ETM 522/622: Communication and Team Building

Professor: Dr. Fatima Albar

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TEAM 2: PROCESS REPORT

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Executive Summary

We analyzed team processes used by our team, "Team 2" during winter 2015 term for; "Communication & Team Building" class. Purpose of our analysis is to look back and learn from our shortcomings and strengthen performance during future courses. We have laid down phases of development that our team went through during the term and processes implemented to gradually transition through stages along the team performance curve (Appendix-III) [3]; starting from a "potential" team through "real" to a "high performance" team with a common goal in mind to do an outstanding job of enhancing our learning experience and getting a good grade.

Introduction

Whenever teams are formed constituting of small group of people with complementary skills to work on common goals; most team members try to perform to the best of abilities hoping to deliver the performance results that make them a winner in one way or another. To their surprise when all members start working towards common objectives, all with only good intentions; hurdles are created, conflicts arise making the end goal seem unachievable lowering the hope, morals & enthusiasm of team members. There has been a lot of research on "team development models" that talk about how such barriers can be removed by following a process and activities for improving team performance. Team development activities can range from simple bonding exercises to intensive, multi-day team development retreats [1]. We noticed our team development went through some variation of stages outlined in Bruce Tuckman's; 4 stage model.

Team 2 consisted of 4 members with diverse backgrounds but coincidently coming from a very similar cultural backdrop to an extent of even being familiar with common regional language in addition to English. But it was sort of created haphazardly during the first class when 4 of us sort ended up walking towards same vicinity in the classroom, 3 of us were at least visually familiar with each other due to a previous class and 4th member just kind of accidentally joined in (tendency of like people to stick together). This process report will describe challenges experienced by our team members; Shruti Agarwal, Swati Kar, and Imran Mirza & Pramod Kumar during the course work.

Member Profile

Team 2 consisted of the following set individuals. Brief description of their background is given below.

Imran Mirza:

Originally from Pakistan; graduated in electrical engineering from Rutgers University in New Jersey. He is a technology veteran and has worked in various sectors of silicon industry over the years and brings tremendous experience to Team 2 because of exposure and experience of working in multiple types of diverse team setups scattered internationally. He is married with 2 kids and enjoys sports, food and traveling with his family in free time.

Shruti Agrawal:

Is a native of Nepal; she works as a Data analyst intern in a health care industry in Portland. She enjoys reading about technology, sports, politics and finance. She loves dancing and also likes to play guitar in her leisure hours. It's been 3 years for her in Portland and she loves everything about this city from beautiful summer, food carts, restaurants, hike, rivers, and falls to its wet winter rain. She has earned a degree in Electronics and Communication engineering in India and has worked as software engineer for around 3 years. This is her third term in the ETM program and her interest is in Project Management.

Swati Kar:

Comes from a traditionally diverse and rich country, India and brings diversity to the team with her varied experiences. She holds an engineering degree in Electronics and Communication, worked as a Software Developer for about 3 years and then as a Quality Assurance Analyst for 2 more years in India. Currently, she is a full time student in the ETM program and works as a Software Quality Engineer with a financial solutions company. Swati wishes to keep adding more diverse roles to her profile through knowledge gained from ETM program. Apart from being a food lover, her interest lies in making new friends, cooking and learning different dance forms.

Pramod Kumar:

Native from India with varied professional experiences. He holds an undergraduate degree in Electricals and Electronics Engineering. He started his career as a Technology Marketing Intern at Cap Gemini, with his well-versed knowledge he jumped into AMAZON.COM as a Risk Investigator for 2 years. He is a very versatile guy with lot of creativity and comes up with great ideas every time. Currently, he is a full time student in ETM program and working as a Project Analyst in a local firm. Apart from all these he is always active and adds more life to the ideas by brainstorming. His interests are making new friends, Go Carting, Mountain hiking, reading case studies, making short films and composing music etc.

Communication

Communication being the key to success for all kinds of teams; effectiveness of successful communication is determined by how well team members exchange information amongst themselves during collaboration and completion of tasks involved to accomplish the common team goals. All team members knew this deep down and that is probably why we all agreed to meet as soon as possible over the weekend; face to face at a local public library to discuss high-level logistics of how we are going to function and communicate during the course of the term. We decided to use following tools to communicate and exchange information; because in order for a team or individual to perform efficiently it has to have the right tools to collaborate and develop work products.

- Face-to-Face - Weekly team Meetings.
- Occasional team lunches.
- Messaging App – WhatsApp.
- Emails.
- Conference calls.
- Google Drive

Traditional Communication Tools:

More "traditional" communication tools like email and cell phone were used for regular communication outside of the classroom. We mainly relied on email but also used phone calls for more personal one-on-one encounters. We also set up a group in mobile messaging app called 'WhatsApp' to reach out team members instantly.

Google Drive:

Google Drive was really helpful because all of us could access the documents simultaneously and even update it online itself. It also allowed us to keep our work products synchronized and revision controlled in a very efficient way without having to worry about sharing emails with attachments. The team had ground rules in place that we all followed, such as, increasing the version number of each document after making changes e.g. SR#1 Version 1.doc, SR#1 Version2.doc.

Although few of us had the experience of working in virtual teams but we did not realize that we will actually end up working in a virtual team setup; until later in the term when we started learning about virtual teams and realized that our team dynamics are exactly those of a "virtual team". Most of us were part time students with full time jobs and family commitments with the exception of one member. Due to such limitations; with time it became harder for every member to meet face to face for our weekly meetings due to clashing commitments. Shortly; we will show how we got over such hurdles to deliver.

Team Process Analysis (Against Tuckman's Model)

Bruce Tuckman proposed a model of team building in 1965; stating that teams go through 4 stages of development namely; "Forming", "Storming", "Norming" & "Performing". He maintained that these phases are all necessary and inevitable in order for the teams to grow, to face up to challenges, to tackle problems, to find solutions, to plan work and deliver results [2].

Our team did not have any prior knowledge of this model but we felt that; our team went through all stages of development mentioned above.

Forming:

This is when team forming takes place; members acquaint themselves with each other but still feel as strangers and interaction is very formal. When we first meet during our first class and formed a team; a member with prior experience immediately realized the need to have a face 2 face ; ice breaker meeting to acquaint with each other and establish some ground rules and expectations to interact. We meet in a local public library Saturday morning; in a very casual environment; since our team was up for presentation in the very next class so our "forming" session meeting turned out to be a very productive one, where we actually discussed logistics of preparing and working on our team presentation the following week. This was a blessing in disguise where everyone was forced to get comfortable at the earliest.

Storming:

This is when members start feeling comfortable with each other and start to express opinions challenging others opinions. In addition; they don't like to be controlled by a leader. This is a challenging and unpleasant stage but essential for team growth. Being the first team to present

in the following class we had to meet again a few times to discuss how each team member will work on their deliverables followed by organization and integration of the entire presentation. We decided to have a daily synch up on phone conference call. We noticed during these synch ups that people disagreed; emotions were high, few heated but productive discussions took place. Since it was still the beginning of our team formation stage people felt they are being judged but it productively ignited the discussions making us all achieve our goal finalizing the presentation slides well before the presentation day. People really worked hard on their piece to create first impressions.

Norming:

Here people feel like they belong to the team and realize that work can be done easily if they are open to all viewpoints and some may have to give up their ideas in order for the team to function properly to deliver. We had struggles during the first week when we started having a daily synch up to achieve a common goal to have a high quality work product (presentation during first class). But during the course of the week we realized that in the end we should come through and all negativity that impacted individuals during the storming phase, hurting their performance turned into a sense of accomplishment; band-aiding the wounds. It was "win-win" for all team members and a huge confidence booster.

Performing:

This is the phase where team members fully trust each other without paying attention to leadership hierarchy and are very flexible towards each other including decision-making aspects of the project. After some time team members; feel they can work smoothly without inappropriate conflict and minimal supervision. Being thrown into violent waters the first week helped our team to come out of it stronger because we tried hard to not drown. That fear of failure helped us stay a-float and learn to resolve conflicts. I would say that we were not a high performance team at the end of this first week but it gave us enough in site into how we can get there.

Team Assignments

One of the best things that happened to us was a challenge to jump into fire the very first week when we had to deliver the presentation in second week. This apparently daunting task forced our team to go through all Tuckman stages during the 1st week itself.

We felt very good after our presentation and thought we did well. In order to keep that momentum going we wanted to leverage from our mistakes for future experiences. So we deiced to have on-going weekly meetings along with weekly tracking of assigned tasks. Journal Entries; is another thing we wanted to maintain as free format document that we could use at any given point as a reminder of our mistakes to avoid them in future.

Weekly Meetings:

We would have a weekly meeting every Saturday; to go over items due for following 2 weeks. Meeting Agenda was sent out in advance so people were prepared to talk about things. We prioritized the tasks due in the upcoming week over any other items due the following week. General methodology for selected readings (SR) was to assign all team members to research literature followed by 2 team members responsible for write-up and remaining 2 as reviewers. We would swap roles on every other SR. For Team presentation's all of us would share

responsibilities and divide up tasks and assign clear owners to every task and hold them responsible for it. But more than often people would just jump in to help each other out on individual tasks; a real team characteristic. During research report; we meet very frequently first to discuss and iron out the exact area to focus our research on followed by assigning task ownership.

Weekly tracking & Journal entry

There was an incident during one of the SR's; where due to miscommunication 2 team member's ended up working on same tasks; this redundant effort ended up wasting their times. So we as team decided to track all assigned tasks every week during our weekly meeting's to keep track of such mishaps in addition; to keep our team on-track in general and ensure team members are accountable for their ownerships. Journal entry document was also kept intact where the expectation was to keep a running record of major events good or bad during the execution of the project so we can learn from them to improve future performance. We started out pretty religiously but due to busy schedules we could not keep up with the required frequency.

Team Radar

A radar chart, also known as spider chart, which was first used by Georg von Mayr in 1877 is a data comparison tools allowing team members to monitors their strengths and weakness [4]. Our team decided to rate each member and the team as a whole on the following points:

- o Collaboration
- o Communication
- o Trust and respect
- o Conflict
- o Decision making
- o Performance

Each person rated himself or herself from 1 to 10 showing a beginning of the class rating and then an after class rating in each of the criteria previously mentioned. Radar chart was a good tool for visualizing how well our team was performing in each of these areas. This data and change in the group performance metrics according to the radar chart are presented in Appendix-I.

Gantt chart

A Gantt chart is a type of bar chart, first developed by Karol Adamiecki in 1896, and independently by Henry Gantt in the 1910s, that illustrates a project schedule. [5] Before creating this chart, we had first prepared a work breakdown structure, displaying all the activities and its time scale. A bar represents each activity; the position and length of the bar reflects the start date, duration and end date of the activity. Gantt chart was a very effective tool as it helped us to keep a track on our activities and submissions and ensured that they were delivered on schedule. (Please refer Appendix-II)

Lessons Learned

Over the course of this term we have all grown, improved and refined our team communication & collaboration skills. We learned how a team forms, storms, norms and perform to deliver results. We have learnt the importance of engaging all team members early on so they get through stages of team building as soon as possible. Another important learning was the need to have a team leader or facilitator whose job should be to push the team members somehow to make them realize the importance of completing tasks on schedule or else risk failure. In addition; team leader also keeps overall organizations goals in check to ensure all members deliver accordingly.

We experienced the model of moving from a working group (set of individuals) to Pseudo team (no interest in sharing information) and to Potential Team (some of us would argue we started here seeking improvement and clarity) and then to Real Team (common purpose and mutually accountability) and finally we have become a High Performance team that has deeply committed members that will push for each other's personal goals and success. We look forward using this skillset in our other classes as well in order to be an efficient and responsible team.

Conclusions

This class was a great opportunity to learn what the crucial team components and key success factors are for real and high performance teams. Any team has the capability to grow from set of individuals to high performing team if the members have strong and clearly defined roles. This was definitely the case for our group. Being familiar with a common second language helped us get over the initial hump of formality amongst members and added humor to our interactions during stressful times and was good for team building but for professional reasons teams should maintain official language for communication to ensure that professional integrity is not violated or risked.

Appendix-I: Team Radar

Before Class Rating:

Issues	Imran	Pramod	Swati	Shruti	Total	Average Rating
Collaboration	5	5	5	5	20	5
Communication	4	6	5	6	21	5.25
Trust and respect	2	5	5	6	18	4.5
Conflict	3	4	5	4	16	4
Decision making	4	4	4	4	16	4
Performance	2	5	6	6	19	4.75
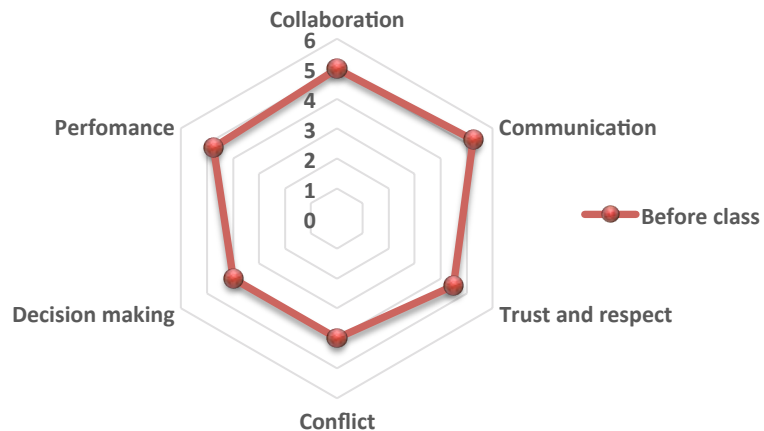
After Class Rating:

Issues	Imran	Pramod	Swati	Shruti	Total	Average rating
Collaboration	9	10	9	9	37	9.25
Communication	10	8	9	9	36	9
Trust and respect	9	8	9	9	35	8.75
Conflict	8	8	9	7	32	8
Decision making	8	8	8	8	32	8
Performance	9	9	9	9	36	9
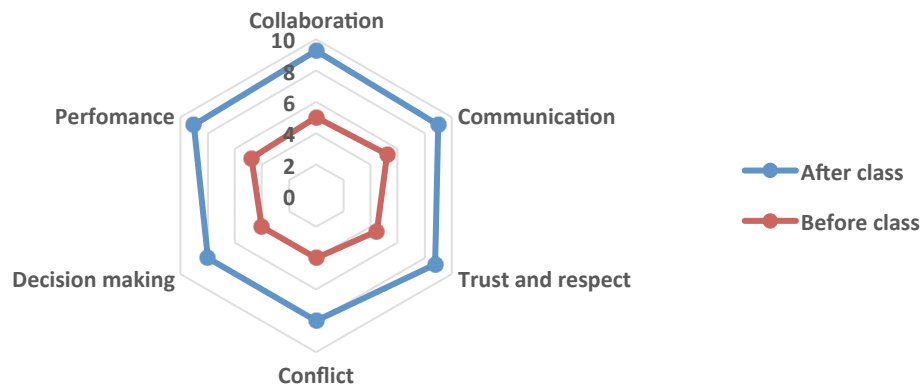
Appendix-II

Work Breakdown Structure

Task Name	Start Date	End Date	Duration
⊟ Presentation -1 (Burlington Model)	01/08/15	01/14/15	5
Planning phase	01/08/15	01/09/15	2
Burlington case study-1	01/10/15	01/13/15	3
Activities-1	01/12/15	01/13/15	2
SR-1	01/12/15	01/14/15	3
SR-3	01/18/15	01/20/15	3
⊟ Presentation-2 (Team performance)	01/31/15	02/04/15	4
Planning	01/31/15	02/04/15	4
Comtech case study-2	01/31/15	02/03/15	3
Activites-2	02/03/15	02/04/15	2
⊟ Team Research report	02/05/15	02/18/15	10
Topic Finalization	02/05/15	02/11/15	5
Team research report	02/13/15	02/18/15	4
Survey Questionaire preparation	02/14/15	02/16/15	2
SR-8	02/20/15	02/24/15	3
⊟ Team Process report	02/26/15	03/10/15	9
Planning	02/26/15	02/26/15	1
Final report	03/02/15	03/10/15	7
Final Presentation (Conflict resolution)	03/07/15	03/11/15	4

Appendix-III

Gantt chart
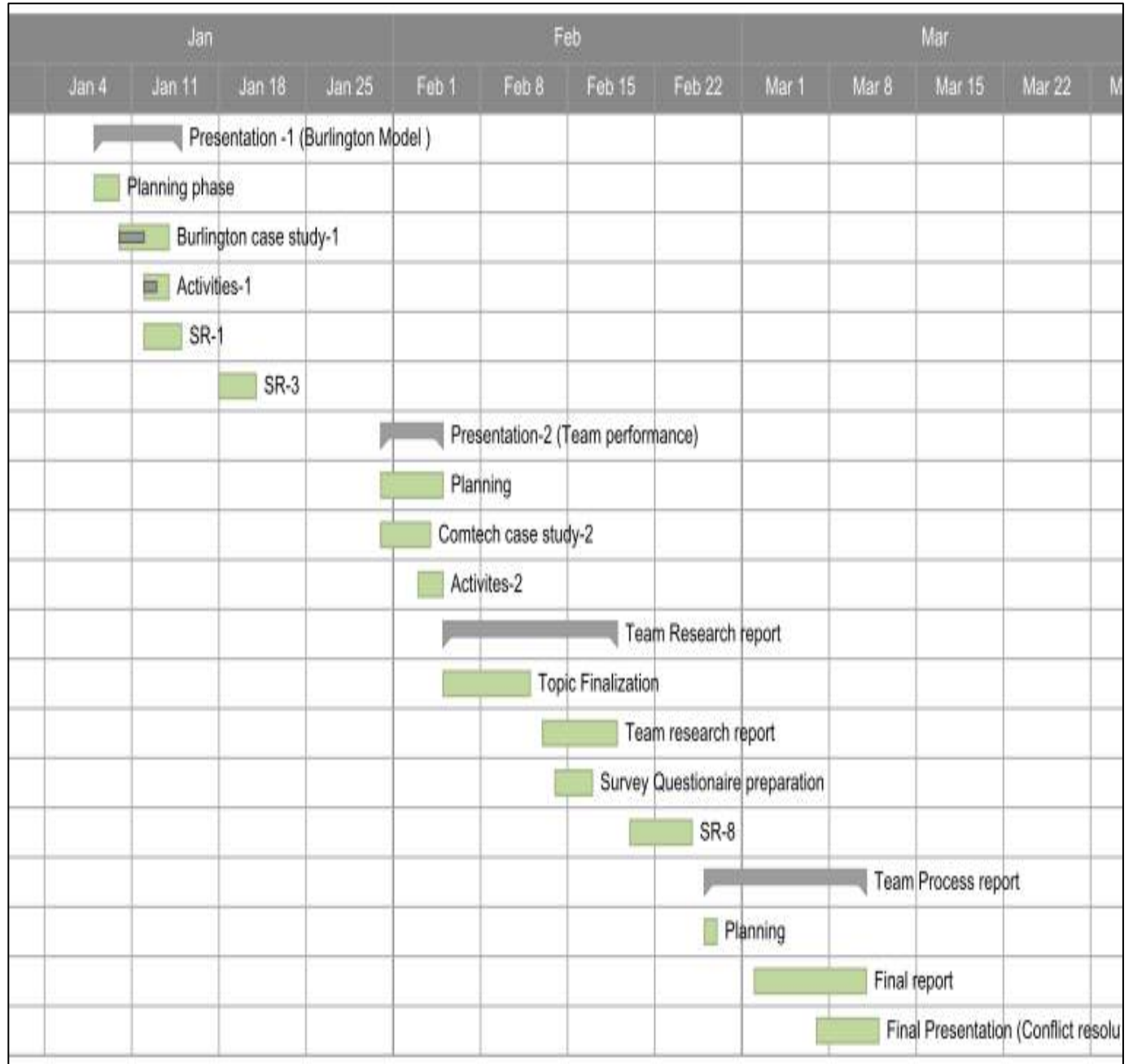
THE TEAM PERFORMANCE CURVE

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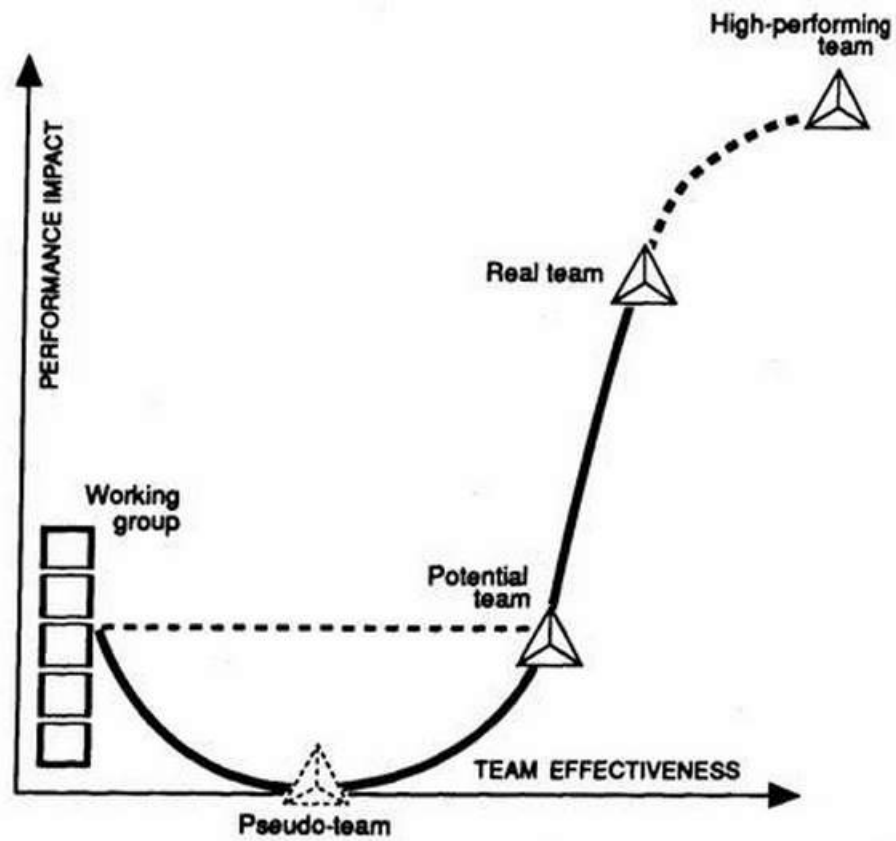
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[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radar_chart.

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gantt_chart.