

2010

Team Process Report

ETM 522 Team 1 Final project



Jamshid Nafisi,
Shah Eshghi,
Nick Wallace,
Shahin Alijani,
Ori Wolman,



Contents

Contents	1
Executive Summary	1
Energy of Diversity	2
Our Progress Throughout Diversity	3
Walking Through the Stages of Team Development	4
Conclusion	6

Executive Summary

It is always challenging to start a new group every quarter at PSU. Finding everyone's skills and weaknesses in a 12 week period is sometimes impossible and frustrating. It takes a keen skill of observing your teammate's personalities and making assumptions based on behaviors and discussions. When you are taking more than one class at a time, it is especially difficult to distribute these observations to a particular person. Part of being a successful business person is to be able to understand and work well with people at your company. Using communication and team building skills is essential to any business professional hoping to have a productive team environment.

We discuss two different factors that contribute to successful teams and explain how each applies to our team specifically. The first is using diversity to bring different cultures and skill sets to the group. When selecting team members, it is very helpful to examine the different cultures because having different cultures on a team can help to vary the different skills and weaknesses between the members. Although, you do not always have the option to choose your team members, you can use the different cultures as a tool to creating a successful team.

Along with observing the cultural differences between our teammates, it was very helpful to learn how to observe how our team was moving from stage to stage using the Tuckman model for team development that we discussed in class. We will go over these stages and describe how our team behaved in each stage. Using this data, we were able to decide if our team was moving along as expected or if we needed to work on certain things to stay on track.

Energy of Diversity

Our team was one of the most diverse groups in this class by having team members with six different cultural backgrounds. The members of our team had four different nationalities, four different native languages, and even different religions. Of our members, Nick came from the U.S.A, Ori came from Israel, Atakan from Turkey, and Shah, Shayan, and Shahin from Iran. From a global standpoint, U.S.A, Israel, Turkey, and Iran have ironic relationships where communication and teamwork are not very good. Our team developed without taking political views into account. The question was “how we can work together where we can use cultural diversity to be more creative, productive, and minimize the conflict as much as possible”. Another unknown key objective was to be able to learn about the other cultures in the group as we went through the course.

Cultural diversity brought more mutual respect to our team through the different stages of our team building. Some of us knew each other from the previous courses but for the others we were going to build our team without knowing each other. Some of us received our undergraduate degree from overseas which caused some to have different techniques to group behavior and studying. Overall, the culture of studying was different. That was a challenge for some of us. For example giving a presentation in English was a big challenge for some of us. Some of our team members gave their first presentation to a graduate audience in this class. We shared our experiences so that everybody would feel comfortable to give their presentation.

Nick was the only American in our team. He was in charge of reviewing all papers that were written by the other team members and to edit and correct all of the grammar, word choices, and etc. That doesn't mean the other team members couldn't write papers at all. We just tried to take advantage of having a team member with English as his native language. Even though Nick did not have the best grammar skills, the team still needed to count on him to accurately review each paper. The process was easy. Any paper had to be sent to Nick and its writer was open for any correction and edit. That was one of the processes in our team which was initially created due to the cultural differences. We accepted that some of us could be good in some areas and that was a good idea to be open and let the team solve the problem instead of individuals.

Having different educational experience and having English as a second language, created some challenges for our team. Instead of looking at the bad side of the problem, we used them as an advantage to build a strong team. First, we were

discussed those challenges could slow down the progress of our team. We got some great information through one of our reading paper. Paper 5a was about having diversity in a team helps the team to be more creative and be more productive [1]. We discussed how we agreed with the article and how it has made our group stronger. We learned and believed we would have more creativity and productivity by having diversity based on our research.

Our Progress Throughout Diversity

We became the first team by accident and by being too nervous. Who wants to be the first team in the class to give a 90 minute presentation while there is no idea what is expected of the class since others have not presented. Dr. Dryden said, "It is not bad to be team number 1." He was right. As the first team we had to work hard and get everything done for the first presentation. We created a yahoo group at the end of the first class on 03/30/10 and Nick became the team lead that night. He broke down all the tasks which we needed for the first presentation and assigned them to each of us through the online communication. We got our jobs done and came ready to have our first meeting. We set our first meeting in PSU on the first Sunday after class on 04/04/10 at 10:00 am. Of course everyone did not show up on time. That was the first issue that we recognized in our team.

Some people believe being late on any appointment is their culture. As we believed this is just an excuse for not be responsible, we looked at it as a lack of culture and unacceptable behavior. But that was not the only conflict which our team was facing with it. That time Nick was the only married team member in our team. So the rest of our team members had a busy late Friday night and for them waking up early on Saturday was kind of painful. On the other hand, Nick had some family responsibilities on Sunday that weekend which had a different meaning for him and his family compared to the rest of group. We had to solve these conflicts but more importantly, we had to finish the first presentation. Then we would be free to solve the other problems. We buckled down, gave our first presentation, and were satisfied of its outcome. At this point we were able to slow down and look at each of the team member's skills to see who would be a good fit for the different tasks in the group. After the first presentation, we got a new team member, Ori who chose to attend our team. He was the second guy in our team who was married. Now, Nick was not alone and we made a decision to choose a day and time that work for the both people with families and without.

Another lesson that our team learned was later in the course when we had a conflict arise because of a cultural difference between members. Some cultures have been generalized as being very straight forward and direct when working with others or

giving feedback. In other cultures this can be taken in the wrong context and offensive, especially when given in a non face to face form such as email. We had one ugly stream of emails when there was a disagreement on when and how something was done. We learned as a team that the best way to solve a conflict is to meet face to face and avoid communication methods that do not allow unintentional interpretations.

Culture has mainly been a large benefit to the success of our team. With our different backgrounds, we were able to work hard where needed and to have fun when possible. It was very helpful to be able to examine how the differences helped us when faced with challenges.

[Walking Through the Stages of Team Development](#)

Dr. Bruce Tuckman presented a model of group development in 1965 [2] where he documented the stages that teams go through. The stages are forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Tuckman's model clarifies that when the team develops maturity and ability, relationships will establish. By being aware of these stages, team members and leaders will better understand the interactions between other team members and their feelings. I will talk about how our team went through those stages while we worked together as a team.

Our team didn't have any significant problems in the forming stage. Even though some of the team members didn't know each other and there were four different nationalities in our team, we quickly got along well. We were all excited and proud to be on this cross-national team despite the fact that we were not completely sure about our project's goals. We quickly identified a leader and created a Yahoo group where we could communicate together and keep everyone informed. While each team member was trying to find place within group, our team members listened and respected each other. For this reason, we didn't have hard time assigning specific roles to team members. Since there was six of us with different schedules, in the beginning we had a little hard time to find out the meeting times. Eventually we overcame this issue too. For example, Me, Ori, Shahin, Nick and Sha work in weekdays and Shayan and Ori busy on Saturdays so we arranged the meeting times on Sunday mornings and before class.

We started generating many ideas in the storming stage even though we didn't use all of them. During this stage, we tried to clarify and understand the team's purpose. We started discussing and arguing even if we agreed on the real issue. Our biggest challenge was deciding as a team which topics to base our presentations on. Our team leader made sure that communication between the six team members was efficient while each team member was looking for clarity and rules to overcome the conflict. We

first tried to identify team member's styles and skills and then divide the tasks and responsibilities equally. Sometimes, the tasks were different from what some team members imagined and seemed very difficult to accomplish on time. We usually found a solution to this kind of issues.

In the norming stage our team members were aware of their responsibilities and scope of tasks. For example, Nick was in charge of editing presentation slides and grammar mistakes in the papers. Our team leader stepped back and allowed our team to take more responsibility. Each team member started listening and supporting each other better. We also shared our personal problems with each other. We tried to find solutions to those problems. We maintained good energy and healthy relationships. We made an effort to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict. On the other hand, when some issues appeared suddenly and unexpectedly, our team bounced back and forth between norming and storming stage. We tried not to spend too much time in this bouncing back and forth period.

We started feeling like a real team in performing stage. We were sharing responsibilities for the team's success or failure. We were making our best effort for the team's achievement and enjoying working together. While we were having fun, we had the most productive time in this stage. We kept going through small group problems and attempting to find solutions to them. We had a better understanding of each team member's strengths and weaknesses. For example, Ori has great presentation skills and can help our team perform better in this category.

We evaluated the efforts and kept giving feedback each other after presentations or finding out the grade for selective reading papers. For example, after the first selected reading, we discussed where we could have had more time for everyone to review the paper before it would be submitted. We used that plan for the rest of the class. We also maintained our good relationship as a team except group meetings for our presentations and class time. For example, we usually meet and hang out before or after class. We have dinner together a couple of times. After a good grade we got as a team, we congratulated each other. If we get a good final grade, we are planning to go to a restaurant and celebrate it. We were basically proud of our accomplishments. We have learned each other's strengths and weaknesses and since we enjoyed working together we would like to be on the same team if we take another class.

Conclusion

Our team was a successful team this quarter. We learned many techniques in this course that will help us become more successful business people. By examining the culture and flow of our team and teammates, we were able to increase teamwork, productivity, quality and have fun while doing it. It was greatly beneficial to observe the interactions between our team members so we could watch our team develop and learn from them.

In other classes, where we do not focus on team dynamics, it is possible to overlook many of these techniques when forming teams and interacting together. This class has helped us to understand how important it is to observe behaviors in the beginning of team formation and throughout the duration of the team.

Communication and upfront role layout were the keys to our group's success. It was very helpful to be able to take this course and develop the skills to become better teammates.

References

- [1] Ricarda B Bouncken and Viviane A. Winkler, National and Cultural Diversity in Global Innovation Teams Creativity and Innovation as a Function of Cultural Team Composition, PICMET Proceedings July, p. 1764-1772 (2008)
- [2] Dr. Bruce W Tuckman, Group & Organization Management, Vol. 2, No. 4, 419-427 (1977)