

## The Challenge: More Engaging Team Experiences

Team projects are standard fare in most college curricula, but many students dread them. Bad experiences are common and can discourage full participation in subsequent team projects.

The **A – B – C’s of Self-Determination Theory** (Deci & Ryan, 2008, 2010, 2012) may offer a strategy for more positive engagement in such projects by focusing on students’ **Autonomy** (by giving them a choice in their assignment), sense of **Belonging** (by creating a sense of commonality with their teammates), and desire to exercise their **Competence** (by working at a task that aligns with their passions, skills, and interests).

## Pilot Study: Forming Teams Based on Common Interests

### The Assignment: Create a PR Calendar for an organization you would like to work for some day.

Students in an introductory Public Relations course were assigned a team project to create a public relations plan in the form of a year-long schedule of activities designed to foster relationships with key “publics” of a real or imaginary organization of their own choosing.

They were given a choice of ten different kinds of organizations—five *for-profits*, and five *non-profits*—and asked to indicate their top three choices from the ten. They were then assigned to teams according to their preferences.

Ten teams were formed. In a class of 44 students, all except a handful got their first choice. None got worse than their second.

Outcome: Nine of the ten teams received B+ or above on their projects.

## Student Comments

*I was very fortunate to have common interests with great people! This is my first semester here at UTA so working with Kevin and Vince proved especially helpful as we discussed much more than just the project. I learned a lot and they had to carry or guide me a bit more but their patience and willingness to help was very much appreciated!*

*Loved the assignment! Very clear and easy to understand, and everyone in my group was very helpful and contributed to the final product. :)*

*Our group was good except for one person, she rarely came to class. On the [class work-day], she missed and she didn't connect with us to talk about what she missed until Sunday night at 11pm. The project was due the next day by 11:59pm.*

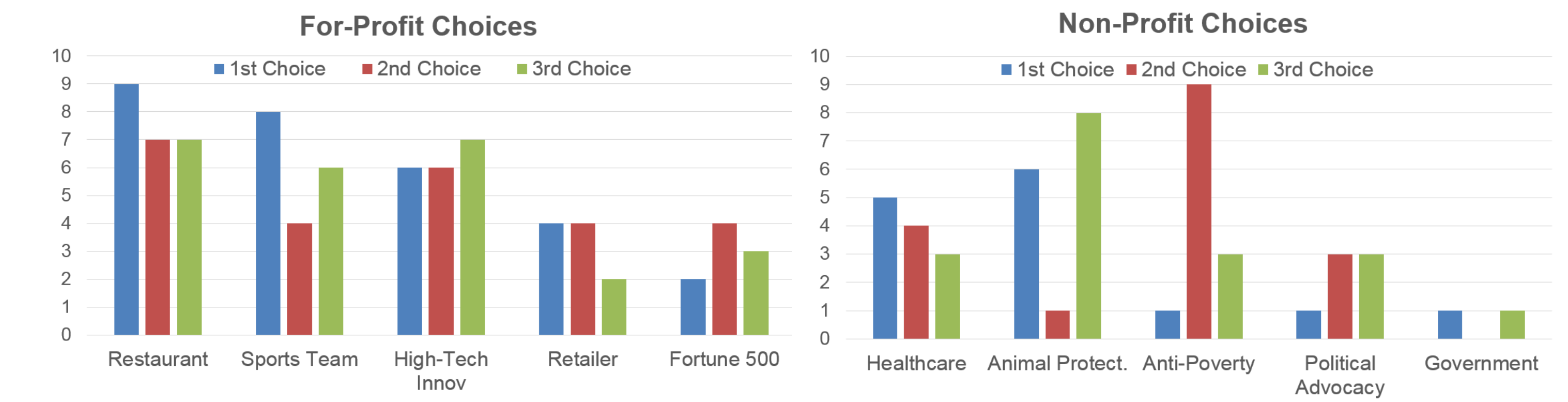
*This was the best group project I've been in at UTA. Most everyone was engaged, intelligent and self-sufficient. This group project has given me hope for the future. Thanks Dr. Gans!*

*I really enjoyed my time working with my teammates, they made the project easy and fun to complete. We all had great ideas that really worked well together in the end. I appreciated everyone's effort and willingness to get everything done in a timely manner and I hope that if any of us have any more classes together that we will be placed in the same group.*

## STEP 1: Survey of Students’ Organization Preferences

Organization Type	1 <sup>st</sup> Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> Choice
For-Profit: Restaurant	Alvaro Hannah Ashley Tia Edgar Abril Alexandra Nicole Alyssa	Madison Heather Rebecca Nafim Eniola Stephanie Jesus	Habeebah Isaiah Mason Isabella Kabuya Nazah Nina
For-Profit: Sports Team	Solomon Nafim Eniola Kabuya Isaiah Mason Taylor	Vince Alexandra Emma Peyton	Heather Edgar Reyna Melanie Dallas J Nina
For-Profit: High-Tech Innovations Company	Madison Joel Habeebah Nazah Keyuri Hope	Danielle Nicole Isaiah Mason Eduardo	Alyssa Solomon Taylor Jesus Angelyn
For-Profit: Online and/or Brick-and-Mortar Retailer	Heather Rebecca Vince Kevin	Isabella Alvaro Hannah Tia	Nicole Alexandra
For-Profit: Fortune 500 Conglomerate	Danielle Isabella	Habeebah Keyuri Dallas J	Rebecca Ashley Emma
Non-Profit: Healthcare Organization	Dallas L Nina Angelyn Jesus	Nazah Kevin Alyssa Solomon Taylor	Hannah Lindsey Joel
Non-Profit: Animal Protection/Rights Organization	Emma Lindsey Reyna Stephanie Eduardo Melanie	Angelyn	Hope Vince Kevin Alvaro Eniola Dallas Peyton
Non-Profit: Anti-Poverty Social Welfare Organization	Nina	Hope Ashley Edgar Abril Kabuya Lindsey Reyna Dallas L Nina	Tia Eduardo Stephanie
Non-Profit: Political Advocacy Organization	Peyton	Joel Melanie Nina	Keyuri Madison Abril
Non-Profit: Government Agency	Dallas J		Danielle

## Distribution of Choices



## STEP 2: Team Assignments – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Choices Only

<b>For Profit: Restaurant</b> Alvaro Hannah Ashley Tia Edgar	<b>For Profit: Sports Team</b> Solomon Nafim Eniola Kabuya Jason	<b>For Profit: High Tech Innovations Firm</b> Madison Hope Habeebah Nazah Braidon
<b>For Profit: Restaurant</b> Abril Alexandra Nicole Alyssa	<b>For Profit: Sports Team</b> Isaiah Mason Taylor Emma	<b>For Profit: Online/B&amp;M Retailer</b> Heather Rebecca Vince Kevin
<b>For Profit: Fortune 500 Conglomerate</b> Danielle Isabella Keyuri Dallas J	<b>Non-Profit: Healthcare Organization</b> Dallas L Nina Angelyn Jesus Jordan	<b>Non-Profit: Animal Rights Organization</b> Lindsey Reyna Stephanie Eduardo
	<b>Non-Profit: Political Advocacy Organization</b> Peyton Joel Melanie Nina	

## POSITIVE RESULTS: Student Experience Ratings

