

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Masters
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Management Consulting Lab

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the exports generated in the geographical area under the management of ANA. Since the company have been increasing, and is not aware how they have been evolving. The analysis was done through an analytical overview over the company and all the activities that occur in the geographical area. Then, interviews were conducted to identify passengers' major differences among the Portuguese airports. Based on all of the information were designed out-of-the box ideas to increase the level of exports.

Keywords: project ; consulting

A) Brief context of the client, its industry and situation

Our client was ANA – Aeroportos de Portugal, a stated-owned company, which is responsible for the Portuguese airports management. ANA is responsible for providing services related with aviation (e.g. landing, parking, etc.), all other activities (e.g. rent-a-car, advertising, etc.) are in concessionary spaces. ANA is inserted in a strictly regulated industry, where an independent authority sets maximum revenue per passenger. That is why the revenue that is not provided by the aviation activities is so important for the company to be competitive¹. In recent years we have been watching dramatic changes in the aeronautical industry mainly due to the emergence of the low-cost airlines and its gain of market share in Europe. In Portugal, the major low-cost airlines, Ryanair and Easyjet, have been increasing their positioning (Exhibit 1), and have been investing in operational basis in the Portuguese airports. The emergence of these low-cost companies changed the paradigm of mobility and point-to-point transportation in Europe, as result we observed an increase in the number of passengers. In Portugal this change had a special effect in Lisbon and Oporto airports (Exhibit 2). This is a new reality that all the players in the industry have to adapt to.

B) Reflection on content done for the client

a. Problem definition

Portugal is suffering a severe economic and financial crisis, and all the solutions have been pointed out the investment in exports as the path to economic prosperity. Therefore the first challenge proposed in this project was to measure the exports that were happening in the geographical area that ANA is managing. Despite the relevance

¹ Zenglein, M. J. & Jürgen, M. (2007). Non-Aviation Revenue in the Airport Business – Evaluating Performance Measurement for a Changing Value Proposition. Berlin School of Economics

and timeliness of the discussion, in my opinion this is not a question that has the greatest interest given the company's characteristics. ANA as a company provides several services, which are daily exported. Nevertheless, there are products sold in the airports (e.g. Porto's wine); however, not all of them represent an export of a *Made in Portugal* good. This question just makes sense to be analyzed in the perspective of the importance of ANA to the Portuguese economy, through its exports.

The second question of the project asked us to measure the potential of growth of those exports, and in my opinion this question is out of the scope of what should be the strategic vision of ANA as a company. ANA should be focused in becoming a more efficient company in the provision of its services, and in this way turn out to be more competitive internationally. From the company's perspective it is important to increase the number of passengers, independently of their residence.

These were the two questions the team worked on, and they were linked to each other, since it was not possible to answer to the second question without having answered to the first question. The team was only able to boost the exports after knowing what was the source of those exports, since airports can offer a variety of services and products.

b. From the hypothesis to the work

Along the project the team had to change its organization and methodologies of work. As it was already mentioned, there was a sequence in the practical resolution of the project, and the different objective of each question demanded a change in the work methodologies.

For the first question, in order to measure the exports occurring in the airports, we started by looking to the internal departments of ANA. In this way we were able to know what were the biggest business areas that we would need to analyze, and which

different work fronts to establish. We gathered all the businesses in three work fronts, and each element of the team was in charge of one of those. The past experience and knowledge of each element of the team influenced the allocation of the work fronts. Then each element started to work only on its work front, scheduling meetings, working with the available data, etc., in order to reach the project objectives. This was an individualized phase of the work because each one focused on his work front and was not aware of the developments and arising problems in other work fronts. Communication just existed to know how deeply someone was analyzing its problem, since all the work fronts had to be analyzed in the same depth. Two of the work front involved databases, so it was an opportunity to develop the database analysis skills, and the use of Excel tools. To analyze this databases efficiently, we needed to apply the 80-20 rule², which was applied throughout of the project. On contrary, the other work front included a significant number of businesses that were not under the scope of ANA, so there was no data for these businesses and the methodology had to be different. We had to work on extrapolating the dimension of the business, so the 80-20 rule was not so relevant as it was in the two other fronts, however, another concept gain relevance, the triangulation, i.e., using different approaches to infer a number, in this way you will know if your extrapolations are following the correct direction. As we can see even in the first phase of the project different methodologies were necessary to reach the desired conclusions. Besides the lack of involvement in the different work fronts, the team was not able to gather all the information, and in this way did not had any indication of what would be the final result, and did not had any vision of how this result was evolving during the project.

² Also known as the Pareto Principle, which states that, for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes.

Looking back we should have changed the way we managed the project, since what was initially planned was that one of the elements would start working on the second phase of the project even before the first phase was closed. However, this did not happen, the team only started the second question after finishing the first one, which was not an efficient project management regarding the allocation of the human resources.

In the second phase we were asked to measure the exports growth potential. So, it was necessary to know how the exports have been growing in the recent past, and which variables influenced this evolution. Therefore, we selected specific business units with growth potential, and where ANA could directly impact, and then focused in understanding how the export could be increased. Then, the team started to work all together in the same work front. We have learned from the past mistake, so we improved communication flow, which, at the end, resulted in a stronger link between the work done. Taking into account the new reality of the aeronautical industry the team searched for out-of-the box solutions to increase the exports. All these new ideas were thought for a specific segment of passengers, so we used interviews as methodology to gather the necessary information. The team did not have the necessary resources to do a quantitative analysis, so we used a qualitative approach to support the solutions presented to the client. This methodology will be explained further in detail.

c. Recommendations

For the first question the main message to the client was the value of the export that happened in the airports. This information is strictly statistic and not strategic or operational, however it gave to the client a different perspective about his company, and the clients' feedback was always positive regarding the team results.

In the second question the team reached more operational recommendations, i.e., out-of-the box ideas for the client. The team bear in mind the necessity of showing which of these ideas were easier to apply, however, the team did not have the necessary time to make a cost/benefit analysis. From the client's perspective it was more important to know the net present value of each idea than knowing which of them was easier to apply, since the client was looking for ideas that could create value for the company. In addition to this, the company was aware of the qualitative approach of the solutions, so the team also recommended to the client to invest on a quantitative study in the area; thus, the team believes that the recommendations presented are directionally correct.

C) Reflections on learning

a) The team

"Let's get to know each other"

An additional challenge came along with the project: The team, which was be the most important factor for the quality of the project. At the beginning I wasn't familiar with the other elements of the team, I even haven't worked with them before. They already knew each other, but haven't together. So, it was the time to learn each others working habits, strengths and weaknesses... soon we realized that each one had a different profile, in terms of behavior, attitudes and values. I was afraid of this diversity, however it end up to be the ingredient for an excellent group dynamic. The team adapted quickly to the different profiles. In a short period of time we managed to adjust the communication to each individual, to read the body language, and to anticipate some upcoming problems even personal ones.

This entire situation was new for me, because in my past experiences I was able to choose my workgroups, so I always choose individuals that I already knew, and with

whim I used to work. This new experience was very enriching and important for my future as professional because I was in a different situation, which put me close to the consulting reality, when you change team in each project.

“If you need help you can count on me”

Mutual help was the most important point of all the team interaction. Often someone offered to help a colleague with work in hands, and this was only possible thanks to the great relationship between all the elements, and to the confidence that we were all working in favor of the project quality. The pressure with the deadlines, and the pressure to deliver a quality work also boosted the support among us. This spirit was also a new lesson for me, since in all the previous experiences I never felt this level of availability to help. Usually in the Master studies we have more than one course, and several assignments to do deliver in, and we rarely work with the same group in more than one course, which means that when one end their part of the job he would start to work for some other course. *One for all, and all for one* tuned out to be the spirit of the project.

“I have been watching that...”

The good relationship we lived in the team was beneficial for each one's individual development, and for the evolution of the team as a whole. The existence of constant feedback was one of the reasons of this development. We all felt the importance of feedback to the development of the work, and was common to hear comments like “I've been watching that...” or “For the next time I suggest that you would do...”. And the feedback was always well accepted by the team, and there was always a great effort to improve the environment and the work. The team dynamics and openness to feedback

was such that the elements were asking for immediate feedback after having modified a behavior, or even in a situation that needed an uncommon resolution.

b) The client

The client was a new reality for all of us, since it was the first time we weren't having a professor in front of us, but a customer who paid for the project, working for several years in the aeronautic industry and expecting high-quality results. The kick-off meeting was important to understand the customer profile and thus to understand the type of interactions that we had to carry out. In this kick-off meeting the team had prepared a very pragmatic approach to the problems, where we would directly discuss the issues planned. However, we ended having a meeting where we discussed aspects that would not be relevant for the work, as the history of the company. This was the first step in building customer relationship, which was always very good, and the client always did everything to help the project progress. The client was the channel to get all internal information, and to arrange meetings with the different departments. Nevertheless the team had to bear in mind that the client was not working for us, whereas the team was working for the client, and so, the team had to position itself as a source of solutions, not problems.

Despite the excellent customer relationship there were certain points, which hinder the efficiency of the project execution, as it was the case of over-bureaucratization of internal relationships, and the evident hierarchy in relations and communication between the various departments of the company. Knowing this constrain the team could anticipate possible problems and change procedures. Having this in mind, the team managed to plan the project weakly with more anticipation. There was another issue that could have a better intervention from the client. During the last phase of the

project the team ended up working on a specific issue, for which ANA holds a department, and if there was more involvement from this department at this phase, the team could have managed to create more value to the company. Given that they have more experience and know-how that could be determinant for the improvement of the quality of recommendations.

Despite these setbacks, the customer relationship was always healthy and thrived in all stages of the project.

c) Work planning

The work planning turned out to be an evolving process throughout the project. Experience is a key element when conducting the project management, and none of us had that experience, that's why this task was never done in the most efficient way. In addition to this, there was no project leader to be responsible of establishing goals, ensuring that the project had the desired rhythm, gathering the new data that the team was finding. However, after the first progress review we allocated this responsibility among the team members. I was the first project leader for two weeks, then there was another project leader for the next two weeks, and in the last three weeks there was another project leader. Looking back this distribution was not the most efficient, because we never had the chance to repeat the experience of leadership, and to apply the experience that we gained during the first period of project leader, and thus improving with the feedback. Thus, for a better development of the leadership characteristics each element should be in the role of project leader for one week. This way, there would be another chance to learn from mistakes and keep improving.

Since the beginning of the project all the interactions with client were already scheduled, all the dates of the progress reviews, and due date to deliver the final

document. In this way the team was always working with fixed deadlines, a factor that added pressure to the work. The advanced schedule of progress reviews, sending the plans for each meeting, sending the progress review documents to be analyzed in advanced, among others, helped to build credibility with the customer. The issue of *Trust* was critical in the beginning of the project, because it was the first time the university made this type of project, and we did not have a whole structure supporting us, as exist in the consulting firms to ensure quality in the project implementation.

$$\text{Trust} = \frac{\text{Empathy} \times \text{Reliability} \times \text{Credibility}}{\text{Self – interest}} \quad (1)$$

In the previous equation, we can observe that the customer's *Trust* depends on *empathy*, the team had always good relationship with the client, the *reliability* and *credibility* of the team, and *self-interest* of the team on the project. After each progress review there was an increase in the *credibility* and *reliability* on the team work, because the client gave us the best feedback about the work, and he was surprised with the quality of the results.

$$\text{Satisfaction} = \text{Reality} - \text{Expectations} \quad (2)$$

As we were reaching unexpected results the client's expectations were rising, so the team needed an extra effort not to disappoint the expectation that the client was creating regarding the project.

To maintain and even improve the quality of the project we needed to invest in the quality of work planning. It was necessary to have a global view of all the work to be done in the remaining weeks. With this challenge came a new concept, the *Grand Chart*, which is a table that briefly summarizes all the different phases of the project, its different tasks, the work for every week, and, the day of the week that a specific task had to be accomplished. The *Grand Chart* besides summarizing the work, creates the

linkage between the required tasks (in Exhibit 3 we can find a illustrative *Grand Chart* of the project). Of course, this process depended on the experience of the team, and in this case this was a learning process. It was also a new experience, because in all Masters courses I never did a similar planning, given the different features between this project and the regular courses.

d) Problem solving

The project was rich in opportunities to develop the ability of *problem solving*, and the team with such different characteristics enhance the outcome of the *problem solving* sessions. The time spent in *problem solving* sessions cannot be considered wasted time, but time invested in the quality of the recommendations delivered to the customer.

The definition of the export, under the project, was the first great challenge of *problem solving* to overcome, since this concept had to be applied at the same depth in the different work fronts of the project. As already mentioned, there was a lack of communication in the first phase of the project, and there was no participation in the *problem solving* sessions of the others work fronts. However, this situation improved as the time passed by and as we began to participate in others *problem solving* session, we realized that it was beneficial to solve the arising obstacles in our work front.

I already had the experience of group *problem solving*, because in several times I had to solve case studies based on a critical view, and this was the methodology used to obtain the results. Although, learning form the problem solving session in other areas was a valuable situation, because they turned out to be very useful to easily solve the challenges arising in my work front.

In the second phase of the project, we were all focused in only one work front, so we had to change the methodology of work, as we started to do a different task. We started

improving our creativity with out-of-the box ideas, and we had problem solving session for each idea. In this phase it was very important a *problem solving* session that we had together with the client, because we had the opportunity to obtain some insights about the ideas and their implementation. Unfortunately we just had one of these sessions with the client.

e) The interviews

As already mentioned in the second part of the project the team used a new source to obtain information. It was necessary to carry out qualitative interviews with a specific segment of passengers at the main Portuguese airports. This was a new experience for me, and an important learning for the future.

“Guidelines are the first step of any interview”

The passengers had to perceive the interviews as a conversation, and for them to have the desirable quality it couldn't last less than ten minutes. The most important thing was that the passengers felt they were having a conversation and not merely answering to a statistical survey. And so they would felt more comfortable to talk about the issues that the team had planned to address. To do so the team needed to build a script that would be the base of the conversations, since we needed to know the out-of-the box ideas we would address and the ideas that we would suggest to the passengers. Moreover this sheet would serve to point out the insights that we withdrew from the conversations with the passengers.

“Guys you have to go to Oporto and Faro...”

A new methodology had to be applied to ANA major airports, it was necessary to travel to Oporto and Faro, in order to observe the different characteristics and necessities of those passengers. So there was a new task, the trips planning, since we had to plan the

transport to use, the hotels, and it was necessary to define a budget, and to verify the implementation of the budget.

“Now you have to joint everything”

After several days of conversation with the passengers we have done more than 130 interviews, now the task was the organization of all the information. The major objective of this study was to design segments of passengers in each airports, the reason why the team had dedicated so much time to this task. The segmentation itself is a challenging task, because as you want to group the most common features, you do not want to loose every important insight obtained in every conversation with the passengers. So it was a hard and demanding task done by the team, which was rewarded in the final presentation where the client visualized the segments through the descriptions given.

f) The document

The creation of the document is the most important moment of any consulting project because it's the moment where the team can bypass its knowledge to the client. The work of conveying the information becomes a challenge as big as the project itself, since it is not easy to communicate the knowledge in a coherent and logical way. The volume of information generated during the project was colossal, so, we had to evaluate the relevance of the information to the client, and to the story that we will communicate to the client. In a consulting project we spent two-thirds of the time working on the content, and the remaining one-third is devoted to communication, which shows the importance of communication to the industry. This process resembles a class taught at a university, since the professor may even be the greatest expert in a subject, however, his success as such depends on how he transmits his knowledge to his students. He needs to

organize the info so that the students are able to understand it effectively. Despite the vast knowledge that the consultants have about a subject, they need to work hard for the info to be concise and transmitted in the best way.

“We know so much... and now what do we do!”

Before we start thinking about the communication we need to *step back* and look at the various areas of work at the same time, so we do not disperse with the information and lose quality in the work. It is necessary to look at all the information without going into details and without losing information that might be relevant.

This is the moment when we are prepared to begin writing the first notes of what will be transmitted to the client, i.e., the key messages of the whole work. All messages emerging from this general look are written in the *dot-dash*, a written document with the main point to be communicated, and a short description behind each one. This document is the starting point and will always serve as the basis for developing the final document. In this document should be invested a good portion of time, as if this work is well executed the rest of the document is much easier to construct, because the main contents are close, and so we need only to discuss the most efficient way of communicating the information.

“The presentation in a comic book”

After having constructed the *dot-dash* is time to move towards the idealization of the presentation, i.e., the document that will be presented to the client. Now that we already had outlined the information, it is the time to start drafting what will be the final document. Here we introduce a new methodology, the *storyboard*, where we put the preview of the slide we will build. This step is very important because it is the first contact with what will be the final document, and we can have a notion of the extension

of the document, and depth in the analysis in each area. Today, looking back at our work this was the step that we missed in the final document. The consequence of not investing enough time in this step was crucial, since we created more slides than were needed, and thus the communication of the document had to be redone in a short period of time, right before the final meeting with the client. This experience is the proof that these steps are crucial for an efficient performance. As we can see, the *dot-dash* and the *storyboard* when executed with precision and quality means that the communication is heading for success. These two steps should be viewed as investments in pursuit of success and quality of the work that will be delivered to the client. When executed with quality, we can say that about 70% of the work is done! Now we just need to start building the *master* in sheets of paper, and then do it on PowerPoint, however, this process is much easier when you have the support of these materials. The construction of the *master* starts as a handwritten document and only then is transcript to the PowerPoint... It is in these sheets of paper that you start to realize what the document will be in visual terms, based on what have been done in the *dot-dash* and *storyboard* we started to build the slides from the title to the *so-what*. With the handwriting of the master the team had to decide the type of communication the document will have, e.g., there are two types of titles that can be used in a slide, the descriptive title, one that just explains what will appear on the slide, and the active title, which summarizes the conclusion of the slide. If we look in perspective to all these active titles we will get all the key messages of the document, which does not happen in the descriptive title. Furthermore, we learned that each slide should not transmit more than one message, and each slide should have a conclusion on the *so-what*, and here the communication must

be simple and direct. With all of this we can build the entire presentation, only missing the presentation of the document to the client.

g) The “d” day

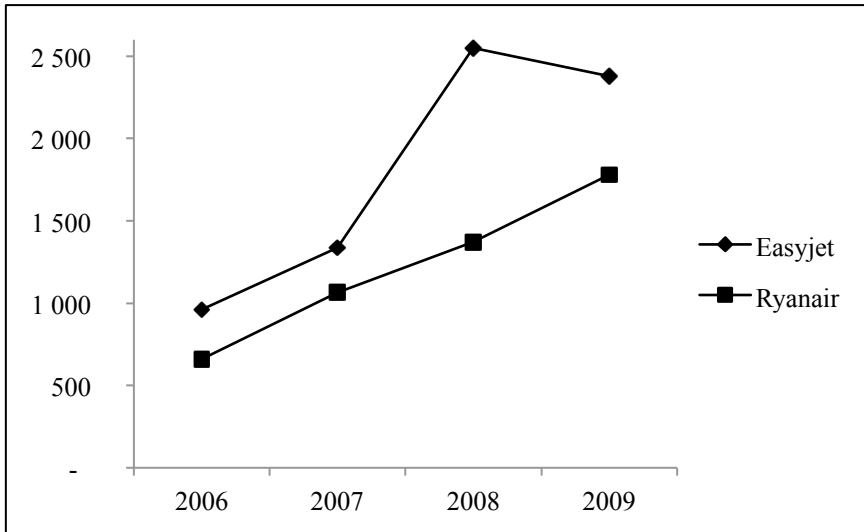
The day of the final presentation is very important, since it is the day that the team submits the work to the client. And there is also lessons that are crucial to the presentation success. Despite we all already have made several presentations at the university this project gave us a different experience, since we made the final presentation to the company board of directors, and we learned new techniques for the success of the presentation and to keep the audience motivated with the presentation. In the beginning of the meeting we must ask the client how much time he has available for the meeting, and so the team can rearrange the original plan for the presentation, and set the proper rhythm. And then we start to explore the document, and we have to be aware if the customer is looking for the same page that we are talking about, to do so, we need always to indicate the number of the slide we are talking about, in this way the client can follow us and not get lost in the development of the presentation. Another important learning was the slides preempt, i.e., explaining the key messages before presenting the slide, and so the client is not distracted by reading the slide, but focused on the key message. Only that it comes the sentence “in the slide 7...”, thus making the client go to the slide where he already knew the message, and where he can find the supporting explanations.

D) Myself and the future

Since I started my Masters degree I intended to work for a consulting firm, however I was not totally aware of the work that was done there. So, this project was important to have a first glimpse with the reality of the consultancy world, and with I could decide if

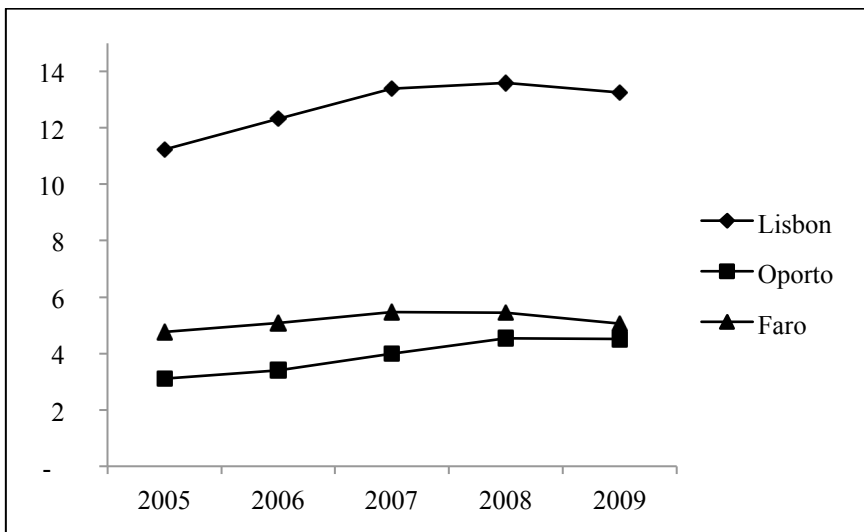
consulting was the area where I would like to begin my career. This project was the help that I needed to confirm my intention to become a consultant, since I liked everything about this experience, the type of work, the constant pressure we felt, and the intensity of the daily work. Moreover, with only a three-month project I gathered a great knowledge about the industry, every day was an opportunity to learn something new, and yet I am aware that amounts of information remain unknown. So, consulting is the best option to start a career, because I am looking for an opportunity to develop my soft and hard skills. The project also gave me the opportunity to know and explore my key strengths and weaknesses, for example I was not aware of my positive reaction to feedback, and as a negative aspect I have to focus on always asking the importance of the work I'm doing, and being able to rethink the results, and react to unforeseen difficulties. To overcome these difficulties I will do some workshops on theatre or arts. In conclusion, I hope to work as a consultant to overcome my weaknesses and thereby improve myself as person and professional.

Exhibit 1 – Easyjet and Ryanair passengers in Portugal (Thousands)



Source: ANA Traffic Yearbook, 2006-2009

Exhibit 2 - Passengers in the main Portuguese airports (Millions)



Source: ANA Traffic Yearbook, 2005-2009

Exhibit 3 – Illustrative *Grand Chart* of the project

