

Terracog case study

Education



In this case, there are three main meetings which have been held. Throughout these three meetings, and according to the TerraCog's meeting culture that I observed, I can find some problems that may generate some negative influence on the meeting dynamics and may not conduct a good result easily. To begin with, I will briefly describe the performance about these three meetings regarding the project of Aerial. According to the timeline of events provided by the case, these three meetings are held from spring 2007 to March 2008 whose topic is concerning the product design, market positioning, cost estimates, and price making.

The first meeting is held in order to "speed development and avoid the costs of new moldings and major reconfiguration" (Case PP3). The product design & development team decided to redesign based on the old products within the existing GPStech technology. As the case, the convener of this meeting is Richard Fiero, the president of TerraCog, and the participants include Allen Roth, director of design & development, and ED Pryor, Vice president of sales.

The main issue for this meeting is regarding the features and quality of the new product competing with the rivals such as Posthaste and Garmin. In this meeting they successfully reached the agreement about what kind of product TerraCog will design and produce, and Roth was tasked to be in charge of the designing and cost estimating. Because this is a brief and short meeting just for assigning the tasks, there is few conflict and disagreement in the meeting. The second meeting is Aerial Pre-Launch Meeting which is convened by Emma Richardson, the new executive vice president on March 7, 2008.

Because the design team completed Aerial by the end of 2007 and the product team had finished the test of the model, Richardson held this meeting with sales, production, and design & development to discuss the cost estimate and retail price of the new product. The specific participants are Emma Richardson, Ed Pryor, Allen Roth, Tony Barren, the product director, Cory Wu, the manager of software and firmware design, and Alice Gorga, the manager of hardware design.

However, in the meeting the disagreement occurred, Barren said that the cost of the new product production is too high because of Aerial's higher-end components and complicated manufacture. While Pryor said he could not sell the new products in such high cost. Also Cory Wu showed her puzzle about the high cost. Due to his problem, the meeting came to a deadlock. Reviewing this meeting, I think Emma Richardson who was the convener and facilitator did less to smooth and facilitate the meeting. The only thing she did was suggesting ending the meeting when the participants were at an impasse.

Also in the third meeting, though she invited more people such as Becky Timmons, the CFO, and Harold Whisler, the Vice President of design and development, to attend the Resumption meeting, Richardson did nothing but let the quarrel carry on because I cannot see any word of Richardson in the meeting. In my opinion, there were some opportunities for facilitator to adjust the rhythm of the meeting. For example, in the Aerial Pre-Launch Meeting, when Barren finished his serious word, as the facilitator, Emma Richardson should make some word to smooth the atmosphere of the meeting, whatever it is the joke or semiformal word.

In this way, the conflict or disagreement will not so easily to be occurred like the situation in the description of the case. Regarding the latter two meetings, there are several factors contributing to the dysfunctional meeting culture. The first factor is my previous statement, the malfunction of the role of the facilitator. The second factor is the seats of the Resumption of Pre-Launch Meeting. In the meeting, inappropriate seats may aggravate the conflict between both sides. In the seats of the resumption meeting, on one hand, Emma Richardson as the facilitator sat in a wrong place, instead, she should sit in the middle of both sides.

In this seat, she can observe the situation of meeting more easily, and it was convenient for her the ask questions to both sides. On the other hand, Tony Barren and Allen Roth should sit in the same side, and Ed Pryor and Cory Wu should sit at the other side. Finally, I think the appropriate facilitator of the third meeting should be Richard Fiero, the President of TerraCog. Because Emma Richard seemed to can't control the situation in the Aerial Pre-Launch Meeting, and in the resumption meeting, the facilitator and mediator should be the people in a higher position: Richard Fiero.

This is what I concluded and assessed for the previous meeting held in TerraCog. However, for the next meeting that will be held next week, and in order to successfully facilitate, I should make more consideration about how to design and conduct the upcoming meeting. Firstly, I will think about the purpose and deliverables of the third launching meeting. The purpose should be, as the case writes, how to " push them to one". Recalling the last meeting, the disagreement concerns on the high cost and it causes a big problem for marketing.

Ed Pryor require the production to cut down the cost, but the request are declined because Tony Barren, director of the production said that it was unlikely to reduce the cost because once we did that, some key features of the new products would be lost and it would weaken the competitiveness of the new products. Therefore, I think the main purpose is how to unify the different opinions about cost cutting. If we solve the problem, the next steps regarding the pricing and go-to-market plan will be easily settled, and the project launching meeting will be finished successfully.

In aspect to the participants of the upcoming meeting, I strongly recommend that the president should attend the meeting. As I stated previously, Emma Richardson is out of capacity, further, the authority, to control the situation of the meeting because it relates the disagreement of two big departments, sales and production. Therefore, it is necessary that the president appears in the meeting. Even president Fiero should be the facilitator and mediator of the meeting. As for the other participants, I think it is nice with the same list of the last meeting.

However, for the Harold Whistler, I think he did not well play his role in the last meeting. As the leader who is in charge of the design and development, he made less constructive suggestion for the problem solving. For the issues that will discuss in the next meeting, I think they mainly constitute three points. The first and the most important issue is about the cost of the new product. The production department thought the cost they estimated is very sound. However, the marketing section of TerraCog cannot make an appropriate marketing plan that would retake the losing market share in such high cost.

Therefore the first issue is how to balance the cost, features and sales regarding the new product. The second issue is the re-pricing and re-positioning on the market after both sides reach an agreement on the production cost. The final issue is about the go-to-marketing of the new product and the related competition strategies. The latter two issues should be addressed easily once the first problem is solved. For the facilitation guide, I will more think about the approaches how to mediate the argument and disagreement between the departments of sales and production. One approach is one-to-one debate.

Now Ed Pryor, the vice president of sales represents the voice of sales, however, there are different voice in the department of design and production. For example, Cory Wu, manager of software and firmware design also thinks the cost of producing the new product is too high. Also, Alice Gorga was absent the last meeting, and I do not know his attitude about the problem. Therefore, I think an important step is integrating the opinions inside the party of design and production as the one voice. Particularly, Harold Whistler should play a key role in this job because he is in charge of the design and production department.

First he should unify the views inside the group, and then I think Fiero should communicate with him to learn about the idea of the production department. That is the right step to gathering and processing the right information. Besides, at the site of the meeting, Fiero (facilitator) should hold a brainstorming to come up with the solution of disagreement. This approach guarantee everyone engage in the discussion and it is more possible to excogitate the ideas by participants. More important, the brainstorming

method will desalt the opposite atmosphere and change it to practical ways to find the solutions.