

How to Create a Winning Research and Design Website Team

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1. Introduction

For the last 5 years, Dewitt Perry Middle School has entered at least two teams into the Research and Design Website competition for Botball. For each of these years, at least one team has gotten third or higher. This year our three teams placed first, second, and honorable mention. This competition requires a large amount of work, but it could not be successful without a good team. If the members of the team don't get along, then no work will get done. You don't have to all be best friends but you need to be able to at least work with each other. This means that the people on your team need to be understanding and friendly. So if someone does a good job, compliment them on their work. Also, a good team has people that will pull their own weight, and they won't back down when they have to do something.



Figure 1: Our Dewitt Perry Middle School Research & Design Website Team

2. Building a Team

The first and most important thing in having a successful team to participate in the Research and Design Website Challenge is having a team that can work together. Teamwork is a value that plays a major part in this competition. As was mentioned earlier, if you can't work together, then you can't get anything done. On our team, we didn't quite get along at first, but as time went on, we learned that we had to work together to accomplish the task that was set before us. In the beginning, my other team members thought that I was a perfectionist, which was kind of true, but I was willing to "tweak" those specific items on my own time at home, so what was the big deal, right? Well, they didn't agree with me, and since they outnumbered me, I decided to step down on that decision.

Another thing that is important in building a team is to have a have team members that specialized in certain things. For example, a team that has someone who is a good writer, someone who is good at doing all of the technical stuff, and someone who is a good artist, is a good team, because everyone is good at a certain thing. This team is much better than a team that has just four people that are okay at everything because the more specialized team helps to make the people stay more on task. It does this because then you are only doing one thing, so you know what to do. You also know that you, and only you have responsibility for that area. One person's job is to draw, one person's job is to design the actual website, and one person's job is to write all of the information. However, teamwork doesn't really play into that so much, does it? If everyone is doing their own separate thing, then you don't really have to work together. However, if you have hand-drawn pictures on your website, then your artist would have to work with your designer to get it done. You also have to make sure that everyone is on base with each other. For example, what is being drawn has to fit in with what is being written, and so on. But, all team members still need to be able to write, even though they are specialized in another area, so that if you really need to get some writing done, then you can.

Another good thing that you need to look for in team members is trustworthiness. The ideal team member needs to be able to pull their own weight. If somebody is responsible for doing something, but they don't do it, then your whole team suffers because of that one person's mistakes. If you have one of those people on your team, and you can't help it, then the other team members need to be able to pull a little extra weight, to make up for that person. However, when the time comes around for the honors, it feels unjust that that certain person should get credit, when they didn't even do anything.

After you consider these key items, you will realize that no team can be perfect, and that you will have to give a little to get something out of this project. I'm not just saying that you have to work to get rewards, although that is true. The thing that I'm trying to say is, no project that involves a team can be done without "taking one *for* the team". That is just as important as *giving* one for the team.

3. Winning

So, after all that you've been through, how could you not win? You've put up with your stubborn team members, you've dealt with that certain someone that doesn't ever work, and you've lead your team to actually making your first website. So, how could you not win? Unfortunately, there is no award for "Leadership", or "Dealing with Stubborn Team Members". There might have been teams that worked together better than you, or they might just have had one person do it, but they did one heck of a job. But remember, this competition wasn't just about winning...no competition is. It was about making friends, while learning how to design and create a website about how robots can help in agriculture. For some, that was exactly what they did. For others, the whole thing was all about taking home the biggest Website trophy at Regionals. For my team, it was to design a website...a task that nobody on our team had done before, and to have fun doing it. However, our team ran into the same problems that every team usually does, which are the team member issues that I talked about before. Despite this, our team managed to get back on track after a couple of weeks, and we high-tailed it from there. We were proud of how it turned out, and we were very happy when it won.

4. Conclusion

To have the winning website in a competition like this is a great thing. Believe me, I speak from experience. But to accomplish such great things, you cannot concentrate on just winning, or else the true meaning of the challenge will pass you by. My advice is to pick a team that you will be comfortable working with, and team members that will understand you, and that will listen to you. Once you have that, the rest of the competition will be smooth sailing. So long as everybody does what they're supposed to do, and you guys don't end up hating each other, then it's all good. You don't have to win a prize to have fun!