

# Team Process Report

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Course Number:	ETM-522
Course Title:	Communication and Team Building
Term/Year:	Spring 2011
Team Number:	4
Authors:	Scott Ferre, Chenxi Yan, John Elliot, Priti Maheshwari, Vera Sell, Aarthi Neethirajan
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## 1 Team Introduction

**Aarthi Neethirajan.** Aarthi joins us from India where she worked for Scope International. Aarthi has a BS in Electronics and Communications engineering from Sathyabama University in Chennai, India and is currently pursuing her MS in ETM from PSU. Her interests include painting, photography and ceramic art. Aarthi is trained in Indian Carnatic music and loves dogs.

**Chenxi (Charlie) Yan.** Charlie currently works as a network administrator for the housing authority of Portland, OR. His previous work experience includes lab attendant at PSU, student assistant at the PSU library and lab assistant at Zhou Li's Physics Lab in Suzhou, China. Charlie holds a BS in electrical engineering and physics and is working on double masters in Engineering and Technology management and Electrical Engineering. Charlie is originally from China and enjoys music, basketball and photography.

**John Elliot.** John currently works for Logitech, a manufacturer of consumer electronics products. Over his career John has worked in many cross-functional teams both throughout the US and in Europe. He holds a BSEE from the university of Idaho. His interests include music and he composes for various instruments including guitar, vocal and trumpet.

**Priti Maheshwari.** Priti originally hails from Mumbai, India where she worked for Tata Consultancy Services, a leading consultant for 4 years as a software engineer. There she worked in enhancement and development projects. She holds BE in Information Technology from India. Her interests include traveling and hiking.

**Scott Ferre.** Scott is a professional Civil Engineer and currently serves as a Civil Engineering Officer for the US Air Force. Has served four tours in the Middle East. Prior to that he worked as a design engineer for Otak, Inc, and practiced as a water resources engineer. Scott graduated Oregon State University with a BS in Civil Engineering and is currently pursuing a Masters of Civil Engineering at PSU and taking several ETM courses as electives. Scott is a partner in the family alfalfa and cattle ranch in southeastern Oregon. He enjoys cutting cattle, ranch sorting, team penning. Scott owns and races/cruises a sailboat on the Columbia River, participates in ocean sail races and has sailed from Hawaii to Portland. Is an avid large game hunter and salmon/steelhead fisherman.

**Vera Sell.** Vera rounds off the multi-national team with a European perspective. Her background is in business and product management and includes experience at Avnera Corp, a fab-less semiconductor design startup, and at Biamp Systems, a leader in professional audio equipment. Vera holds a BS in International Management from the University of Applied Sciences in Dresden, Germany and a Master of International Management from Portland State University. Vera enjoys the outdoors and is crazy about horses.

## 2 Stages of the team

The following sections describe the stages of the team as described in the Team Handbook [1].

**Forming** – Our team’s forming stage only lasted for a very short time. We formed our team on the first day of the class after people randomly introduced themselves. Some people knew each other before, some found other people with the same interest, one person left the team since he wanted to join his friend in other group and one person wanted to join our group but we were already full. Finally our team was formed with 6 members from different countries and diversities. We all had common goals in improving in communication and team building, to become a good team player and to get “A” grade in the course. Since we all were from different countries we were excited to learn about each other and know about everybody’s country and culture. In the first meeting we decided on the ground rules and expectations of the team (see Appendix 9.1). Everybody had the feeling of excitement, anticipation and optimism to give their best in all the tasks. The team also planned to hang out somewhere. For more details please see the journal summary (Appendix 9.2).

**Storming** – This stage began when one of the team members notified us that he would be out of town for two weeks which caused a sense of tension and frustration in the team. The team managed to complete his report and presentation portion in a very short notice despite his absence. The team resolved this issue and ensured that the team member compensated the work in the final presentation. During the second presentation one of the team members overreacted after some technical difficulties and snapped at another team member. However, the team member apologized the same evening. In a way, going through these tensions and allowing each other to see personalities when working under pressure made the bond between team members stronger. Another area of contention was finding time to meet. With six team members it was hard to find a time that suited the work and personal schedules of everyone. Therefore, the meeting times were never the same and the day and time kept on changing every week. The team compensated for this difficulty by showing empathy toward one another, allowing team members to excuse themselves and documenting and communicating decisions carefully so team members that could not attend still knew what was discussed. Please see Appendix 9.3 for the full meeting notes that also indicate attendance.

**Norming** – We realized that the team reached norming stage when people started helping each other in assignments and presentations. One of the team members unfortunately fell ill on the day of presentation, but we took care of that part. We ensured that no one was overloaded and so distributed the tasks equally. Everybody gave their inputs and came up with the outline for the process report and presentation. Also, the team ensured that the selected readings and the reports were error free. The team progressed from potential team to real team (as described by Katzenbach in Wisdom of Teams [2]). Team members took an interest both in the professional and personal development of their colleagues. For example, we recommended each other for jobs, reviewed resumes and suggested career development strategies. Everybody became good friends and started laughing and joking. The team also went to hang out in a restaurant. The team members were frank enough to talk about their own culture and about their preconceived understanding of each other’s cultures.

**Performing** – Despite having difficulties in deciding on meeting time, the team ensured regular meetings whenever possible. The tasks were done without any delays and hurry. The team was happy and satisfied with their performance and progress. In fact, the meetings became progressively shorter as team members could anticipate what needed to be discussed and prepared accordingly. Although it was

a short course, at the end we felt that we were effective and performed as a cohesive unit. The following sections will describe evaluation of team performance by team members in more detail.

### 3 Team Performance

In order to better quantify the effectiveness of the team, we created a team radar chart. This chart can help us see the areas that the team is performing well and the areas that need improvement. Each member of the team rated the team effectiveness in the following six categories:

1. Attendance – how well were team meetings and classes attended by the team
2. Cooperation – how well did the team members work together
3. Performance – how good were the results of the team activities
4. Entertainment – how enjoyable was the team interaction
5. Creativity – how creative was the team when generating content
6. Schedule – how well did the team meet the required deadlines

Once each team member had rated the team in each category, an average was calculated. The results are shown in the figure below. We can see that the team is pleased with the overall effectiveness with relatively high averages in the various categories. The team members were in agreement in their ratings. If we want to focus on categories for improvement, we could look at Creativity and Attendance. These two categories had the lowest average score of 3.8, so there is certainly room for some improvement.

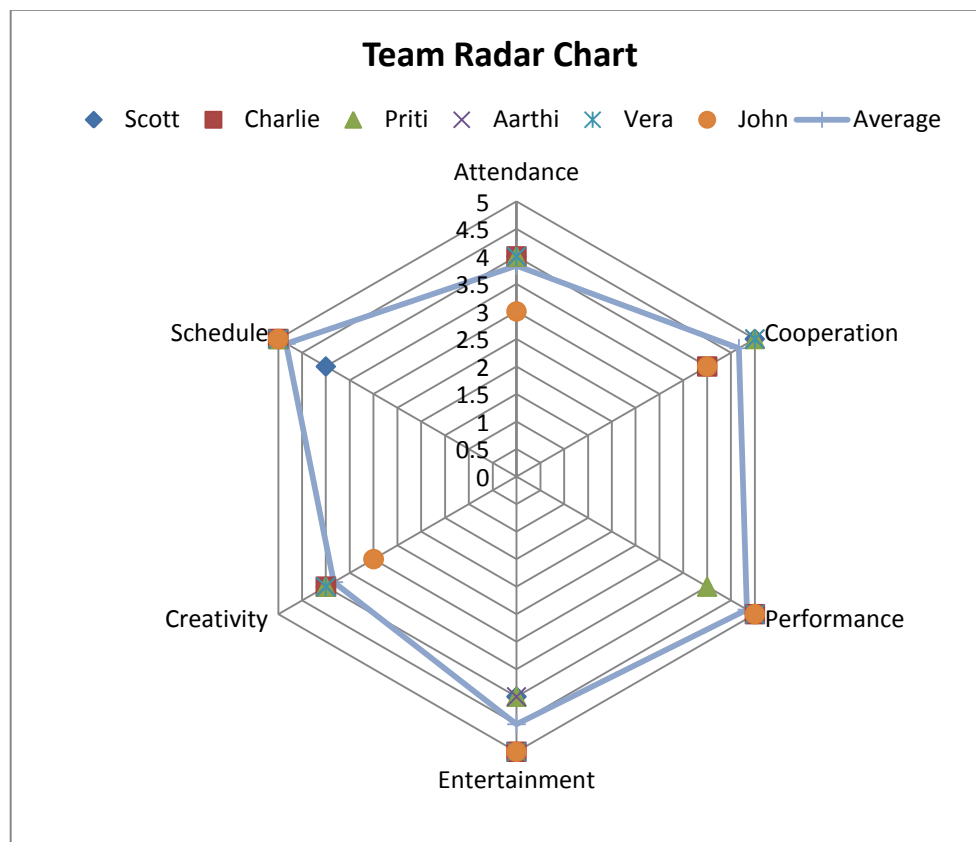


Figure 1 Team Radar Chart

## 4 Task Pacing

In addition to the traditional model of team stages by Tuckman we learned about the concept of task pacing according to punctuated equilibrium by Gersick [3]. Gersick contends that teams go through predictable phases of high activity and inertia. This task pacing can be predicted by the time that has elapsed between project start, midway point and deadline.

We constructed a timeline for our team deliverables as shown in Table 1. The team prepared the outline for each class ownership presentation the week prior to the deadline as agreed during forming and documented in the team rules (see Appendix 9.1 Team Rules). If we assume we had two weeks to prepare for every presentation, it is evident that most of the activity took place at the halfway mark as predicted by Gersick. After the outline was established, each team member focused on his or her assigned topic. On the Sunday before class we met to practice the presentation (see Appendix 9.3 Meeting Notes). Each team member presented his or her slides and the others provided constructive feedback. A similar pattern can be seen for the Research and Process reports. An outline with task assignments was created at the team meeting on April 24 and May 8 respectively (midpoint for each assignment). There was almost no activity prior to that. A week before the deadline for the reports each team member submitted his or her draft to the team leader so that final formatting and editing could be applied in time for the deadline.

This type of task assignment and pacing was very efficient and avoided conflict. Everyone knew what the expectations were and could focus on their part. We communicated frequently to ensure that everyone understood what needed to be done. During reviews we could harness the power of the crowd by giving constructive feedback.

Table 1 Team 4 Task Pacing for

Key Milestones	W1 30- Mar	W2 6-Apr	W3 13- Apr	W4 20- Apr	W5 27- Apr	W6 4-May	W7 11- May	W8 18- May	W9 25- May	W10 1-Jun
Class Ownership		outline	X							
Class Ownership				outline	X					
Class Ownership						outline	X			
Research Report				outline		draft	X			
Process Report						outline			draft	X

Legend:

due (X)
no activity
low activity
high activity

## 5 Team roller coaster

As many other teams, our team experienced the same feeling as riding the “roller coast” – feelings of elation and frustration alternated over the course of the class duration (see Figure 2).

Six people from five different countries formed the team the first day of the class. At that time, everybody felt fresh and excited and eager to perform well. This goal is documented in the team charter (see Appendix 9.4). Everything went very smoothly the first couple of weeks and we all felt comfortable working with each other. The day just before the first presentation one of the team members got very sick. Obviously that put a damper on the exuberating feeling. However, the team member notified everyone in due time so we could distribute the presentation load without too many problems. We did a very good job on the presentation, everybody felt encouraged and understood that others in the team were prepared to share the responsibility in case one member faced problems.

The mood in the team took a turn for the worse when one of the members notified us that he would have to go out of town for two weeks. As described in the storming section above that left the remaining team members frustrated. To complicate matters, it was impossible to communicate with that team member because he was on military assignment and did not have access to the Internet. At some point we did not know when he would return, if he would deliver on the assignments as promised or if we had to cover for him. We developed a backup plan in case the 6<sup>th</sup> member did not have time to complete the assignment. With the knowledge that we would be able to submit the projects either way the tension lessened. The team member returned and stepped up to the task by working twice as hard on the remaining assignments.

As we learned more about team building and communication we understood more how to communication and work as a team. We learned that no matter how good the team, there will always be phases of good times and bad times. The most important thing to deal with these cycles is to understand these cycles are normal and face them with a positive attitude.



Figure 2 Team 4 Roller Coaster

## 6 Cross-Cultural Communication

Our team has people from five different cultures, namely American, British, Indian, German and Chinese. The following will discuss cultural stereotypes that are based on research performed by Geert Hofstede [4] and general preconceptions as brainstormed by our team. Figure 3 shows the cultural dimensions of Germany. It shows that Germans are typically highly individualistic (IDV), meaning these societies are less group-oriented. Conventional wisdom depicts Germans as hyper-organized, very accurate, dominating, perfectionist and bureaucratic. Vera stayed true to her German stereotype of a hardworking, methodical and analytical person. But, she is really very considerate and helpful whereas Germans are considered cold-hearted. When one team member was out of town, she volunteered to do his part and helped in editing the report every time.

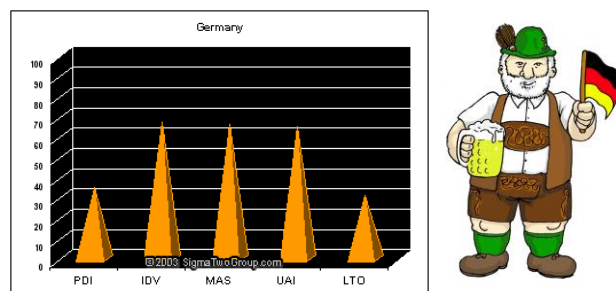


Figure 3 Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions: Germany [4] and stereotypical image of German

Figure 4 shows the Hofstede dimensions for China. The Chinese culture has the lowest individualism (IDV) rank among any Asian cultures [4]. This leads to a very loyal society where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of the group. The process of completing a task is just as important as the result. Also of note is the very high score in power distance (80) compared to the world average of 55. Members of high power distance societies rarely speak up against individuals of authority or voice their opinion. Charlie, our Chinese team member, is a very quiet, talented and intelligent person. He completes his work on time and expresses his opinion when required and is never confrontational. The team believes he is not a stereotypical Chinese. In any case, he is a great asset to the team.

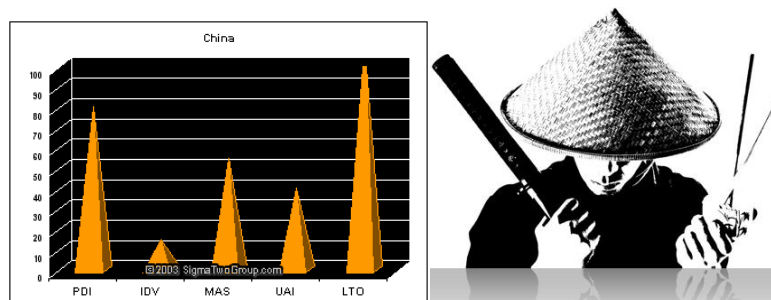


Figure 4 Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions: China [4] and stereotypical image of Chinese

The United States is such a large and diverse country that it seems hard to pinpoint a true US stereotype. Figure 5 shows the cultural dimensions for the United States. The US culture is the opposite of Chinese culture when it comes to individualism. The lone cowboy is a stereotype that symbolizes the high level of individualism. How will the American and Chinese team members work together? Very well it turns out. Scott, our quota American, is very nice and friendly. He came up with interesting and innovative ideas that helped to enhance the team performance. He was considerate when giving feedback and made sure that all team members voiced their opinions before making a decision.



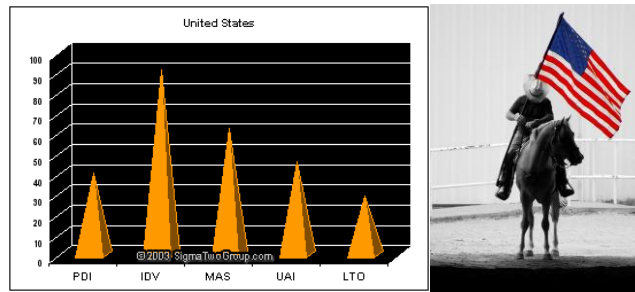


Figure 5 Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions: United States [4] and stereotypical image of American

John has exposure to both American and British cultures as he was born in the UK. Not surprisingly, the British culture is very similar to the American in terms of cultural dimensions (see Figure 6). Though British people are considered very reserved and conventional, John always came with interesting insights that helped the team to look at the matter from a different perspective. He also did not disappoint in adding his British humor to any situation starting from the suggestion to wear devil's horns to represent the devil's advocate to wearing traditional garments for the final presentation.

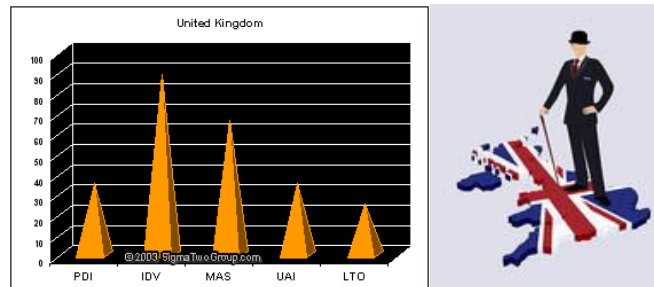


Figure 6 Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions: United Kingdom [4] and stereotypical image of a Brit

Indians are looked at as a very punctual and hardworking people. They are more individualistic than other Asian cultures (see Figure 7). These stereotypes hold true for both Aarthi and Priti who were always punctual and dedicated to their work.

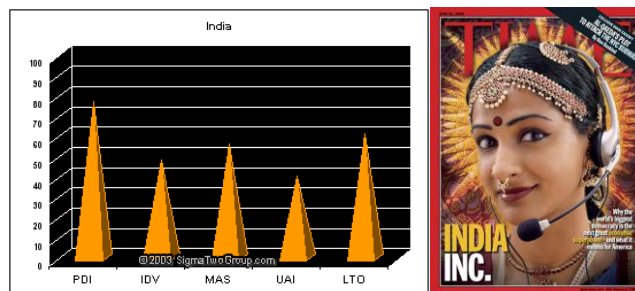


Figure 7 Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions: India [4] and stereotypical image of Indian

## 7 Lessons learned

Overall our team performed very well and we had a good deal of fun. We learned that it is important to check expectations, time availability and commitment at the beginning. Having a note-taker was extremely helpful. We found that brainstorming was useful at the beginning of a task or when team members got stuck. Regular meetings and communication kept us on track and productive.



## 8 Bibliography

- [1] P. R. Scholtes, B. L. Joiner, and B. J. Streibel, *The Team Handbook*, 3rd ed. WI: Oriel Inc., 2003.
- [2] J. R. Katzenbach and D. K. Smith, "Chapter Five: The Team Performance Curve," in *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization*, New York, NY: Collins Business Essentials, 2003, p. 320.
- [3] C. J. G. Gersick, "Time and Transition in Work Teams: Toward a New Model of Group Development," *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 9-41, Mar. 1988.
- [4] "Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Explained," *Geert Hofstede - itim*, 2009. [Online]. Available: [http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\\_germany.shtml](http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_germany.shtml). [Accessed: 28-May-2011].

## **9 Appendices**

### **9.1 Team Rules**

1. Attend all meetings unless you have a prior engagement. Be on time.
2. Submit SR write-ups by Sunday so the team has sufficient time to review and comment.
3. Prepare slides for presentation dry-run by Sunday prior to class ownership.
4. If late with an assignment, let the team know by email in due time so other arrangements can be made.
5. Always be courteous and respectful.
6. When brainstorming let all ideas be heard without dismissing them too soon.

### **9.2 Team Journal Summary**

On the first day of class everyone introduced themselves and provided a brief bio. It was suggested that students utilize the information from the introductions to help them form small teams. The professor advised a good mix of students new to the graduate program and students with more experience that had been in the program for a while. Team Four was primarily formed by students that were simply sitting next to each other with little regard for experience or interest in each other's backgrounds. Team Four turned out to be a very functional, productive team with both varying levels of graduate student experience and both professional and ethnic diversity. Although each individual had challenging schedules the team was able to identify a meeting time outside of class to work together to prepare assignments. Each individual agreed on Sunday afternoons.

At the first team meeting outside of class the team quickly established ground rules and individuals readily accepted team assigned tasks and roles without a lot of difficulty or challenges. The team worked together to assign readings, portions of presentations, and to develop a schedule of milestones and assignment due dates. It became apparent at the first meeting outside of class that all members had experience working on teams and knew how to behave in a team despite not knowing each other initially. Members were talkative and exchanged ideas and personal experiences and backgrounds early on. There seemed to be a genuine interest in one another both personally and as a team for the class.

The second day of class our team did not present. Although all members were present in class, some members did not sit in proximity to the rest of the team. All team members participated actively with the presenting team's activities, although some members participated more frequently than others.

On the second team meeting members worked together to run through the presentation and time each section. Everyone seemed to be light hearted and helpful to one another. The team also agreed to wear similar clothing for our first presentation to show solidarity between members. Everyone agreed to wear a white shirt with jeans. It became apparent at this meeting that some members had strong personalities and others were more quiet and agreeable to whatever direction the team went. There were no conflicts or confrontations as members' personalities complimented one another.

The team did a very good job on our first presentation on the third day of class. Everyone was pleased and we had a great interaction with the class. All members seemed enthusiastic and pleased with the time we spent preparing and the result.

There was a state of tension when one team member left for two weeks. We completed the presentation and other task assignments without him. However, due to the inability to communicate

with that team member tension arose. When he returned we had a heart-to heart explaining that better hand-off before his leave would have reduced the level of anxiety.

All team members were present again for the sixth day of class which was also a class our team was presenting again. The presentation went very well and a future team meeting outside of class was set for a Thursday night and it was proposed to hold this meeting at restaurant/bar. The team agreed on a location via e-mail later that week.

All members came to the bar for the meeting and it was a productive and enjoyable social meeting. Members talked more and learned more about each other at this meeting than any previous meeting where all members were present. We discussed, agreed on, and planned our final presentation and the final details of the process report.

The team met outside of class again the following week at the library to rehearse the final presentation.

### **9.3 Meeting Notes**

**Date: May 25 @ 6:30 at PSU library**

Attendees: all

This was the quickest meeting yet! It took only 15 minutes to complete the discussion:

- Instructions for construction project (Scott), make an announcement at halfway mark (2 min), start a time on-screen
- Let teams play (2 x 7 min)
- Observations (5 min)
  - i. Created a team leader?
  - ii. Did they assign a time keeper?
  - iii. Task pacing?
  - iv. Task distribution – equal vs. concentrated on some team members
  - v. Discussion vs. doing
- About our team (10 minutes)
  - i. Radar chart - John
  - ii. Task pacing - Vera
  - iii. Roller coaster - Charlie

**Date: May 18 @ 6:30pm at “On Deck Sports Bar”**

Attendees: All

Reviewed outline of the meeting report and brainstormed ideas for the team process presentation. Scott suggested letting teams build a bridge from a limited set of construction material. We agreed.

Action Items:

- Prepare construction game so we can all test it out (Scott) by Wed May 25
- Draft each section of the report by Wed May 25

Agreed to next meeting time. Some of us went on to grab a drink at another bar (the current establishment did not feel like serving us any beer on the patio despite the sunshine).

**Date: May 8, 2011 @ 10am at PSU library**

Attendees: All except John and Scott. John had a prior engagement and Scott was out of town.  
Discussed the content of the presentation for class ownership and drafted the outline for the team process report.

Outline Team Process Report

2. Abstract
3. Team introduction (done)
4. Stages of the team (Priti)
  - Task pacing (Vera)
  - team performance depicted as radar chart (John)
5. Team rules/team charter (done)
6. Team roller coaster (Charlie)
7. Cross-cultural communication (Aarthy)
8. Lessons learned (Vera)
9. References
10. Appendix - meeting notes & journal

**Date: April 24, 2011 @ 3pm at PSU library**

Attendees: Charlie could not make it and Scott was on duty

Discussed the team presentation and made the following decisions:

1. John will start with an icebreaker on animal horoscopes.
2. Priti will recap what the class should have learned from the previous session with a quiz
3. Priti and Aarthy will briefly run through the stages of team growth. Vera will put on horns and play devil's advocate critiquing and putting the theory in perspective and solicit class comments.
4. We will play a card game that shows how lack of communication can lead to frustration and confusion
5. Charlie will cover team roller coaster
6. Vera will cover SR-4
7. John will close and solicit any other discussion as necessary.

We also talked about the Research Report which IS DUE IN TWO WEEKS

1. John will review an article from MIT on team IQ
2. Vera will critique Wisdom of Teams (positively) and look on HBR for newer and more appropriate articles on diversity and team performance
3. Priti will look at a book on team discipline and outline why it should be added to the class resource list
4. Aarti, Charlie and Scott – please send your selection of either a paper or book you would like to critique and/or what paper you think should be added to the class literature list

The paper has to be a maximum of seven pages. Please send your **draft write-ups by May 4!** I can consolidate and write a short introduction and conclusion. Am

**Date: April 10, 2011 @ 3pm at PSU library**

Attendees: All

We ran through the presentation and made suggestions. Estimated timing was as follows:

Priti: 12min

John: 10 min

Scott: 10 min

Charlie: 16 min

Scott: 3 min

Aarthi/Vera: 15 min

Total: 66 min

We have 90 minutes allotted to us so we should be in good time. Aarthi and I can always extend the discussion phase at the end. I also expect the affinity diagram exercise will take longer than expected.

WEAR WHITE SHIRT AND JEANS for the presentation!

Action Items

Priti: Write potato chip ideas on index cards and bring scotch tape and a sharpie/marker

Vera: Update slides with feedback (done and sent)

Vera: Send out names for Charlie's interview (done)

All: Send details for team charter (I have: John and Charlie)

**Date: April 6, 2011**

Attendees: All

1. Complete session outline and responsibility assignments over email
2. Agreed on deadlines (posted in the team charter and again below). We will amend these as we proceed

Action Items

Vera: type and send team charter (done)

All: email/post suggestions for ground rules

Priti: design template for presentation (done)

All: think of a team building action that we can do together

All: prepare for the Sunday meeting and have most of your presentation/talking point ready. The goal is to finalize the presentation on Sunday within 2 hours.

Key Milestones

Week 3 class ownership + team charter due

Week 4 Draft outline for team research report

Week 5 SR-4 (Vera) + check status of team research report

Week 6 SR-5a (Aarthi) + draft outline for team process report & presentation

Week 7 class ownership + SR-7 (Priti) + SR-9 (Scott) + team research report

Week 8 Dry-run for team process presentation, draft team process report

Week 9 Team process presentation

Week 10 Team process report

**Date: March 30, 2011 @ 5:30 during class**

Attendees: All

For all assigned actions the **name** is highlighted in bold.

Notes

- There were two proposals as to how to divide the work for the suggested readings (SR). Either each team member writes a paragraph or one team member selects a reading, drafts the report and submits it for comment. Since we were six in the group and only needed to submit five reports we decided to select one team member as the editor.
- Each team member selected their preferred SR and John volunteered as editor:
  - Charlie: 2

- Vera: 3
  - Priti: 5
  - Scott: 9
  - Aarthi will email her selection
  - John: editor
- We agreed that all reports should be submitted by Sunday to give the other team members time to comment and for the editor to incorporate the comments. **Charlie** will send the SR due next class by Sunday.
- **Aarthi** volunteered to create a group and email the contact information to everyone.
- The next team meeting was scheduled for after class the next Wednesday. **Vera** offered to send out an agenda beforehand. The team will discuss additional team meetings then. It turned out to be a little difficult to agree on a time for meetings as some team members have classes during all but one evening during the week and other team members work alternate weekends.
- The dry-run for the presentation was scheduled for Sunday April 9 at 3pm.

## **9.4 Team Charter**

### **9.4.1 Mission**

Become good team players.

### **9.4.2 Output Targets**

1. Become good communicators as measured by subjective evaluation by our team members (360 evaluation)
2. Deliver excellent team performance as measured by the quality of the team products (team research report, team process report and selected readings reports)
3. Enrich others by delivering an entertaining and instructive class when our team has class ownership and also by participating during other class times
4. Overcome aversion and discomfort of working in teams that some team members harbor
5. Diversify skill set by learning additional tools for working in teams successfully

### **9.4.3 Basis for Interest**

The ETM 522 class is a core requirement for the Masters in ETM. Additionally team members expressed desire to improve their skill set for working in teams effectively.

### **9.4.4 Key Mile Stones**

- Class ownerships
- SR write-ups
- Team research report
- Team process report

Resources: Readings, PSU online library, Internet, team creativity

### **9.4.5 Key Challenges**

Scheduling poses the biggest challenge to effective team communication. Some people are busy all week-evenings except Friday; other team members work alternate weekends. One team member has work obligations that take him out of town for two weeks. The team will address these challenges by planning ahead and allotting the workload so all assignments can be finished in time.