

# Reflective report on group work assignment



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8 | | References | 9 | Introduction When effective group management and high organisation skills are applied, group work can bring students a wide range of skills and abilities related to people and problem solving. Group work demonstrates student's capacity to communicate effectively, share and consider opinions, establish trust, analyse the group process, resolve conflicts and also develop their creativity.

However, the constructive learning and beneficial results does not always come as a result of group work. For instance, if the students can not perceive the objective of the group work in order to achieve a common goal, or to lay back or believe that the work load can be relied on other members of the group making the individual work less and still get an equal grade, the educational benefits can result in frustration and arguments as well as leading the whole group to a state of stress and anxiety. This essay reflects on my own participation towards ' Lush Project' as a project director, also how I contributed in interpreting and researching the Lush Brief, as well as my participation with the final presentation.

It also discusses the difficulties that emerged throughout the group work; things that went well regards to the preparation and the areas that could have been improved upon. The Group A group can be defined in various ways, for instance; Charles Handy (1993, p. 150) identified a group as " any collection of people who perceive themselves to be a group" in order to interact with one another. The group then is likely to go through a number of

structures which cover forming the group, the group passing from an undeveloped concept to a mature conception then going through a “ variety of stages from mutual acceptance and membership to control and organisation” (Culliname, J. , 2007, p. 628)). My group went though the ‘ Tuckman’ structure which is defined as ‘ forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning’.

Forming – initially the group was formed of seven students from the same class. There was no deliberation as to who would be in what group. There were only seven in the class and we were given the assignment to research the company ‘ Lush’ and from our findings we were to stage and run a successful and unique event on behalf of the company. In this stage, the individuals start to know the other members of the group and the group is uncertain of the prospective tasks and there are no rules for the group work leading to a lack of focus and interest. At the norming stage a clearer guideline was given, individuals had the chance to choose the roles in the group and procedures were taken from there.

The group consisted of a Project Director, two Logistics Managers, an Account Director, a Finance director and two Creative Directors where all had to come across to an agreement of a name for the group ‘ Essence Events’ and where each individual group member would pitch an idea to the rest of the group. At this stage emotion was shown and excitement expressed towards the work we had to do. A timetable for regular meetings was given to each individual of the group by the project director and at each meeting’s ‘ minutes’ were taken by one member of the group in order to keep track of

the work that had been done. Then comes the performing where the team knew each other and structure and guideline were clear and cohesive.

The team now focused on a common goal of developing the ideas for the ‘Lush’ event. At the beginning of this stage, all members of the group were getting together regularly and were constructing and expanding ideas for the project as well as for the presentation. However, unfortunately the group did not stay this way for very long. Distraction and lack of interest emerged bringing the whole group down to anxiety and disagreement. I as group leader was rather unsuccessful in putting the team together and in demanding more of a serious commitment from them. At this stage, the group should have been able to have delivered a successful project in the form of a presentation.

Instead, all the hard work that had been done was diverted into a lack of interest and commitment resulting in a negative consequence. The final stage is the adjourning, where ‘Essence Events’ group disbanded. The idea should be that the group dispersing should get together again and reflect on the group work and see what went well and what did not go well and what should we have done differently. In this case, each member of the group was asked to reflect on the group work on their own which might bring more benefit as an individual. My Role in the Group According to Culliname, J. (2007, p. 566), a leader “aim to influence and guide others into pursuing particular objectives or visions of the future and to stimulate them into waiting to follow”.

A project director has the same principle of leader in the sense of being able to conduct tasks successfully, maintaining teamwork and have a democratic participation leadership on the project. At the outset, as the project director I felt that I would fit into the role easily and would be able to distribute different roles to each member of the group. However, I was on a steep learning curve where I would find out that as group leader not only are you expected to have your own ideas to pitch to the group, but you are expected to salvage the group when an idea goes horribly wrong and the group then turns to you for guidance and a solution of how to rectify such problems. Not only was the actual academic side of the group a shock, but the outside organisation of the group proved to be tough as well.

Trying to pin down each member of the group to turn up at a particular time at a particular place was a whole other project in itself as of course each member had other work pieces to deal with at the same time, which needed the same amount of due care and attention as the 'Lush' event presentation required. When separating responsibilities and separate individual projects to each member of the group I was well aware that not only did the writing and research need to be done but we needed to go to 'Lush' stores themselves in order to gather further research information to then take back to the group and compile our findings together to make a firm research file from which we could then discuss and sort what was considered to be primary information and what was secondary information.

What we did was with each visit to the 'Lush' stores we would divide up the responsibilities and each person was responsible for gathering the respective information. The branches of research were mainly creativity, marketing,

pricing, PH, promotion and target market. For instance, the marketing section one observation that the group made is that the door to the shop was always open. This was so that the smell of the products would reach the public outside and therefore attract their attention and ultimately attract consumers into the store to purchase the ' Lush' products. When we pitched our ideas to the group, one of the group members suggested that we should run the ' Lush' event based on the four seasons (winter, summer, autumn and spring).

Each section included the right smell of the particular season, the right colour, such as darker heavier colours for the winter seasons and brighter colours for spring and summer. We emphasised the fact that ' Lush' does not carry out any tests on animals and that all their products are environmentally friendly and are also all natural products. Difficult encountered during the group work As with any group or team project it is inevitable that at some point throughout the time together there will be a minor or a major hurdle. This being that either one of the group members does not agree with a particular pitch or strongly disagrees with another person's idea(s). They may even simply not get along with another member of the group.

In the ' Lush' situation all group members seemed to get along at the beginning, however, soon disagreement and arguments started to emerge on the event's topic and meetings. As a general rule the ideas for the project were usually chosen by the majority vote of the group. The problems that we as a group faced were ones that we would generally expect to encounter. We as a group suffered from people not attending meetings. This could be down

to lack of organisation, however, it is unlikely that this was the case as all members of the group were aware of the time, date and location of the meeting. Some members simply did not turn up and failed to let the rest of the group who had turned up know that they would not be coming.

This ultimately could be said down to the group leader, however, the leader can only do so much as the leader cannot be expected to force other members to turn up. As leader I could only send messages, emails and give phone calls and state the importance of the meeting but, could not make the individual turn up. Another problem we faced was as mentioned earlier; there was a lack of interest from certain members, and this pushed its way through the group and affected others as they began to become irritated with the members of the group who, when they would turn up, not doing any work. This issue I addressed as I took the respective group members aside and both explained the situation that they were putting the group in and asked what it was in particular they were not interested in.

It became apparent that it was not the idea that they were not interested in, more the fact they simply did not want to share the workload, as they would not turn up to the meetings and hence cause the other members who did turn up to take on their work that they had not done as well as their own part of the project. Being anxious of not being able to complete the project in time for the presentation a few of the group members decided to starting putting the project together even though it seemed to be a lot of work to do for just a few members of the team. Just three days before the presentation all group members seemed to be interested about the work again and a vast improvement was made and the members who previously had failed to turn

up, turned up to what was supposed to be the last meeting and the work was again shared “equally” and finished.

This although seemingly positive in the short term for the group project, was relatively short lived as it had come too late and there was a lot of ground to cover in order to deliver our presentation. This created the problem that there was not as much time as we had hoped for. The Presentation The last minute work reflected in our final presentation because as a result there was a distinct lack of practice for the final presentation. The problems during the actual presentation were that due to the lack of practice there was no real deliverance of each member’s part as they had not pre-read their material beforehand and in effect, the actual presentation was more of a reading practice than of the finished article.

Our first main practice was about a few hours before the final presentation was due and this was where I as group leader had to explain that I had told the members that this was the situation that we would be in if we carried on the way we were going three weeks prior to the presentation date. This led to a select few of us being able to deliver our part in a professional way, however, rendering the remainder of the project unfinished. We started late as one member who was responsible for the budgeting aspect of our project had failed to complete final checks on their display and as a result during the presentation their part failed to initialise causing a major delay whilst they left and went to go and print off their part to present.

Upon reflection, the above situations were somewhat out of my control as group leader as I could not force the members of the group to turn up and do



their part, also being unable to reach the other members due to them not answering my messages or simply not answering phone calls left the rest of the group in a hard situation as we were unaware as to whether they were doing their part of the project. These issues as aforementioned were out of my control somewhat, however, I feel that my role as project director was not fully satisfied as I did not quite deliberate responsibilities as much as I might possibly have wanted to if given the same opportunity again.

There were many ideas from the group at the outset of the project, however, there was no real development of these ideas and this may have been what caused the lack of guidance from the project leader. Also as group leader it is a challenging situation to be in as it is easy to be forceful and blunt at the beginning of the project, however, I chose perhaps too soft an approach for too long a period and this is what perhaps led to some of the group members failing to keep up to date. Upon reflection, we as a group did deliver our presentation; however, it was not as good as what we originally thought when compiling our ideas. There was a lot of potential for the group and the idea of the ' Four Seasons' was something that we felt as a group would enable us to succeed in our endeavours as a group.

However, if I am to perform my role correctly, must shoulder the responsibility as it was up to me to have directed the ideas much more thoroughly, and if given the opportunity again, I would most definitely do so, as good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment. For the final presentation, I gave the idea and it was accepted by the group that we should use a flip chart as this mirrored the fact that ' Lush' also used natural products. We used a lot of visual representation as we felt

that this would be a much more observer friendly method of communicating our ideas across. The pictures that we used were all from magazine cut-outs. At the presentation, we did not have just one sole speaker, each member of the group spoke on their respective areas of responsibility. Myself and another member of the group gave the main introduction to the presentation and a small introduction to each speaker.

Due to the lack of practice I was very anxious and tense resulting in a bad opening and followed by the other member of the group. The timing was very accurate and the presentation ended with a simple but effective conclusion followed by answering all direct questions made by the panel. In order to have delivered a better presentation the group should have had better commitment to what the original aim of the group was at the outset of the project. Critically, the leader should have relayed a better understanding of what was expected in order to complete our presentation to a high professional standard. Conclusion According to J. F. Benson (1987, p. 1) Group work in practice " refers to the conscious, disciplined, and systematic use of knowledge about the processes of collective human interaction, in order to intervene in an informed way, or promote some desired objective in a group setting. " In our group's presentation, the idea of disciplined knowledge was what we as a group failed to achieve as we were unable to have the entire group in one place every time we arranged a time to meet. Although groups generally elect a leader, there are as always exceptions to the general rule. A group is a team, a democracy, not a dictatorship. A group needs to have its own ideas and aims, so that a high level of morale is maintained throughout the group.

If there is one person who decides upon everything with no concept of what it is like to function as a team, the team will fail, due to a lack of interest and commitment. A team needs to work together, else it will fall short of what a group is all about, and a team has more than one person within it.

References Benson, J. F. (1987), *Working more Creatively with Groups*, Routledge. Brandler, S. and Roman, P. C. (1999), *Group Work: Skills and Strategies for Effective Interventions*, 2nd Edition, The Haworth Press Inc. Culliname, J. (2007), *Working in Organisations: A Compilation of Resources for the University of Greenwich*, 2nd Edition, A Person Custom Publication. Handy, C. (1993), *Understanding Organisations*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Book.