

Personality and Flair Essay

We all came together with a common mission in mind – to create a website that would blend commerce with good works. Our organization provided micro-loans to indigenous women in poor and rural villages so they could start their own businesses, bringing the entire community up with them. But we also needed to attract investors who would provide the capital for the project.

The entire venture was the brainchild of Kevin, a retired banking executive, and he needed a team to make it a reality. Since he was a university trustee, he naturally turned to the university to find people to make his dream a reality.

I was the first one recruited since Kevin and I had worked together on projects in the past. As a recently retired finance professor and head of the business school, I knew the students. Kevin trusted me to manage the team with humor and camaraderie but keeping everyone on task and ensuring that the final product was high quality.

I knew that Alice would be the perfect person to be in charge of website project planning. She was a junior majoring in marketing and she was the most organized student I knew. She had an uncanny ability to see how all of the different parts of the project fit into the big picture and had no problem in telling people what to do. I knew that others sometimes didn't appreciate what they saw as her bossiness, but my plan was to temper that by intervening when necessary.

Barry was a brilliant writer of fiction. I chose him because although he wasn't a business student, he excelled in telling stories, and for this project, telling the stories of the women and communities we aimed to help was of critical importance. Like most creative people, he tended to get off track sometimes and needed to be gently brought back to task so we could meet deadlines.

The final member of the team wasn't a student at all. Gloria ran a successful marketing firm and Kevin brought her in as the resident marketing expert. As a businessperson, Gloria wasn't used to working with students but she knew exactly the points we needed to cover and the keywords we needed to incorporate for the site to be successful and she had a library of stock photography we could use for the graphics.

The first thing I did was to call a meeting so everyone could meet each other and start seeing each other as members of a team rather than isolated resources. I set the tone by reiterating our mission, which they had enthusiastically endorsed when I had initially talked to each of them about participating. I introduced everyone's expertise so they could see how the others fit into the team and to build respect for each other.

Once that was done, I had everyone introduce themselves and talk about what they liked about the project and a little about their working style and personality.

Gloria's style was that she had a lot of information from her years of experience and she preferred meeting in person to transmit the information without a lot of back and forth. As a mature adult and businesswoman, she was motivated to be efficient.

Alice said that she liked to work via email because then she would have a written record of everything and she could refer to that to make sure that nothing slipped through the cracks.

Barry was the most laid back of the group. Although he said it would take him a little time to think about and absorb all of the different elements of the project, once inspiration struck, he would write like a madman.

I decided that the best way work was to set up a meeting between Gloria and Alice to map out the site's structure and goals. Gloria and Alice were both very goal oriented and they were able to quickly get a project plan and website map together.

To not waste Gloria's time while Barry pondered, I suggested that she email him a bunch of images she thought would help to tell the story. He could look at them and use them as inspiration on his own time.

At the same time, I suggested that Alice email Barry a list of the pages that he would need to write so he could organize them into a narrative flow. In addition to the individual pages, Barry's creativity could really shine when he wrote the script to a video that would tell the entire story on the site's home page and also on Facebook.

Barry used the input from the other team members and wrote his stuff independently, sending it to Gloria, who tweaked it to be really compelling and add calls to action. Gloria then sent it to me to look at and I passed it along to Alice as it was approved so she could organize the content and manage the programming team.

Once a week, we got together at the local coffee shop and talked about the project in general terms and shared any ideas or issues we encountered along the way. By the end of three months, our website launched and Gloria helped us spread the word via social media.