

CERTIFICATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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workplace

Question: You are required to reflect upon the personal skills set you have developed in relation to the development of the business plan arising from your group work. In order to do so, you must produce a reflective submission of approximately 2,000 words.

Introduction

The group and I decided to venture into the business of Games & Gadgets and our company is based London where we have a retail unit in Elephant & Castle shopping centre, south London. There are several factors which influenced our choice of business venture which will be fully discussed in the paragraphs below. However, it is important to mention that our idea is fundamentally based on the economic viability of the business in today's world. These two have become indispensable to mankind such that there is no end in sight of our business ability to expand as man has become addicted to games and gadgets. Just imagine a day without a phone, telephone and computer our world would literally come to a stand still and even planes and trains have become more effective because they are fitted with technological tools which enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

So what are these things called games, Dictionary.com defines games as any interactive game which is played using a specialised electronic device or a computer, television or mobile phone device along with a means to control the graphic image, whereas gadgets are referred to as small technological objects or device or appliance that has particular function and sometimes they are referred as gizmos. These two have indeed enhanced mankind's effectiveness and efficiency and happiness to us all. They have reduced the usual loads and have improved communication and the world with has become more enjoyable because of games and gadgets.

Now coming back to the question and my reflection on the personal skills I have developed as a result of my participation in the business plan. I should start by stating that the business planning process was an eye opener to most of those in my group. The first thing we all learned I should guess was our ability to work together to produce the business plan. With our difference and diversity of cultural beliefs and, orientations and background, we agreed to come out with the business plan. Just like anything involving a group there were people with strong and dominant views and some who were willing to agree easily but either way once we agreed on the type of business I had to read around extensively and visit websites and consult about the business type we had decided to undertake, its location and the of course the cliental or market. Then there were issues of the time and energy I needed to be with the group and also the challenges of having time to contribute effectively and meet times and deadlines and also understanding or appreciate the contributions of every team member.

In our group we then agreed on how we were to distribute work among ourselves and to ensure that this was done fairly and also with the realisation of the individual skills and ability. The composition of the group also mattered a lot, we had four members in the group namely Saeed Hussain, Irfan Rahim, Saif Malek Mithu and I and we managed to pull out one of the best business plan in my opinion.

As anyone can image every member of the group had their own individual plan before we started and so members had to pour in their minds and ideas to what kind of business one would prefer to do. There were of course several ideas put forward in the initial stages and of course this was not unusual as my research has also concluded that group work is never an easily task. The group members had to learn to be tolerant to one another and to accommodate each other's ideas as a starting point.

By the time we started working on the agreed plan, we all felt that we were included in the decision making process and all the ideas we had were listed down and discussed without fear or favour. What I learn in this process is that whilst it is very difficult at the start to agree to consensus however, once the group members agree it becomes easier to move forward. By way of our contributions, it came naturally that one of us had the lead the group. At some point we had to consult our tutor, for assistance and everyone involved was willing to assist us. As we progressed with the business plan we had to address other related and external issues such as the legal, accessibility and competition challenges for our proposed business. These also become central as the any business would be affected by these external factors regardless of how good the business plan is on paper.

One of the most important lesson I learn from this project was the willingness of group members to move forward and getting things done and the ability to assemble pieces of information from different people and making coming up with a well drafted single document. Whilst my research has mostly concluded that there are normally disagreements in working in groups, I should confess that this was never a problem in our group of four, I think we naturally accepted the leadership of the group leader and the direction he was taking such that there was little complaint or disagreement in the group. As I stated earlier, our tutor was very helpful in all times and things did move very fast as we managed to complete our tasks on time and we were all happy with the final draft of the business plan.

In the whole process, I also personally learnt about the ingredients of coming up with the best ideas whilst working in a group. To me listening to what every member was saying was as equally important at the business plan. After producing the accepted document or draft, I also learnt the power which lies in numbers. I learnt to manage myself whilst working in a group and even to compromise for the sake of progress.

As I reflect now, our group leader quickly and rightly played his part well in the group as he also acted as the timekeeper and maintaining group confidence. I discovered that once we started working on the plan, we suddenly realised the challenges of setting up a business and the issues business people have to address as they run businesses. It was also important to ensure that I contribute effectively and that my contribution was taken into account such that by the end of the project I could also see my footprints on the final business plan. We had to learn how to manage ideas, reflect on them, encourage participation and allow debate.

As also learnt to a larger extent, working in a group is like a family composed of brothers and sisters, that even if you do not agree at certain points, you still belong to the same family and once dinner is ready you all sit at the table to eat the same food.

Working with the group on the project taught me fundamental life skills in addition to the experience I have at my work that there will always be different opinions but if you are in a group you have to have the right mentality that the group has to work as either co-workers or the example of the family I gave above.

I had to learn to work closely with new people, I mean new in the sense that whilst we are on the same programme we had never really sit together to produce a single piece of work. I also learn even much more that the extent our tutors can go to assist to understand our coursework and their desire that we achieve the best out of work by taking their time to listen and support us when we get stuck. I now appreciate that group work unlike individual assignments allowed me to take off

the burden of the project but rather to understand that their dubern was equally shared among the members who are not necessarily your usual friends.

As we continued with the project, i enjoyed how members kept on bringing new ideas and at the end I really felt that the group could realistically engage into such business because of the volume of knowledge and information we gathered for the project. I also learnt that motivation is key to group participation as we all ended up feeling free to pour in our ideas without the fear of being laughed at or being despised by other members. For me this was a great opportunity to build my confidence in participation with a group that was willing to listen to me and take no offence to my suggestions although not necessarily taking them as valid at the same time. My group was very accommodative of me as in some cases it would impossible for me to attend all the group meetings notwithstanding my contributions to the discussion via phone or email, thereby reiterating the importance of games and gadgets as proposed in the business plan.

Whilst thing well in our group, research has however shown that group work is not an easy task. A survey taken to establish the challenges of group work conducted by The Value of Academic Group Work: an Examination of Faculty and Student Perceptions (LaBeouf, Griffith, & Schultz, 2014), demonstrated that most students involved in the research project believed that group work was of great academic value and it had practical work applications and that grades obtained by the student would reflect their participation in the group but other student still disagreed and said that individual grades are not reflective of their participation.

In previous research, Sedgwick (2010) maintained that group work creates an environment where students have the opportunity to develop social skills – including the ability to clarify and mediate differences and construct new understandings - and to learn about themselves by interacting with others, all necessary facets of forming value systems.

Researchers concluded that group work contributes to encouraging interest in the topic, facilitating resourcefulness and interdependence in learning, and developing skills such as problem identification and analysis, the exploration of solutions, teamwork, interpersonal communication and project management (Payne, Monk-Turner, Smith, & Sumter, 2006; Quinn & Hughes, 2007).

Other researchers found that students prefer to work independently, simply do not enjoy the process of working in groups and would actively choose to avoid if given the option (R. M. Felder, Felder, & Dietz, 2002; Gardner & Korth, 1998). Various research studies have uncovered significant interpersonal, motivational and socio-emotional challenges unique to the group work modality (Bosworth & Hamilton,

1994; Volet & Ang, 1998; Volet, 2001; Fenwick, 2002; Burdett, 2003; Wright & Lander, 2003)

As indicated in various researches group work comes with its own advantages and disadvantage. It brings in people or students of different beliefs and backgrounds and that in itself brings challenges. However there are several benefits of group work as compared to the negatives, and as indicated in my reflective account, my group project yielded tangible benefits and experience to me. It enhanced my personal skills and improved my approach to any future work related to projects or business planning. I learnt of the fundamentals, pitfalls and risk that individuals working in a group may face, but overall this was a fantastic personal experience and my reflective account will not end before I say thank you to my those in my group and the tutor for their support and assistance. I even now believe that the project could be implemented in the real world and that our project proved in a little way that there is such power and unity that working in a group can generate.

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(2008 words including references)

References

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