

Self reflection of team



Group work is the one thing that cannot be avoided no matter whom you work for or no matter how many people work for you. Synergic group work could give a company the competitive edge that is required to become a market leader while entropic group work is likely to cause a catastrophe. In the process of doing the group report on a virtual business in the tourism industry, I have managed to find different aspects of group work that I could improve upon and certain aspects that I should keep the same.

In order to increase the group synergy and reduce entropy one must critically analyse several situations and base future decision on the analysis. Many such situations, where critical analysis was required, arose during the course of the group project. One such situation occurred during the group development stage of forming. There are three main stages in the development of groups including forming, storming norming, performing and adjourning (Bartol et al, 2008, 558-559).

The first of the five is forming and during this step the group will try to establish the basic ground rules for both group interactions and task performance. During this stage the members will also search for large amount of information on the task, on the acceptable and the unacceptable behaviour, and the most efficient way to interact with the group (Bartol et al, 2008, 558). My group started this process by having a group meeting where we discussed the ground rules that we were all going to have to follow in order to have effective group meetings.

We also discussed some of the obvious “ do’s and don’t” like how to handle calls during meetings, etc. This was a highly effective manoeuvre because by

doing this we were able to create a set of guideline which everyone could follow, thus eliminating the chance of time and energy being lost due to confusion and misunderstandings. This process also promoted the cohesiveness of the group thus speeding up the group development cycle to quickly reach the stages of norming and performing. The stage of performing was another state which I critically analysed.

During this stage the roles of each member becomes clear and they become devoted to the task ahead of them while trying to maintain intra-group relationships at the same time. The team thus achieves a state where all members channel their energy into the task and work towards positive synergy (Bartol et al, 2008, 559). Though not all groups achieve this, my group was effectively able to attain this stage. My group, which consisted of 6 members, was able to allocate each person to a special task according to their individual strengths.

Two members were allocated to type up a majority of the report and another two, including me, were allocated to do the research. One member was assigned the task of checking for grammatical, punctuation and other errors and the last one to help with any process in general in case of excess pressure or demand on a certain kind of task. By doing this we were each able to specialise in one area and were thus able to take advantage of the fact that some people have a knack for research while some are better at typing (Frijters et al, 2008, 8).

Though we were highly segregated in the work we did, we continued to maintain a reasonable level of communication through regular meetings and

the frequent use of email. This enabled us to work more efficiently and ensured that we were working as a group. Our communication however was not always perfect and lead to a few misunderstandings. In general the five main sources of miscommunication are perceptual issues, attribution processes, semantics, communication skills and cultural context. (Bartol et al, 2008, 519) When we first started the group work, the one we had the most trouble with was attribution process. Attribution theory tries to explain how people make judgements on the action and behaviour of other members in the group. It says that we make either dispositional judgements in which case we assume the cause to be internal, like personality, or situational judgements where we assume the cause to be external, like luck. (Bartol et al, 2008, 520) In the beginning we made a fundamental attribution error.

For the first two weeks a member from our group was very sick and was thus unable to attend any of the first few meetings. However we had not received that information until the fourth week and because of that during those four weeks most of us assumed that she either had a lazy nature or shared a more laidback culture. As a result when she started attending the meetings, we gave her the less difficult tasks. Thus, the lack of knowledge combined with the fundamental attribution error caused problematic communication for four week though it could have been solved on the first day she came.

Having cultural diversity in groups is a very effective way to increase the number of view points. It has been found that a culturally diverse group is very likely to produce a higher number of effective ideas than a completely homogeneous group. (McLeod et al. , 1996, 248-264) Our group was a moderately diverse team. It consisted of two male and four female, out of

this we had a male and female who were from India and Dubai respectively. This is a fairly good distribution, as there was at least one person per representation.

We have at least one female non-Australian, one male non-Australian, one male Australian and one female Australian. It is well documented that in many culturally diverse groups communication becomes less effective due to differences in communication styles which may result in tension and even power struggles. (Cox, 1991, 45-56). However, since both the foreign members have stayed in Australia for a few years and were able to adapt to the communication styles we did not have this problem. I have learnt a lot about how to run a more efficient group from participating in the virtual business assignment.

I've also found through research that a culturally diverse group may have communication problems but in the long run will always do better than a homogeneous team. To reduce the communication problems and prevent misunderstandings it is always better to set the ground rule as early as possible. To increase the synergy the group members could specialise at what they are better at. Through the completion of the project I have come to realise that successful team members must simultaneously focus inward on the group process as well as look outward at the task ahead.