



Tips for Successful Collaboration

How You Show Up

- ◆ If collaboration is outside your comfort zone, start small. Ask someone to review a document or project plan, then co-create an outline or framework, and then co-author.
- ◆ Ask others to join you in collaborative projects. Ask for help. Ask for what you need.
- ◆ Be open to the ideas and input of others. Looking for feedback makes it easier to accept.
- ◆ Know yourself, your needs, talents and goals for the collaboration.
- ◆ Be willing to hear and participate in someone else's agenda.
- ◆ Be respectful of the people who have to manage the systems that the collaboration operates in (i.e., interests and stakeholders at each organization, processes for approval and funding, etc).
- ◆ Be fearless.
- ◆ Listen beyond just the words.
- ◆ Manage your own feelings. Notice resistance as well as excitement. Be introspective.
- ◆ Do your homework about your collaborators: who they are and their history. Understand what's in it for them, their agenda, and their needs.
- ◆ Watch for an MMFI sign — Make me feel important. Look for ways to acknowledge others.
- ◆ Be willing to do more than your share of the work, especially at first.

Choose collaborators who:

- ◆ Have diverse talents and skills.
- ◆ Bring new perspectives.
- ◆ Can think beyond self and think of the higher goal.
- ◆ Show the ability to choose a role or tasks and follow through.
- ◆ Are committed to the work.
- ◆ Are honest and tactful.
- ◆ Are flexible, can go with the flow and shift their thinking.
- ◆ Choose to be in the collaboration and are accessible.
- ◆ Are open to possibilities.
- ◆ Will make time and space for the collaboration.
- ◆ Have a tolerance for uncertainty.
- ◆ Share your values in relation to the work to be done. For example, you and your collaborators may usually be competitors and yet you have a reason to come together around a particular goal.
- ◆ Have a track record from serving on a board or committee with you, when possible. You'll have a sense of how they think and whether they deliver on promises.



Skills

- ◆ Listening to what is behind the words as well as what is said.
- ◆ Ability to connect people and ideas.
- ◆ Area of expertise that is of value in the collaboration.



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Skills continued

- ◆ Communication.
- ◆ Negotiation.
- ◆ Problem solving.
- ◆ Ability to suspend ego and own ideas. Listening before you take a position.
- ◆ Social graces. Be able to give feedback tactfully.
- ◆ Ability to amplify others' ideas.
- ◆ Capacity to find common points of understanding.
- ◆ Willingness to make mistakes.

Process

- ◆ Set ground rules. Everyone has different backgrounds and experiences. Don't assume agreement without checking it out.
- ◆ Be respectful.
- ◆ Search for opportunities.
- ◆ Stay organized.
- ◆ Create a safe place.
- ◆ Do homework.
- ◆ Teach each other. Share expertise.
- ◆ If possible, take pleasure in chaos.
- ◆ Solicit and be open to feedback.
- ◆ Create an exit plan. How will you know when you are done?

Results

- ◆ Incredible outcomes.
- ◆ Connection. Visibility to others within and outside of your community where they see you as a valuable resource.
- ◆ Stress reduction. A good collaboration can accomplish a lot with less individual effort.
- ◆ Innovation. Many of the most innovative companies have gone to great lengths to foster collaborative work environments because they lead to innovation.
- ◆ Leverage talents. Multiple minds together are better than the sum of the parts.
- ◆ A dynamic environment of support and challenge, advocacy, efficiency, discovery, and diversity.
- ◆ Rapid rate of learning and enlightenment.
- ◆ Affirmation of your skills and contribution.
- ◆ Sustainability. Collaboration creates the likelihood that your efforts go beyond your involvement.
- ◆ Increased energy, excitement, creativity, fresh thinking and motivation.
- ◆ Accountability. Individuals in collaborative groups learn to take ownership rather than passively exist within a community.