

Collaborative scorecard; the final grade is in!

Contributed by Rudy Hoeboer
 Monday, 13 February 2006
 Last Updated Monday, 13 February 2006

Lately most of our surprises are positive, whether we're on a roll or just too optimistic for our own good, I don't know. Putting an effort in staying open minded sure helps and I have always liked surprises, especially those of the positive kind. For those of you having read Malcolm Gladwells Tipping point you know that when critical mass for your ideas is nearing, things start to tip your way and you start to get opportunities you didn't get before.

Wednesday February 8th was one of those days. It was the day our students were to present their results on developing the Collaborative Scorecard and receive a grade on the project as a whole. We had a morning meeting to prepare for the presentation and discuss a preliminary grade by one of the teachers. It wasn't the best of grades, so emotions ran high, including ours. The group apparently received a bad grade for not having reflected enough on what they did. Initially, we were stupefied, "how can this be?" we thought. We had seen these people grow as individuals and as a group, some of the changes were astounding. Such changes are not possible without reflection! The initial reaction of outrage struck a chord with us as well; "let's blame the teaching establishment! But let's be practical about it and do it after the final grade has been established." We took some time to evaluate the Global Learning Group platform that provided the support for the collaborative project; enabling communication, file sharing, document management, and process flow. A number of new ideas and applications were discussed that will help the Global Learning Group develop a clear and focused value proposition to users. Thank you Folkert for sharing your insights with us! All of us had lunch together: the students, Crossing Signals, and the Global Learning Group. Toward the end of the lunch break anticipation was rising, so it was time to kick off the performance. The students had chosen, in a truly collaborative spirit, to present the results as a duo. They showed that they really learned how to navigate their way around the complex subject matter. The questions from the audience, mostly students and faculty staff, were challenging, and showed that the audience was thinking along with what was happening in the presentation; they understood the concept. The students proved very able in handling the interaction, showing that they had really mastered the concepts behind their research project and were quite confident in explaining their approach. Trying to measure intangible aspects of the value of networks is complex and, though commercially viable, there is room for improvement in both the content of the survey and the statistical sophistication of the Collaborative Scorecard as it stands. The students' presentation provided both insight into the applicability of the Scorecard to a concrete context, and provided a number of directions in which to further develop the tool. In the end some moments were reserved for reflecting on the project as such. The students paid a great compliment to us by stressing the impact of our Socratic Discourse session early in the project. The team members had developed a strong sense of trust and mutual respect based on an understanding of each other's drives and motivations. Leadership roles were naturally assumed and changed depending on context, this to the satisfaction of all members. The group had developed naturally and achieved results beyond our expectations. During the period the other groups gave their presentations, Matthijs, Peter and I left the room and discussed our experience with Professor Erwin Seydel (Dean of Behavioral Sciences) who was responsible for the group from the point of view of the University and Dr. Aard Groen (MD Nikos) who gave the students an introduction on measuring value systems, he also evaluated their report. We were all impressed by the way the group had bonded and had risen above itself. They had created unity and synergy and the end result was clearly above average. We discussed the group's reflection and concluded that this had clearly happened; they had just failed to put it into the right format and so had been descriptive without drawing personal conclusions and clearly showing what they had learned. Apparently we have grown old, because we could not do anything else but agree that there actually was room for improvement in this area. It's a sad moment when you realize you have become part of the establishment! In the Netherlands we work with a system of grading that is very simple, grades range from one to ten, with an eight being very good and a six being enough to pass. When the students came back, an unavoidable discussion on the reflection grade ensued. After explaining it as we understood it, most saw the sense of it and took it in stride. For others it was, we hope, a learning experience; control is an illusion! Sometimes you need to let go and move on. Next we all sat down together, Crossing Signals, students and Prof. Seydel, and went through all parts that still needed to be graded. A nine actually appeared and to cut a long story short, the average final grade was a resounding eight. This is a good result, especially considering the influence of the reflection grade, and it made our troopers happy campers. What made us all happy is that they committed to continue seeing each other and keep each other informed about future developments. This from a group of students, who four months ago had never seen any of the others before! We felt very fatherly! And guys, when you read this, when Matthijs gets back from holiday: you owe us dinner! There is one thing remaining that was the icing on the cake for me personally. During our discussions on the performance of the group, we also addressed the question: "what's next?" At Crossing Signals we would really like to see a more in-depth scientific foundation to our Scorecard. We want to expand the aspects we score on as well as improve the statistical validity of the tool, in addition we would like to see it tested in a larger context. These suggestions were met with enthusiasm from both Professor Seydel and Dr. Groen. This could be an interesting subject for a master's thesis for one of the students. We also offered to provide input from our daily practice for their courses, and then they even elaborated on the possibilities by asking us whether we would like to go one step further and go for a dissertation. I am not often at a loss for words, but this was such a moment. Personally I have been asked to think about this when I graduated for my master's degree, I thought then as I do now: the ambition is there, but I want to get my hands dirty and do stuff instead of write about it. This time it's different, we can actually use this in our business practice! We have been discussing internally how to ensure a firm scientific foundation for what we do. What

better way than to build in a research module that we can use for feedback to our customers and for writing a body of work that links in to the research both esteemed gentlemen already do? Dr. van Zutphen has a nice ring to it, Dr. Hoeboer sounds terrible, but the last name I got at birth, the Dr. part I can get myself. One can only wish to experience more such days and look back with gratitude on the success of a job well done, at the same time experience the emergence of even greater opportunities that lie dormant…