HBO 17-18 conflict # 5

While I was studying at my home university in Birmingham, United Kingdom I was attending a practical module named Event Management. The groups for that module had to be with around 12 members or even more and groups were randomly created by the head of the Event management module teacher, so we did not have the chance to choose who do we want to work with. This project was counting 100% of our grade and everyone was receiving the same mark.

I would start by saying that working with so many people is very hard, much harder than with a 5 people group or so.

The task was more or less clear: we had to come up with an idea of an event aiming to increase the tourism in England, in other city than London and each of the group members had a certain role which we were deciding between us (e.g. Communication manager, Finance manager etc.).

The initial problem was that we all doing Marketing and communications as a degree, some tasks were obviously hared than others; nobody wanted to do the Financial part, and, furthermore, by dividing the tasks we realised that we are having one less person in our group than the total number of tasks.

As such, in the end we decided that everyone is going to do their part and we will do finance in the end, when the full project was done.

There were several problems constantly interfering with our work such as different expectations, time management, not enough interest coming from some people. Because of these reasons the whole project delivery was a bit delayed and we did not have enough time to concentrate upon the last part of our work: how are we going to finance our idea of the event. Some people were constantly missing meetings, sending half of the work done to the others, and as such, the whole process was delayed.

Our biggest problem was that the teacher didn’t want to get involved considering that in a real life situation we need to handle problems like this on our own and be able to communicate better.

3 days’ prior the deadline we had (almost) everything done and we met the teacher in order to give us some final feedback before the main presentation. While being there the teacher said that the main idea of our event is not bad but there is definitely insufficient information regarding the financing and, beside, all our marketing and promotions parts are not justified enough, the work was not homogeneous, some parts were really good while others were quite incomplete (for example, the risk assessment)

Nobody wanted to assume the fact that we do not have things done on time, moreover some people who were very hard working regarding university work were accusing the others for not doing their parts right. For half of a day we argued who and how is going to sort things out because the ones who had their work done right did not want to do others’ work, and if we were letting things like that we were about to fail the module.

The problem was that a few of us didn’t mind to get just the passing grade while others (including me) were constantly working hard at school and didn’t want to let things like that.

I sent an email to the teacher explaining the whole situation, and hardly, we managed to obtain an 1 week deadline extension, in which 8 out of 12 of us almost changed the whole project. I carried out the management part: setting very clear meeting times, deadlines for work delivery and so on.

In the end, we managed to have a decent piece of work, graded with almost 60% which is not too bad in the UK.

The conflict was essentially solved because some of us accepted to do others work with the help of some extra days from the teacher. But the real conflict, the fact that a part of the group did just not assumed their fault remained unsolved. The initial rule still applied: everyone received the same grade. I learned one thing from this story: that working in big groups is hard to manage and in a real life case, self-managing teams need one thing in order to work well: shared values.