins. I decide to be more authoritative and assign tasks. Two people get on it straight away, the other 3 are still lurking behind even though personal and group messages has been sent. One thing that kept the project going was constantly keeping everyone updated. I would send out group emails and chat messages every other day on latest updates, key information, links and developments on our project.

**Tuesday May 22nd, Evening. Pat on my shoulder.**

Everything is falling in place. Patty did our logo, that itself was a challenge. Due to language barrier we were not able to discuss effectively our design ideas. That is when I asked my former flatmate to help me out as she spoke Thai. In the end it all fell into place and we are excited about how our final draft looks, pictures make it look pretty. Yay! Finally a night of peaceful sleep without a wandering mind.
Viti Bags is the most satisfying project that I have worked on. It taught me a lot about the world we live in, the realities, differences in opinions, language barriers, dynamics of group, importance of UN SDG 8, late nights, early mornings, thinking outside the box and going with your gut feeling.

Despite there being slow response from my team initially, I took a head start and constantly engaged the team in every step of the way. It definitely was a challenging experience with a diverse group like this. However in the end, we accomplished something that we all can be proud of.

*Mood: Feeling accomplished*

Gee, thanks!