

8 Ways Leaders Build Collaboration

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Most leaders agree that effective collaboration is more important than ever in today's turbulent business environment. In fact, a company's very survival may depend on how well it can combine the potential of its people and the quality of the information they possess with their ability – and willingness – to share what they know with their teammates and across departmental, hierarchical, and functional boundaries.

Leaders looking to foster organization-wide collaboration are using the following strategies:

1. **Rewarding collaboration.** As organizations move to collaborative cultures, leaders are changing the reward system – making collaborative performance part of the employee review process and giving recognition, bonuses, and promotions to those who work effectively across organizational boundaries.
2. **Communicating transparently.** In any organization, the way information is handled determines whether it becomes an obstacle to or an enabler of collaboration. Company-wide transparent communication is a vitally important tool in disrupting silo mentality and fostering collaboration.
3. **Encouraging networks.** Employees with multiple networks throughout the organization bring added value and facilitate collaboration. Leaders accelerate the flow of knowledge and information across boundaries by encouraging workplace relationships and making sure that all offsite retreats or workplace events include opportunities for socializing.

4. **Creating alignment around unifying goals.** The foundation of a successful organization is an entire team focused on common goals. Business unit leaders understand and communicate the overarching goals of the total organization to highlight the importance of working in concert with other areas to achieve crucial objectives.
5. **Increasing innovation through diversity.** Creativity thrives on “collective diversity” – that potent combination of ideas from people across the organization with different backgrounds, thinking styles, and expertise. When an organization focuses on collaborative innovation, leaders create cross-functional teams to capture diverse perspectives.
6. **Focusing on the customer.** Whether your industry is high-tech or healthcare, manufacturing or management consulting – and whether your company is a for-profit business enterprise, a government entity, or a non-profit association – your customers want a seamless, personalized experience. And seamless, customer-centric service takes collaboration.
7. **Building relationships of trust.** Collaborative relationships thrive in an environment of personal trust. Trust is the belief or confidence that one party has in the reliability, integrity and honesty of another party. It is the expectation that the faith one places in someone else will be honored. It is also the glue that holds together any group. Trust is the foundation of true collaboration.
8. **Redefining their role as a leader.** I once asked a Silicon Valley CEO why he thought command and control leadership was wrong. He corrected me: “There is nothing *wrong* with command and control. It’s simply irrelevant in the 21st century. In this networked world, we need collaborative leaders.”

In contrast to control-minded leaders of the past, today's most effective leaders are exercising a different kind of power – getting results through positive influence rather than by position. This new style leadership is a blending of personal and interpersonal skills that form the basis of a leader's ability to impact, include, and inspire others.

Today's organizations exist in an increasingly complex and ever-shifting ocean of change. As a result, collaborative leadership has moved from a "nice to have" organizational philosophy to the "must have" professional strategy for continued success.



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