

Teamwork separates girls from boys

In the first in a series of weekly columns, The Apprentice judge **Brian Purcell** discusses the lessons to be gleaned from the reality TV show

The first task for the candidates in this year's The Apprentice was to sell HB ice-cream on the streets of Dublin on what was probably the hottest day of the year.

The men from Team Cú-Chulainn (get used to it for the next 12 weeks) started off in ego-fuelled chaos, which really showed the need for strong leadership at the start of any project – they never even read the brief.

Their project manager hadn't a chance and, were it not for salesman Steve, they would have been roundly thrashed by Team Platinum (comprising the women).

As any chief executive or head of department knows, team leadership and providing direction with a plan is key to any project. In this case, Craig spent so much time trying to



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control and listen to his troops that he forgot about the brief, messed up the pricing strategy and didn't pay attention to his dwindling ice-cream stock and subsequent re-ordering.

Sometimes too much democracy in business can lead to failure.



Honest graft and teamwork were the crucial factors in the girls' success last week

These very simple mistakes cost the men dearly, and the galling thing is they could have won so easily, but for these errors. Craig made the mistake of volunteering to lead a selling task when it was obvious early on that Steve had the greater experience in selling and pricing in this environment.

However, Steve and the others played a canny game here, and led poor Craig to the guillotine.

Obviously, this set off the alarm bells for the future and the hunt for Bill Cullen's next apprentice. But the top performers last week were Steve and

Brendan for their sheer graft and selling, as well as pulling the team strategy subtly together. Breffny and Donal were very lucky to escape the chop.

As usual – and just like last year – the women all rowed in behind their project leader, knowing that Jackie Lavin would be looking for team spirit and a simple, roll-up-the-sleeves work ethic.

Led by Ruth, who had the team running smoothly, and using Geraldine's guile in pricing to sell at different times during the day, they pipped the men to the overall profit post.

However, the result was close. It emphasises the damage created by Sam's megaphone marketing, which drove potential customers away at both ends of Grafton Street, as well as annoying many shop owners in the area. This was a serious PR disaster; sometimes less is more.

With regard to marketing and advertising awareness, common sense and research are essential qualities and, to be fair, the women had this in spades (apart from the megaphone).

They would have known from last year's first task that

teamwork always wins – and showboating doesn't.

Strategy, with a properly-prepared plan never fails when you go into battle. As the SAS says: "Proper preparation prevents piss poor performance."

Those who impressed on this task, and ones to watch, were Ruth and Geraldine, with Aoiffe and Lucinda close behind. Boardroom tactics are always interesting, but two things were very evident here.

First, never assume or take anything for granted, at any time, anywhere.

It was clear that Craig assumed Bill would give him another chance to prove himself, which was duly noted and used against him at the key boardroom stage.

Donal, who was very close to the chop, fought like a tiger to save himself and totally outshone Craig here.

As is often the case when there is little to choose between candidates, the last thing we looked for was if they still had any pride and hunger, and who really wanted the final prize the most – never forget that, if you really want that job.

This week's episode is a gem, as the men take on the women again in a marketing/advertising task.

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