# Previous Teaming and project management experience

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Over the past seven years, I have gained valuable experience as a team leader in two robotics competition teams, one in high school and one in my undergraduate university, as well as during an internship as a product manager at an autopilot software company. Through these three roles, I have observed both commonalities in management frameworks and notable differences in how these frameworks are applied depending on the organization’s structure.

On the positive side, I have gradually refined my approach to engaging team members and developed certain methodologies. For example, after a failure in a high school competition, I learned to view the product (in this case, the robot) from a holistic perspective rather than focusing solely on the component I was working on. This shift in mindset was pivotal for my future experiences, especially during my internship at Momenta, where I identified a system improvement by considering the product as a whole and focusing on customer requirements.

Additionally, I learned from my high school team coach that fostering an inclusive team culture is key to building a high-functioning team. I applied this lesson to my university team by emphasizing that we should accept any competition result as long as we had given our best effort. This united the team toward a common goal, and we achieved the best performance in the team’s history. As a leader, I found that balancing compassion and accountability is crucial for both project success and team member satisfaction, especially in unpaid roles where people contribute based on passion alone. Simple gestures like treating the team to dinner or coordinating flexible deadlines and resources helped acknowledge their efforts and boost morale.

For the negative side, however, managing people is often the most challenging aspect of leadership. Transitioning from one team to another, whether in a school setting or a professional environment, requires adaptability. One difficulty I encountered was motivating people who were not being paid, relying instead on passion and belief. In addition, as a project manager, I was responsible for assigning leaders for sub-teams, but I often took too long to assess individuals and occasionally made poor decisions, which slowed down progress. During my internship, I also realized that one major drawback of my earlier experiences was the lack of a standardized process, which hampered efficiency in both my high school and undergraduate teams.

Going forward, I aim to improve in two key areas. First, I want to develop a more efficient framework to standardize team processes, which would ensure smoother operations and faster progress. Second, I plan to improve the methods used to validate whether our current progress aligns with our ultimate goals, ensuring that we stay on track and achieve the desired outcomes.

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During the past 7 years, I have worked as team leader in two robotics competition teams in my high school and undergrad university, as well as the product manager intern in an autopilot software company. Through these 3 roles, I think there are some common points in managing framework, while also some totally different points in implementing based on different organization styles.

For the positive part, I have gradually optimized the methods engaging everyone in the team and formulated some methodology. For example, I started to think the product (i.e. the robot) from comprehensive perspective rather than sticking to the part I worked on after a failure in a competition in my high school. This mindset transition paved solid path for my experience in the future, especially in the internship at Momenta where I detected a potential improvement for the system by seeing the product as a whole based on customers’ requirement. Besides, I learned from high school team coach that setting a inclusive team culture is the key to build to high-functioning team, then I applied it to my team in my undergrad. Showing that we should accept any result of the competition as long as we do our best, every member in the team make joint effort toward the same goal and achieved the best performance in the team history. During the management, I feel the leader or the project manager do balance the compassion and accountability so that both projects and members can meet the expected outcome, especially for the unpaid team like us that everybody worked here with their own devotion without any allowance. So treating the team to some dinners or beverage, coordinating the deadline and resource are great ways to recognize their effort.

For the negative part, dealing with people should be the most critical and tricky to consider. As we all transition from a team to another time to time in our career path or in school, adapting to a new team and follow the style of members in it should be a task for every project manager. During my experience in school scenario, I feel it a bit hard to fully motivate people with purely belief or passion without being paid. As a project manager and a team lead, I was also responsible for assigning leaders for each sub-team. I always took a long time recognizing a person and sometimes making poor decision which slowed down our progress.

In addition, learning from the process during the internship, lack of standardized process should be the most negative part during my experience in high school and undergrad team.

Based on the negative part mentioned above, the point I want to optimize most is to acquire an efficient framework to make team process more standardized. Besides, I also want to improve the validation methods to check if our current progress aligned with what we really want.