Elements of Successful Collaboration
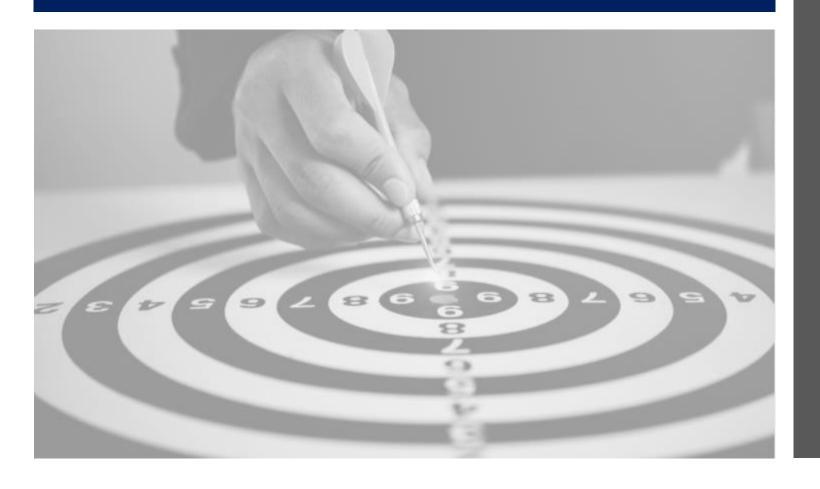
SHARED PURPOSE

CLEAR NORMS   TRUST

EFFECTIVE TEAM MEMBERS   PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY   BETTER SOLUTIONS

ROLE AND PROCESS CLARITY   EXPERIMENTATION

TEAM DECISION-MAKING   ENGAGEMENT

Define Purpose of the Collaboration

Involve everyone in defining the purpose by asking:

- Who will be affected by our solutions?
- What positive outcome would they want?
- What is the highest potential outcome for each of those parties?
- What would "good" look like?

Align around the purpose of the work and the problem to be solved

- Collaboration is a continuous learning process
- Evolve and change the purpose and the problem statement as you move forward

Outcomes:
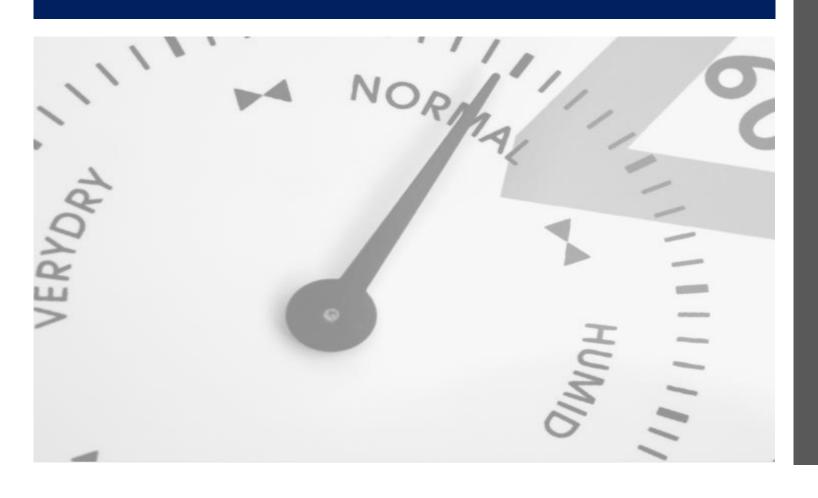
Motivation, Focus, Trust and Safety

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Establish Clear Norms

- Process for giving feedback
- Establishing and reinforcing accountability
- Resolving conflict
- Evaluating team process and results
  - After action reviews
- Modifying plans

Outcomes:

Less Conflict, Willingness to Give and Receive Feedback

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Support Effective Team Members

- Match expertise and experience to the identified purpose and the problem

- Ask participants to share strengths they bring to the team

- Identify and close expertise and experience gaps

- Discuss preferred working styles

- Discuss what you need from each other

Outcomes:

Capability/Problem Alignment, Leveraging strength, Trust and Safety, Support

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Create Role and Process Clarity

Create a roadmap that includes:

- Full team, partial team and individual responsibilities

- How to collaborate off-line

- Agendas and expected outcomes

- Key performance indicators and timelines

- Shared view of deliverables

Outcomes:

Balanced Workload, Less Duplication, Fewer "Territorial" Disputes, More Effective Meetings

Define how work will be performed and where is critical to success

- Entirely virtual or remote

- A hybrid of virtual and in person

- The work requires in person collaboration

- Which people (capabilities) need to collaborate, for what work

Not all collaboration needs to be synchronous

Share Documents

- Feedback on material can be done through file-sharing service like Google Docs and Teams

- Set a deadline for review, track changes, and be clear on exactly what you need from the reviewers

Work "Side By Side"

- Work with a colleague, on a particular shared project at the same time on a video call

Use messaging (e.g., Slack and Teams)

- Make sure messages is enhancing the collaboration

Decide how often and for how long you'll engage through these channels

Optimizing Remote Meetings

- Send out an agenda ahead of time, with clearly defined roles and content topics.
- Rotate the schedule of call facilitators.
- Start by asking everyone to answer the same question (walk the table)
- Ask every participant for their opinion at least once and acknowledge their answers.
- Give credit where it's due; when an individual reiterates an idea that someone else put forward earlier, point out who shared the idea originally.
- Celebrate different opinions and value different perspectives
- Coach team members through potential conflict
- Encourage curiosity
- Help people take risks and being comfortable with not being right.

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Shared Decision Making

Define how specific decisions will be made:

- Team leader informs the team
- Team leader decides after gathering input
- Consensus (with fallback)
- Team members make decisions within constraints
- Majority rules

Outcomes:

Reduced conflict, effective meetings, support for decision, improved execution

Six Dysfunctions of Collaboration

(Rob Cross Et Al When Collaboration Fails and How to Fix It, Winter 2021, MIT Sloan Management Review)

HUB AND SPOKE INTERACTION- Formal and informal decision making slows progress, inhibits innovation and overwhelms decision-makers

- Integrate expertise through joint work; review decision-rights

DISENFRANCHISED TEAM MEMBERS- Some team members lack access to resources, struggle to contribute and dis-engage

- Review norms, meeting design and leadership actions

MISALIGNED TEAM MEMBERS- Groups do not communicate with each other and efforts are not well integrated

- Review shared purpose, norms and metrics: focus on relationships and optimize team member strengths

OVERWHELMED TEAM MEMBERS- Inability to meet commitments and burnout

- Review roles, review work and re-balance, eliminate unneeded work and interactions

ISOLATED TEAM MEMBERS- Hard "borders" block stakeholder engagement and diverse resources and expertise are not well utliized

- Reduce tunnel vision and skunk work by refocusing shared purpose and goals

PRIORITY OVERLOAD- External demands and "real job" commitments results in overload and detracts from the common purpose

- Review priorities and timelines and re-visit with sponsors

Successful Collaboration Strategy

The purpose and the focus of the work to be done

The skills and experiences needed

The norms and approach to decision-making

The critical work activities — Define the skills and experience needed for each critical work activity

How/where the critical work will be performed

The technology tools needed to support the work and how they will be used

Reflection Questions

Which opportunities in your organization will benefit most from effective/more effective collaboration?

What needs to happen/change for that value to be realized?

What can you do to enhance collaboration in your organization?