

# Henry tam case

Experience, Human Nature



We have to evaluate the performance of a distinctly diverse team aiming to create a business plan for MGI's "MusicPuzzle" Game to enter the HBS contest. The team comprised of MGI founders, Sasha, Igor and Roman, two HBS students Henry and Dana and subject matter experts Alex and Dav. In addition, we have to recommend actions for Henry Tam, which would foster better team dynamics to accomplish the task at hand. The team, after much deliberation and little success, has just 3 weeks before entering the case at the HBS Business Plan competition.

In the team there is, Sasha, a former HBS MBA student with experience in drastically different industries; Igor and Roman, exceptionally gifted Russian musicians; Henry & Dana who are finance professionals in the second year of their HBS MBA; Alex, who is a specialist in computer music applications from Berkley; and Dave, a software developer from MIT. Root Cause Analysis The major strengths of the team were a presence of diverse talents, close affinity between the founders, great product, shared passion and complementary skills.

However, there is much conflict and failure to deliver results, due to a variety of factors. These factors include a lack of cohesion as a team, an ambiguity of roles definitions, a lack of clear leadership, and a weak working culture. The team has a common goal to develop the business plan, but the focus is different, with the HBS students focused on the contest deadlines, and the MGI founders striving to create a viable business. The team is unable to come to a consensus on which market to penetrate.

Additionally, the team is functioning more as a group; as they are unstructured, have an unevenly distributed workload (Katzenbach & Smith, 2005). There is no collective work product, and there is an individual approach to problem solving, as opposed to shared resolutions. Within the group, there are also factions or subgroups. Adding to the frustration was that they were in a small confined workspace on the HBS campus. And finally, the team was completely lacking in interrelationship trust. Drawing from Tuckman's stages of group development: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning ("Tuckman's Stages, n. . ."), developed in 1965, we can assess the team building processes. The forming stage was spread over three meetings as all the members were not introduced at the very beginning. During the storming stage, team members' expectations were not aligned. Dana and Henry perceived the role to be more strategic, as opposed to Sasha's perception of them as interns focused on writing the business plan only. The modus operandi suggested by Sasha to contact HBS alumni added to the chaos. Plus the introduction of Dav forced Henry and Dana to speculate on Sasha's motives.

In the norming stage we do not see any cohesion but constant disagreements, all primarily due to not defining the norms at the onset. Issues in the norming stage lead to unclear orientation in the performing stage, not adhering to the timelines. Benchmarking the meetings against Belbin's Team Roles (Belbin, 2010), we see how the seven team members fluctuate between different roles during the three meetings. In the first meeting, Igor, Sasha, Henry and Dana met with different perceptions and reservations and a complete lack of clear strategy.

At this point it is very unclear as to who is in each role: Plant, Resource investigator, Coordinator, Shaper, Monitor Evaluator, Team worker, Implementer, Completer Finisher, or Specialist. Roman and Alex join the second meeting, and amidst a lot of brainstorming and 'creative' discussion we can see the team members conforming to Belbin's Team roles. There is a notable understanding between Henry and Dana to try and handle Sasha's aggression and confrontational style. The third meeting witnesses the entry of Dan the specialist, which adds fuel to the fire and worsens the stance between Sasha and Dana.

We can now see that the team members conform slightly more to the Belbin's model. The team lacked a compelling direction and clear leadership as well (Coutu & Hackman, 2009). Leadership was shared based on who felt like taking on the role at the time. Without formal leadership, there was a breakdown in communication and an absence of the setting of deadlines or the implementation of an overall plan or vision. In fact, an overall direction did not exist, as the MGI founders had different motivating factors than the students, and different perspectives regarding the abilities and roles of each other.

Tasks were not broken down into specific subtasks, or assigned to individual team members. Also, without leadership, there is no establishment or communication of the norms and values of the team, and no role modeling or coaching. The culture of team is weak, as there are no established norms and values or ground rules. As such, there was a discrepancy in the development of the team during the norming stage, as discussed previously.

The team also engaged in a cultural clash in terms of industry areas, country/ethnic differences, and subcultures.

The MGI founders related to a creative and artistic industry, while the students were business focused. The cultural differences manifested themselves in terms of language and expectations. And finally, within the subgroups were individual subcultures, which lead to a difference in values, roles, purposes, and goals especially when disagreements between these subcultures occurred (Hofstede, 1998). Multicultural teams can be more difficult to manage, and can lead to conflicts in communication styles, decision-making approaches, and attitudes towards hierarchy (Brett, Behfar & Kristin, 2006).

As the overall working culture is weak, these clashes can be tumultuous as there is not guiding set of norms and values to reference. Alternatives Henry could try the mediation path first, by mitigating difference between Sasha and Dana using preventive strategies to manage conflict. This strategy will involve everyone to provide input and address issues jointly. The feasibility, however, is in question due to lack of time, the uncertainty of the effectiveness of the mediator and identification of common ground.

Secondly, Henry could identify a leader from within the team.

It could be Alex, as his background in business and music is a good match. Similarly, Henry could step up as he has a neutral stance and no open conflicts with any member of the team. A clear advantage is that there would be no time wasted in learning about the team members, the task at hand and the issues. Henry might be a better option as leader though based on his

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Putting ourselves in the shoes of Henry Tam, and taking the test, we concluded that he has a type of ISTJ (“ MBTI Questionnaire”, n. ), which indicates that he has a clear moral code, operates at high efficiency, is dependable, and able to enforce standards. However, as both Alex and Henry have a history with the team, they might not be able to clearly assert their leadership capability in the short timep available. As such, a third party leader could be found and appointed to address issues and provide expertise, based on knowledge of the market. This would introduce a neutral person and satisfy the desire of some team members who seek external intervention.

The flip side is that there would not be enough time to bring someone on board, there may not be availability in the budget to accommodate the associated costs, and the fit of the new entrant to the team might not be fluid. A third option could be to drop out of the contest, but continue working on the business plan. This will ease the pressure of the deadline and help to alleviate some of the stress and tension. Henry and Dana should continue on the project as they are intrinsically motivated and deeply involved in the project. This clearly gives a breathing space and might promote common focus.

The downside is that the motivation levels might drop along with the reputation and the team will miss out on the chance to get the business plan evaluated by some of the best experts in the field. Recommendation The most viable solution for the team is for Henry to fulfill the role of formal leader, as he is intrinsically motivated and heavily involved in the project.

He, of all the team members, has engaged in the least conflict, is overall neutral, and thus is in the best position to assert influence and guidelines upon the team.

Henry could provide some role definition, according to Belbin's model, for specific members of the team and help team members in aiding in the cultural differences by adapting to them and working around them (Brett, Behfar & Kristin, 2006). This is a better option than obtaining a third-party leader, as the resource costs, time and budget specifically, would be lower. Additionally, in order to build credibility as a leader, Henry should investigate the costs of obtaining a consultant with specialized knowledge of the market. This will serve to satisfy team members who are requesting outside perspective and additional insight.