

Skillful Collaboration

Working Together for Success

Collaborative Leadership

- Define or redefine success.
- Involve others. They are open to input, solicit different perspectives, and cultivate an atmosphere where respectful debate is welcomed.
- Hold themselves and their employees accountable. Every person is responsible for reaching his/her own decisions and goals and working well with others.
- Attempt to minimize detrimental personal traits in themselves such as defensiveness, lack of humility, arrogance, or a need for power.

Collaboration across business or functional units, which combines various areas of technical expertise, can result in innovative new products or processes.

When to Collaborate

You likely have a strong case for collaborating when working with others will:

- Allow you to achieve the desired outcome, which you can't accomplish by yourself.
- Increase the likelihood of solving complex problems or addressing complicated issues.
- Reduce costs or boost efficiency.
- Increase visibility of the project.

Establish Expectations

With your fellow collaborators, be sure to:

- ✓ Determine the objective. What outcome do we want the collaboration to achieve? What does success look like? How will it be measured?
- ✓ Define roles and responsibilities. Ideally, each person should be allowed to define his or her own role in the collaboration.
- ✓ Agree on operating norms—rules of behavior that guide interactions. Common issues include participation, communication, decision-making, support, leadership, and conflict resolution.

Develop Inward Attitudes

The following traits reflect a collaborative mindset:

- ***Sense of personal responsibility for the quality of your relationships.*** Be someone that others want to work with.
- ***Concerned with “What’s in it for us?”*** Focus on how you and the others involved can benefit.
- ***Keeping an open mind.*** Suspend judgment and avoid making assumptions.
- ***Willingness to share.*** Sharing data and experience is vital to successful collaboration.
- ***Willingness to trust others.*** Trust someone unless he or she has given you a reason not to.

Practice Outward Behaviors

Translate your inward attitude of collaboration into observable actions and behaviors:

- Convey personal warmth.
- Be an active listener.
- Be trustworthy – reliable, competent, and sincere.
- Turn conflict into cooperation.
- Commit to completion.

The Power of Words

Words are powerful—and permanent. Being careful with your language can greatly support collaboration.

- Use “I” messages. “I feel/felt ____ when you ____ (behavioral description). I’d appreciate it if you would ____ (behavioral description).”
- Present ideas as questions. “What if we...?”
- Avoid destructive communication. For example, sarcasm, questioning integrity, dismissing people and ideas, and acting incredulous.
- Rephrase negative messages. Say what you can do, not what you can’t do.
- Minimize misinterpreted emails. Be clear and succinct, and don’t say anything that you wouldn’t say face-to-face.

Learning Summary Points

Three benefits of collaboration:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three challenges of collaboration:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is the main reason to collaborate?

Notes

How Strong Are Your Collaboration Skills?

Individual Activity: Self-Assessment

Instructions: For each statement, circle the number that best reflects how often you practice the behavior described. Use the following scale:

1 = seldom, 2 = occasionally, 3 = frequently, 4 = always.

Statement	Frequency			
1. I take personal responsibility for the quality of my relationships at work.	1	2	3	4
2. I go out of my way to convey personal warmth.	1	2	3	4
3. I practice positive intent by assuming that my co-workers and I both want what is best for the organization.	1	2	3	4
4. I am an effective listener, and people can tell that I'm listening to them.	1	2	3	4
5. I ask questions to find out what other people know and what they are thinking and feeling.	1	2	3	4
6. I address disagreements before they become major conflicts.	1	2	3	4
7. I mean what I say, and I say what I mean.	1	2	3	4
8. I keep an open mind and avoid making assumptions until I have accurate information.	1	2	3	4
9. I share information and expertise freely.	1	2	3	4
10. I follow through on my commitments.	1	2	3	4

Total:

Add the numbers assigned to each statement and see how your collaboration skills measure up:

10–19: Your collaboration skills have room for significant improvement.

20–29: Your collaboration skills are average.

30–40: Your collaboration skills are excellent! People probably enjoy collaborating with you.