**Due 1/12/2014 , Submitted 30/11/2014**

**S.L.W.C Essays and Brainstorming**

**DT 228-1**

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**S.L.W.C Academic Essay**

Introduction

The group choose a non-uniform day in a primary school as part of the S.L.W.C portion of the Communications module. The idea was very simplistic. The reasoning behind this was straight forward. It made working as a team relatively easier as there was minimal work involved in organising the event as all the group had to worry about was a proposal form and collecting the money. In the beginning, the group found it difficult to work together. This was due to the fact that they hadn’t all been introduced to one and other yet. Everyone in the group knew at least one other person relatively well, so, the first order of business as a team was to establish a strong group relationship and build from that.

Tuckman’s Theory about Groups

1Dr Bruce Tuckman published his Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing model in 1965. The Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing theory is a great way to describe what a team is, how they can work together, difficulties they can face and behavioural problems they can have.

*Forming:* This is the initial stages in the Tuckman’s theory. 2Orientation, testing and dependence are the fundamentals that make up the group process of forming.In the first class, the group had to get to know one and other before any real work could begin. The team held a brainstorming session and also asked one and other questions so that everyone could get a better understanding of each other and what certain people could offer to the group. Several ideas were put forward and the group had to collectively test each idea and depend on one and other to point out any flaws (if there were any) in the idea. At this stage, natural roles such as leadership and creativity within the group began to shine through.

*Storming:* This is the second stage in Tuckman’s theory. 2Conflict due to interpersonal issues accompanied by emotional attachment to certain areas of the task i.e. an idea. These behaviours can often work against the group and cause uncertainty with the task and may be labelled as storming. In the second class, the group concentrated on assigning certain roles to an individual. There was minor conflict involved in this process as some people wanted to take on roles that they were not suited to. In order to fix this, each member took Belbin’s questionnaire to determine what role they were going to play. This helped to settle some of the conflict within the group, but there were still some issues to be resolved. Some group members felt as though their idea should be used due to emotional attachment. This was quickly resolved by a group discussion, however, it caused uncertainty within the group about the task at hand.

*Norming:* This is the third stage in Tuckman’s theory. 2Any negativity in the group towards the task is gotten rid of so that new standards can evolve, and new roles can be adopted. Different opinions are expressed. This can be called norming. After the second class, everything began to sink in. Everybody in the team recognised and respected one and others roles, goals were a lot easier to set and achieve and communication was a lot better between the group than before due to lack of conflict, clarity of the task at hand and also a Facebook group chat had been set up. This meant that we could contribute ideas and opinions a lot easier and a lot more freely than before.

*Performing:* This is the fourth and final stage in Tuckman’s theory. 2In this stage the group functions together a lot better than previously before due to flexibility and understanding and group energy is channelled into the task. Minor issues have been resolved, and each member of the group can display understanding towards one and other and help each other to accomplish the task at hand. This stage can be labelled as performing. A few weeks into the task, the group really came into their element. Everyone was offering advice to one and other about certain parts of the task and also to help one and other if it was needed. Each group member used their strengths to overcome other team member’s weaknesses such as a language difficulty or inability to phrase sentences properly. The group really worked hard, stayed focused on the task at hand and channelled all their energy into the task at hand in order for it to be as successful as it was.

Dr. R. M. Belbin’s theories about group work

3A team isn’t just a bunch of people with different titles, it’s a group of people who each have a specific role to play in a team. In order for a team to work together efficiently, they have to determine what role suits them best and stick to that role. The group used Belbin’s theories of group work to determine what roles would suit everyone best. Each member took the 4questionnaire to determine what role they could play. In essence, it worked out well for the team as there was such a diverse amount of roles within the group.

Daniel was the group’s leader or 3co-ordinator and 3implementer. He was able to focus on the objective, delegate work accordingly and plan out a timetable and strategy. Daniel made sure that everyone had a role in the group and that work was evenly distributed. Conor was the group’s 3monitor evaluator. He was able to watch over the group and provide logical reasoning to make judgements about what and what not to do. Conor was able to help Daniel with deciding what would and wouldn’t work well. Liam was the group’s 3plant. He was the creative one and was good at problem solving in non-conventional ways. Liam was ultimately responsible for coming up with the idea of a non-uniform day and figuring out ways around collecting the money. Tariq was the group’s 3resource investigator. He was able to provide the team with all the outside knowledge that they needed to know. Tariq was responsible for researching information about the event and also the essay. Fahad was the team’s 3team-worker. He helped the team to gel well by offering to help any member in the group who was struggling with various tasks. Fahad played a crucial part in making sure that no one had too much of a work load to handle.

Although everyone had a role to play, each member contributed towards one and other to help keep a balance within the group and so that one person’s weaknesses could be counteracted by another person’s strengths.

Conclusion

The group found that working as a team can have its ups and downs. These can range from completing tasks efficiently and on time, to conflict over ideas and roles within the group. The group also found that Belbin’s theories about group work helped tremendously. They were the reason why the team was able to work so well and efficiently together. Identifying team roles was crucial in other for everyone to be happy and for things to run smoothly and in the end, the group felt as though they had really bonded as a result of this which made the whole experience a whole lot more enjoyable for everyone.

Overall the group found that it was an enjoyable experience working together as a team and forming new relationships, but the team has also gained invaluable experience about what roles they themselves as individuals can play in a team and also what can contribute negatively and positively to working as a team.

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**Reflective Essay**

Skill Development

Overall we as a group feel that the Students Learning With Communities project was quite useful to our learning and professional skills development and that all the learning objectives were met to certain degree, some more than others. Fortunately we as group had very little arguments or conflicts, the closest we had was when we were pitching ideas for our charity event and there were some disagreements over what we should do. However we were quickly able to come to a compromise which pleased everyone.

Of the five members in our team we all had different roles but these were not rigid roles confining any of us to certain tasks only, we used them mostly as guide for divvying up work. The roles were as follows; Daniel Tilley as Chairman, Conor Murphy as Monitor Evaluator, Tariq Saleh Al-mulhim as Research Investigator, Fahad Alothman as Team Worker and Liam Lalor as Plant/’ideas man’.

Our organisational skills have definitely developed due to this project, we learned the importance of a plan and more importantly to stick to that plan and leave everything to the last minute.As a group we think it’s fair to say that our research skills have developed, from doing this assignment we learned to recognise who we should contact for certain information. To be honest our problem solving skills have not developed greatly as a result of this project. The only significant problem we had to solve was how to safely transport the money we raised from Co. Laois to DIT Kevin Street.

By far our communication skills have developed the most out of any of these key skills. We have learned when it is best to have meetings face-to-face rather than online such as when coming up with fundraising ideas. By communicating online mostly it was far more difficult to clearly convey oneself and this did in fact lead so misinterpretations. Finally we feel that our project management skills have also developed largely, we now see the many and sometimes tedious steps involved in creating idea and following through with it from start to finish. Sometimes great ideas are just that and nothing more; they might infeasible due to an abundance of reasons.

Team Work

Team Good As Gold consisted of initially six members however during the semester one of our members Patrick, dropped out and the team members then were; Daniel Tilley, Conor Murphy, Tariq Saleh Al-mulhim, Fahad Alothman-nz and Liam Lalor. In general we quite liked working as a team, we got along fairly well, we didn’t bicker much and the work load seemed much more manageable by divvying it up across the team. Overall the benefits of working as group seemed to far outweigh any downsides or any complications that could arise, well in this case anyway.

We all contributed to this project in some form or another, Daniel as the leader usually delegated the tasks unless someone volunteered, he set up a Facebook group as well so we could do some planning online and updated all of us on the progress up the project. Conor as the evaluator went through the various ideas pitched for the fundraiser, weighed up the pros and cons and determined whether it was really a feasible option for the group. Tariq worked alongside Conor in going through the options, Tariq contacted various people in his search for information. For example, when postulating on selling an original Christmas card with photographs of Dublin, Tariq got in contact with members of the Photography Society here in DIT. He did this to find out more about rules and regulations relating to taking photographs of various sites in Dublin and whether permission would to be got. Fahad as team worker helped all of us by consistently reminding of when the proposals were due and how many weeks we had left to write the essays. Finally Liam as the ideas man came up with the majority of the options for the fundraiser including the idea we finally went through with it; the non-uniform day in Ballinakill primary school where his mother works.

Group Work and Planning

Although during the course the semester it felt as though we weren’t learning too much about group work and planning upon reflection it appears as though we learned more than we thought. We learned to divvy up the work to people most suited to the task, for example in the beginning Tariq struggled coming up with some ideas for the fundraiser so Liam took over as the ideas man. We learned to not to rely on one person too much, when Patrick left the course and as a result the group our individual workload increased but fortunately he was not in charge of anything too crucial. If he had, we could have found ourselves in serious trouble. Unforeseen events like this happen and we learned that we shouldn’t let things like or conflicts slow us down and derail the entire plan. Speaking of which the group also learned the importance of planning early, planning in detail and planning realistically.

Changes/Improvements to assignment

If we were to repeat the assignment there would certainly be a few changes we would make as to how we went about the project. Firstly we would have more meetings in real life than we previously had. Most of our meetings were on Facebook and as a result they undeniably was not as productive as they probably should have been, also with face-to-face meetings we all would have a better understanding of the current state of the project. Secondly we probably would try to communicate more whether that be online or offline and remind each of their tasks to do and the impending deadline. Finally we would probably try and come with another fundraising idea on top over the non-uniform day we ran to raise even more money for Wells For Zoë.

Overall we can’t think of many ways in which this project could be improved however we think that the academic essay could less of a focus on content such as Tuckman’s theory and that we learn more about Wells For Zoe so people have better understanding what the money they raise is going towards.

Civic Engagement

As extreme as it sounds we as a group feel civic engagement is critically important to all of humanity. Without civic engagement we are all just a group self-centred people who only look out for themselves and just happen to be in the same vicinity. Without communities the world would be in a far worse state than it is now, many people rely on communities for help whether that is educational help, financial help or physical help. Civic engagement promotes positive change for the community as whole. By helping others within our community we can see the help we are given more clearly.

For example in this project; Students Learning With Communities we learned of Wells for Zoe the charity which our fundraising would be donated to. This Irish charity mostly works in Northern Malawi providing access to safe, drinkable water. This here is an example of civic engagement not on a local or even national scale but on a global scale. By realising we are essential to their own health and well-being despite the vast distance we are given a deeper understanding how we can also be dependent on other far nations. We as a group think that when you truly understand this you can have concept of the interwoven network of communities in the world and see how crucial civic engagement is to this.

**Brainstorming Sheets**

***Option 1:***

1. **Define the activity in detail:** We proposed the idea of a non-uniform day in Ballinakill primary school in Co. Laois where the children dress up for Halloween and pay to dress up.
2. **Will you need help from an outside source?** If yes, how and when will you contact them? The School is the only source of outside help we need. We will contact them through Liam Lalor’s mother A.S.A.P
3. **Materials needed? How will you get them?** Bucket to collect the money. Buy one in the shop or find one lying around the house.
4. **Costs? If so, for what and how much?** Cost to transport the money must be taken into account. Also cost of calling the school via phone.
5. **Who will do what? For when?** Liam will contact the school through his mother and the rest of us will organise materials if needed and will also complete the proposal form
6. **Goal(s) (be very specific)?** To raise money and awareness for Wells for Zoe in the primary school, to develop necessary skills that a required to work in a team and to develop organisational skills.
7. **How will you know you have met these goal(s)?** Ask the principal to provide a written copy of a newsletter showing how they have informed kids/parents about Wells for Zoe and receive the money collected.
8. **Strengths?** Quick, easy, hassle free, minimal work involved.
9. **Weaknesses?** Cannot supervise the event personally due to legal reasons.
10. **Skills needed?** Good communication skills in order to communicate effectively with the school

***Option 2:***

1. **Define the activity in detail:** Host a charity raffle where the winner can win the “ultimate student hamper” Which contains items that would help students with daily life such as vouchers etc. Students would buy tickets through SU office and we would host draw in snackery.
2. **Will you need help from an outside source?** **If yes, how and when will you contact them?** Yes, we would need businesses to donate prizes for the hamper or to sponsor the event.
3. **Materials needed? How will you get them?** Items for the hamper, raffle tickets. We would acquire them either through sponsorship or by purchasing them.
4. **Costs?** **If so, for what and how much?** If we need to purchase any goods for the hamper, a cost will be incurred and any other materials such as raffle tickets or anything to do with the running of the event may incur a cost also. Posters for advertisement.
5. **Who will do what? For when?** Daniel and Conor will go around to shops to as for goods or to buy goods. Liam will ask about selling the tickets in the SU office. Tariq and Fahad will work on advertising the event through social media or around the college.
6. **Goal(s) (be very specific)?** To raise awareness and money for wells for Zoe, to develop necessary skills that a required to work in a team and to develop organisational skills.
7. **How will you know you have met these goal(s)?** If people are talking about the event around the college, if we make a profit on the raffle, if we work together well as a team and if we are able to organise the event well so that it runs smoothly, we will have met out goals.
8. **Strengths?** The event is local to D.I.T and is easy to supervise, there is a big target market to sell tickets to.
9. **Weaknesses?** Items for the hamper may be costly and we may not make a profit. May be difficult to organise the event and to sell tickets
10. **Skills needed?** Very good marketing and organisational skills so that the event will run smoothly. Good communication skills so that all parties involved will understand what’s going on and so that you have a good chance of obtaining sponsorship.

***Option 3:***

1. **Define the activity in detail:** Make charity Christmas cards which have pictures of historic and national landmarks on them and sell them around the college/Facebook
2. **Will you need help from an outside source? If yes, how and when will you contact them?** Yes, we will need to seek advice from photo soc in order to determine whether or not we can go ahead with the idea.
3. **Materials needed? How will you get them**? Card to print the cards out on and a printer to printer the cards.
4. **Costs? If so, for what and how much?** Yes, we can either buy a stack of card and a printer or use a printing service to print the cards
5. **Who will do what? For when?** Tariq will take the photos, Fahad will market the idea on Facebook and around the college and Conor, Daniel and Liam will get the cards printed.
6. **Goal(s) (be very specific)?** To raise awareness and money for wells for Zoe, to develop necessary skills that a required to work in a team and to develop organisational skills.
7. **How will you know you have met these goal(s)?** If people are talking about the event around the college, if we make a profit on the cards, if we work together well as a team and if we are able to organise the event well, we will have met out goals.
8. **Strengths?** Very straight forward idea, the process is repetitive and easy to do.
9. **Weaknesses?** A lot of time must be spent taking pictures and printing cards. May be some copyright laws associated with it.
10. **Skills needed?** Very good marketing and organisational skills so that things will sell and run smoothly. Good communication skills so that all parties involved will understand what’s going on.