Team Process Report

PSU-ETM-522

Professor Robert Dryden

Team 2

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Content

Executive Summary

The following report is a reflection of the communication and team building experience over the course of the term as experienced by each individual member of the team. Each member was responsible for recounting their perceptions of a respective phase in the team building process. Each phase (Forming, Norming, Storming, and Performing) is presented as a unique testimonial of sorts from a member of the team. To summarize, the team unanimously agrees that from the initial formation of a team made up of individuals from across the world we had a choice as to how we would respond to such a task. Whereas the team could have accepted the cross-cultural differences as a hindrance and an acceptable excuse to underperform, each member instead took on the added responsibility to acknowledge, understand, and respect the vast cultural differences among the team. The result was a natural mix of roles with no need for an individual team leader in which each member could capitalize on their unique and respective strengths to contribute to the common goals of the team.

Introduction

Team 2 of the Communications and Team Building course at Portland State University was formed on the busy first day of class in spring of 2011. The team is made up of six widely diverse individuals with little to no prior familiarity with each other. Represented by the group of six members is five different native countries and unique cultures, five different native languages, and four different continents. Although the initial formation was largely coincidental, it would prove to be a substantial academic opportunity to truly experience first-hand the objective of the Communications and Team Building curriculum. As will be explained, there were a number of unique challenges posed by the fact that the team was comprised of such richly diverse backgrounds, but in hind-sight, that diversity proved to be the foundation of our ultimate success. Each class activity and every relevant team communication would be an exercise in effective cross-cultural communication and team management.

Forming

At the first class of ETM 522 Communication and Team Building, team 2 was formed with 6 students from different background and countries as follows:

1) Benjamas Siriwannangkul (Benjii) is full-time student in Computer Science program. Benjii came from Bangkok, Thailand where she got bachelor degree in Information Technology in Business. She is a new student for Engineering and Technology Management (ETM) program, and enrolled 2 ETM courses this term.

2) Jeremy Provenzola is part-time student at ETM program. He is Portlander and now currently works as full-time civil engineer for a municipality. He got bachelor degree in Engineering Physics and Science. He enrolls 1-2 ETM courses per term.

3) Thomas Adelmann came from Külsheim, Germany where he got his bachelor degree in Technology Management. He is full-time student at ETM program, and also takes classes from other departments. He is enrolled as post-bacc and not part of a degree program.

4) Ryan Nyberg is part-time student at ETM program. His hometown was at Bainbridge Island, Washington. Ryan got bachelor degree in Plastics Engineering Technology. Now he currently works as design engineer for medical device company.

5) Tin Nguyen is full-time student at ETM program. He came from Vietnam. He got bachelor degree in Mathematics and Electrical Engineering.

6) Nametsegang Boemo-Mokhawa (Boemo) is full-time PhD student at ETM program. He comes from Botswana and has a bachelor degree in Electrical and Electronic engineering from Manchester, UK and MBA from Botswana. He was working as Metrology Services manager for Botswana Technology Center before being on study leave.

All 6 members did not know each other before team was formed, except Tin and Thomas who had been classmates in the previous term. Thus, members spent most of time during first class getting to know each other by talking about their backgrounds and experiences. The team also created a contact list consisting of name, email address and cell phone number of each member. After considering class ownership for entire course, team 2 decided to divide into sub group of three: one volunteered to work on class ownership for the second week, which is next week at that time; another one volunteered to work on class ownership for the fourth week. For the last class ownership, the team decided to work on it together. After spending time knowing each other for a while, team 2 discussed about a channel to communicate and submit any work online, which is Yahoo group. Team 2 also set some ground rules for meeting and working together as follows: 1) meeting time: 30 minutes before and after class and also during break; 2) all work and resources regard to team report, presentation or class ownership have to be submitted via Yahoo group; 3) any discussion will do via face-to-face at meeting time or via email for any notification or via cell phone if urgent. At the end of the class, Tin volunteered to set up Yahoo group and also post the contact list via Yahoo group.

Team 2 worked as cross-cultural team, in which each member had his/her unique characters listed as follows: 1) As most of Asian students, Benjii is perceived by others as soft spoken, diligent and unassuming person. She is ready to work toward team solution and hard working. One member perceives her as sunshine in the team. Commitment and constructive critique also marked her; 2) Boemo is perceived by others as intelligent, vocal, fair and hard working person. He is also perceived as a positive perfectionist. One member really liked his structured approach to work; 3) Tin is perceived by others as enthusiastic, excited and hard working. He has lots of energy, enjoys acting and always has something to say. He also is perceived as a team player from the start; 4) Jeremy is perceived by others as amicable, friendly and hard working. He always has great idea and often works as a "meeting organizer" and

facilitator. One member perceives him that he is laid back but does his share; 5) Thomas is perceived by others as outgoing, friendly, carefree and hard working. He enjoys team work and always willing to contribute. 6) Ryan is perceived by others as good listener and responsive to team issues when discussing team tasks and schedules. He is also intelligent and friendly. Everyone was perceived by others as hard working and had motivation to do well in class by supporting each other through feedback. Everyone has his/her unique skills and bright idea when sharing it together and working as a team. From all perceptions toward each member above indicates that team members get along really well as some perception showed below

> Thomas: "Big respect for Tin's commitment! I think he did a better part of the work and helped really a lot to organize the team! His spirit is adorable!"

> Thomas: "You could always come to Ryan with a question and he was always open-minded for new ideas. Gets bonus for introducing "Office Space"

> Actually, team did not really have any major conflict, and every one works so hard to achieve the team goal as well as overcome language barriers. Even though each member was not familiar with each other at the first class, they observe and have great perceptions from the first class until the last class. Different characteristics and cultural diversity made them work so well as a team.

Storming

It was not too long after our team was formed that reality set in and team members individually sought out the team's objectives, how and when these would be achieved. But most importantly, what each member's contribution should be towards team's weekly tasks. The fact that we had not known each other until the first class made us all nervous and unsure of what communication strategy to adopt for our team. The storming phase in our team development was chronicled by episodes that reflected disparities in contextual understanding due, mostly, to different cultural backgrounds.

Differences in cultural backgrounds became obvious in class-games when individual members' perspectives distinctively differed from each other. For an example, in a game when a member had to identify oneself with certain animal species it became obvious that members' belief systems were very different. Another good example that epitomized cultural diversity was captured in ways that individual members expressed themselves or what they perceived as correct meanings from expressions made by others. This was demonstrated by an instance when a member suggested a team meeting. Some members were too quick to assume that the meeting would not take place whilst others actually turned up for the meeting but at different times. That meeting never took place. That happened despite the fact that we all read the same correspondences posted in the team's Yahoo Group. Those who did not turn up believed that the objective of meeting was diminished by the fact that two members would not be free to attend whilst others assumed the meeting could still take place without the two members. But those who turned up did that at different time slots suggested during the communications and therefore the meeting did not happen.

These little 'storms' were, in time, minimized by learning inside the team by adapting to appropriate problem-solving techniques on a case-by-case scenario and sometimes members had to make compromises. The team's belief in mutual accountability and open communication was central to our team's strategy and over time it was easier to merely consult with any of the members for clarification.

Norming

Rather than stepping up into the Norming Stage after a completed Storming Phase our team has successfully mastered to take these two steps at once. However this "leap" was accompanied by a series of little steps back and forth between those two stages until we built enough trust and competencies to stay in the Norming Stage without falling back.

For this accomplishment we have up established following ground rules for our team. First of all we have agreed upon Key Milestones (see Team Charter) and early deadlines for the regular coursework in order to provide an orientation and clear goals for us. Moreover each paper, which was written solely by a single team member, was review and commented by every team member prior to turning in. This helped up us to build a stronger team cohesion and spirit. Not only the person in charge for the paper didn´t felt being left alone with the task, but also each member felt accepted to provide constructive critique. A very important rule during our team meetings represented the ability for everyone to finish his/her thoughts and ideas without being interrupted. Especially in a cross-cultural team, which we represent without any doubt, differences in lines of thought or general conception are from time to time prevailing. So each member has to have enough time to clearly state his/her opinion or elaborate on an idea without feeling a pressure to come to an end. Nevertheless during some discussion, misunderstanding could not always be prevented, which urged us to go back to the Storming Stage for this problem solving.

Another ground rule encompassed the routine of rotating presenters. Unlike the rest of the groups in this term, we regarded three presenters the appropriate number for that kind of presentation and moreover the extra work load for these three team members was outweighed by the longer break they could enjoy for the next presentation to come.

Performing

Many of the members in our group had spent much of our education in classrooms with a lecture environment. In this particular classroom, the professor presents material in a very uni-lateral method that neither requires nor encourages class participation. In transitioning to a discussion based environment in-class activities were very crucial in jumpstarting class member participation. It created a sort of comfort level that allowed students to share their experiences and open dialogue into each other's personal experiences. The more fun the students were having the more likely they were to open up and share. In a class that is founded around the

principles of communication and team building, this is truly the most creative way to promote these concepts.

Stemming from our previous lecture-based classrooms, our attitudes were a bit skeptical in the beginning of the course. Students were hesitant to share their own experiences. Our perceptions were that we were there to sit and listen while the professor lectured. This clearly wasn't the case. In order for us to succeed we had to get involved and participate, which in itself is the very idea of communication and teambuilding.

Communication

After we formed up the group, we decided to exchange each other contact information like email and phone numbers. Because this is only way we can communicated with each other. We decided, as stated earlier, to open a yahoo group account. Tin set up the yahoo account first and invited all of the other team members to join the group called ETM522. To invite all the team members, Tin decided to put all the team members' email and send them the link through the group and wait for them to confirm. Tin's job was to communicate with all team members to make sure they on the right track with the homework and projects that we get assigned in class. For example, Tin called the team members by phone to make sure they had done the task and let them know the due date so he could turn it in on time by submit in D2L website for our ETM522 team building class. Furthermore, we had to have meetings during the break in team building class and discuss our plan for future task. To make sure everybody has something contribute to our meeting, Tin decided to have an agenda as a guide line to our task. When we have a presentation in the first week of class, Tin decided to call the team members who participated in that presentation and have a meeting to make sure they are on right track with the task they get assign. Normally we take turns to rotate with our tasks, especially doing the presentation in class. We do communicate a lot through virtual meetings through email and yahoo group. We actually communicate face to face during break in the team building or outside of our class like at the Library and do a lot of virtual communication through email and phone. The great thing about our group is communication. We listen to each other's ideas and give feedback. Our communication between team members goes very well. There were misunderstands but we resolved those through communicating together as a team.

Conclusion

With the benefit of hindsight following a brief ten week experience, Team 2 has become an effective cross-cultural team. The rich diversity of the team that could have potentially been the downfall of our team proved to be our greatest asset. Team 2 experienced an interesting forming phase as we each tried to navigate the unique dynamics of our cross-cultural team, but quickly evolved to capitalize on the unique strengths of each member. There was no need for a single member to play the role as the team leader as each member found their own role on a week to week basis. In some regards, the work load was compartmentalized in order to limit

the need for large-scale coordination. For example, as stated earlier and was clearly seen in class, Team 2 chose to split the class ownership assignments into two smaller teams. This approach was unique from the other teams.

The team's internal success was achieved by an unspoken accountability for each member to treat the other members and their ideas with due mutual respect and careful consideration. Each member brought unique perceptions, methodologies, and preferences. If any member were too quick to discard or move on from the idea of a teammate it would prove to be a potentially critical error. Although not always smoothly, all decisions in the group with regards to the course were made by consensus and agreement. All members were expected and encouraged to share their ideas regardless of how it aligned with the other ideas presented. Ultimately, each member had to acknowledge the fundamental cultural differences among ourselves and respond to those differences in how we interact with each other. Ultimately, the unique perceptions and preferences among team members were what allowed our team to perform successfully.

Appendix 1: Team Charter

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<tr><td colspan="2">T EAM CHARTER</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Team Name: Team 2</td></tr>
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Mission: To review and recommend up to date material for Communication and Team Building course curriculum and share the unique team experience with the class.
Output Target: Written Report and class presentations
Basis for Interest: To improve the curriculum by introducing current literature on the subject
Team Members: Nametsegang Boemo-Mokhawa, Ryan Nyberg, Tin Nguyen, Thomas Adelmann, Benjamas Siriwannangkul, Jeremy Provenzola
Team Sponsor: Dr. Dryden

Key Milestones	Timing	Resources
1. Topic selection 2. Research complete 3. Report 4. Presentation	Week 3 Week 5 Week 7 Week 10	PSU library, Books Internet, Journals/Articles and Case Studies

Key Challenges	How to Overcome
Coordinating schedules Language barriers Workload distribution	Virtual meetings Practice Task Assignment and Management Team spirit

Appendix 2: Team Journal

Week 1 [March 30, 2011-April 2, 2011]

March 30, 2011
During class and break:
- Team was at forming stage: members know each other by exchanging their backgrounds and experiences.
  After class:
- Discussed class ownership for entire course: team 2 decided to divide into sub group of three as follows:
  1. Benjii, Tin, Thomas volunteered to work on class ownership for week 2.
  2. Boemo, Jeremy, Ryan volunteered to work on class ownership for week 4.
  For week 6 class ownership, team decided to work on it together.
- Discussed about channel to communicate and submit any work online: team decided to use Yahoo group.
- Created contact list consists of Name, email address and cell phone number of each member.
- Set some ground rules for meeting and working together as follows:
  1) Meeting time: 30 minutes before and after class and also during break
  2) All work and resources regard to team report, presentation or class ownership have to be submitted via Yahoo group
  3) Any discussion will do via face-to-face at meeting time or via email for any notification or via cell phone if urgent.
- Tin volunteered to set up Yahoo group and also post contact list via Yahoo group.

Week 2 [April 3, 2011-April 9, 2011]

April 3, 2011- April 6, 2011[before class]
- Benjii, Tin, Thomas prepared class ownership for week 2 at Intel Lab.
April 6, 2011
During class:
- Benjii, Tin, Thomas worked on class ownership.
- Team worked on team charter (draft version).
After class:
- Discuss team process report and team charter
April 7, 2011-April 9, 2011
- Team worked on team charter (document version).

Week 3 [April 10, 2011-April 16, 2011]

April 13, 2011
Before class:
- Team handed in Team charter to TA.
During break and after class:

- Each member choose one of Selected Readings to write up:
  - Boemo chose Selected Readings # 3 "How The Right Measures Help Teams Excel,"
  - Jeremy chose Selected Readings # 5 "Echoes of The Silent Language of Project Management"
  - Thomas chose Selected Readings # 6 "Bridging Space Over Time: Global Virtual Team Dynamics and Effectiveness"
  - Benjii chose Selected Readings # 7 "Strategies for Effective New Product Team Leaders"
  - Ryan chose Selected Readings # 9 "The Nut Island Effect: When Good Teams Go Wrong"
  - Tin volunteered to upload all selecting readings to d2l and also handed in hard copy to TA before class on the due date.
- Boemo, Jeremy and Ryan discussed about class ownership for week 4.

Week 4 [April 17, 2011-April 23, 2011]
April 17, 2011
- Boemo and Ryan submit their Selected Readings (SR# 3 and SR# 9 respectively) via Yahoo group to let others review and give comment and feedback.
  April 17, 2011- April 20, 2011[before class]
- Boemo, Jeremy and Ryan prepared class ownership for week 4.
  April 20, 2011
  Before class:
- Tin submit write-up SR# 3 to d2l and also handed in hard copy to TA.
  During class:
- Boemo, Jeremy and Ryan worked on class ownership.

Week 5 [April 24, 2011-April 30, 2011]
  April 27, 2011
During break:
- Discuss on class ownership for week 6 and team process report and presentation: team decided to divide into sub group of three as follows:
  1) Benjii, Boemo and Jeremy volunteered to work on class ownership for week 6.
  2) Tin, Thomas and Ryan volunteered to responsible most of team process presentation, which include preparing skit and game.
- Team review and discuss on grade of write-up SR# 3.
  - How to improve write-up reading?
  - Problem needed to solve is the standard format for references and citation.
  During break and after class:
- Team discussed on team research report: team research report focused on article and book suggested for the future course. Then, distribute task to each member.
  After class:
- Got suggestion from TA how to improve score on the next write-up reading.

Week 6 [May 1, 2011-May 7, 2011]
  May 1, 2011-May 4, 2011[before class]
- Benjii, Boemo and Jeremy prepared class ownership for week 6.

- Each member submitted their part of team research report (draft version) to Yahoo group to let others review and give comment and feedback.
- Jeremy submits his selected reading (SR# 5) to Yahoo group to let others review and give comment and feedback.
  May 4, 2011
  Before class:
- Tin submit write-up SR# 5 to d2l and also handed in hard copy to TA.
  During class:
- Benjii, Jeremy and Boemo worked on class ownership.
  During break and after class:
- Team discuss on the format of team research report.

Week 7 [May 8, 2011-May 14, 2011]
  May 8, 2011
- Each member submitted their part of team research report (document version) to Yahoo group to let others review and give comment and feedback.
- Ryan compiled all part together and check grammar error.
- Benjii put Bibliography in the same format.
- Thomas and Benjii submitted their selected readings to Yahoo group to let others review and give comment and feedback.
  May 11, 2011
  Before class:
- Tin submit write-up SR# 6, SR# 7, SR# 9 and team research report to d2l and also handed in hard copy to TA.
  During break and after class:
- Team review and discuss on grade of write-up SR# 5.

Week 8 [May 15, 2011-May 21, 2011]
- Benjii prepared the outline and also team journal for team process report.
- Team discussed on the meeting date and time via email: everyone could not meet during week 8 and decided to meet at library on May 25, 2011 at 6.00 pm.
- Tin volunteered to reserve private room for the meeting.

Week 9 [May 22, 2011-May 28, 2011]
  May 25, 2011
  Before meeting:
- Tin reserved private room for meeting.
  Meeting time: 6.00pm-7.00pm.
- Team met at library in lobby, and then went to private room reserved for meeting to discuss about team process presentation and report as follows:
  1) For team process report: team finalized the report.
  2) For team process presentation: team decided to do skit and game in the theme of cross-cultural team.

Week 10 [May 29, 2011-June 1, 2011]

May 29, 2011
- Each member submitted their part of team process report (document version) to Yahoo group to let others review and give comment and feedback.

May 30, 2011
- Tin, Ryan and Thomas met at Intel lab to prepare a skit.

June 1, 2011
- Team work on team process presentation.
- Tin hand in team process report to TA.