Team Building for Distance or Online Students

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Virtual Students

- Effective communication is can be a challenge with distance students
  - Misunderstandings and miscommunications
  - Loss of speed
  - Loss of creativity
  - Loss of trust
  - Loss of clarity of goals
Virtual Students

- Require more out of class time
- Often feel more disconnected from the class
- Often feel frustrated when working on group work
- We underestimate the impact of virtual distances
Virtual Students

- Trust is required for effective communication across distances
- Cannot assume that trust will develop

Virtual Students

- Building trust
  - Requires time together (work and play)
  - Requires students to find common ground
  - Requires a shared vision
  - Requires respect and sensitivity to differences
Global Project Management

- Large, 6000 level discussion based class
- 45 distance students/51 total this term
- Uses WebEx for live online streaming of the class
Global Project Management

- Class requires two team projects
- Incorporated Team Building activities
- Each week students completed an assignment with team members
- I have used this approach for 3 classes using different approaches
Team Building Exercises

GOALS

- Discuss a topic pertaining to the lecture material.
- Use collaborative tools for distributed discussions.
- Build familiarity and trust among your team members.
- Allow less experienced classmates learn from those with more experience.
- Allow distance students a chance to feel more connected to the class.
Virtual Team Building

- First approach:
  - Had breakout sessions in class with each team
  - Used google docs
  - Difficult to handle the audio
  - Google docs were cumbersome and students were typing over each other
  - Teams didn’t work together
  - Took a great deal of time in class
  - Issues with some students using Google products.
Virtual Team Building

- Second approach:
  - Teams used GroupMe chat rooms for posting team answers to the exercises
  - Exercises were completed prior to class
  - Teams were required to work together to build consensus
  - Results in one answer per team
  - Answers were brought up in class for discussion
Virtual Team Building

- Groupme
  - Free group messaging
  - Easy to set up
  - Students used for other work
  - No issues from students as with Google docs
From here select “Sign up today” in order to use your Missouri S&T email.
To add students to a group, you must first "Start New Group". Select the carrot button on the upper left hand side of the screen then select the "+" symbol.

[Diagram showing the GroupMe interface with a search bar labeled 'Search groups & Start New Group' and a button labeled 'Start New Group'.]
Can create as many teams as you want

Add in specific students or post a “Share Link”

- Team 1: https://groupme.com/join_group/18637079/l76EI5
- Team 2: https://groupme.com/join_group/18637093/Oqk0GE
- Team 3: https://groupme.com/join_group/18637120/3MO7F7
- Team 4: https://groupme.com/join_group/18637143/5pTuJq

Teams were self enroll in Blackboard

I posted a share link for each team on homepage in Blackboard

groupme.com
Virtual Team Building

- Teams
  - 7-9 people

- Weekly assignments types:
  - Have them create a team name and avatar
  - Polling about a topic
  - Consensus on questions
  - Consensus on analysis for a scenario or mini cases
Student teams created better connections with team members

- Saw more cohesion with team interaction
- Teams performed better than previous classes on projects
- Teams spent less time on second project (average of several hours)
- Teams had less conflict
- Students who were frustrated with the technology had support from team members
Comments from students:

- “I really liked the team building exercises, especially the scenario analysis”
- “Learned a great deal from other students in the team building exercises”
- “Didn’t get much out of the team building exercises, but felt that students with less experience did learn from me”
- “Team building exercises made the project work easier, already had those connections”