

The Collaboration Sweet Spot

For you, your team and your organisation



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Tess has worked in the area of organisational innovation for the past 15 years, both in her own company and in partnership with leading companies. She spent six years with InnovationXchange (IXC) implementing systems for Open Innovation both here and internationally. She is now concentrating on building innovation capability in organisations, big and small, public and private, and is developing and implementing people-based innovation in a range of businesses and across a number of industries.

Tess believes that innovation is all about people, and she helps companies provide the opportunity, ability and motivation for employees to use their ideas to make the enterprise a great workplace and a good business.

Acknowledged as an expert facilitator, Tess runs interactive and practical sessions in innovation skills and innovation leadership. She also conducts research and evaluation into issues related to innovation, collaboration and skills and training needs.

Tess is responsible for designing and delivering many of our Hargraves tools and programs in collaboration with members and leading organisations. These include the Hargraves Innovator Awards and our Working Collaboratively tools.

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Introduction

We are born to connect; we are social beings and we know that two heads are better than one for making decisions. In fact, what distinguishes us humans from other species in the animal kingdom is our innate capacity to collaborate.¹

Collaboration also produces outcomes. More than 70% of new ideas and innovations are inspired by others and less than 18% of ideas are truly original. A collaborative work culture creates more innovation, more engaged employees, higher productivity and more sustainable businesses.

"It is the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) that those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."

—Charles Darwin

Yet, we're not all that good at it. For example, one study states that between 50% and 75% of all interorganisational collaborations fail.²

Organisations introduce strategies and platforms to break down silos, to encourage communication within and between teams, and to seek and develop collaborative partnerships with external organisations. These efforts are often undermined by the structures we've created. So, while silos can be damaging, they exist because we need deep pools of expertise to solve complex problems. Interagency or division collaboration is desirable but hard to achieve if the outcome means one agency or team gains and the other loses. Technology provides unprecedented pathways for communication but used poorly it can be destructive or a waste of money.

In the end it relies on people and the leadership—their judgement, skill and motivation. We call this **the collaboration sweet spot**—when people are sufficiently confident and connected to collaborate with the right people, in the right way, to achieve the right outcome.

This short guide will help you to understand the contradictions, the barriers and the myths that surround collaboration, and give you tools and tips to build your own ability and the ability of others.

Your aims with this guide

You can use this guide to identify:

1. what you need to do to better contribute to collaborative outcomes
2. how to improve your team collaboration
3. strategies for the whole organisation to work across silos and achieve better outcomes through collaboration

Your aim is to get yourself, your team and your organisation into the healthy collaboration zone—the sweet spot.

Steps for using the guide

1. Agree on what collaboration means for you and your organisation
2. Agree on why you want to collaborate and why it's important (Collaboration Maturity Model and Why Collaborate?)
3. Have each person complete the Collaboration Assessment Tool (CAT). It is a measure of how well you score in the attributes associated with positive collaboration capability.
4. Develop an action plan for the organisation, the team and the individuals.

¹ Sloman, S. and Fernbach, P.; *The Knowledge Illusion*; Riverhead Books; New York; 2017

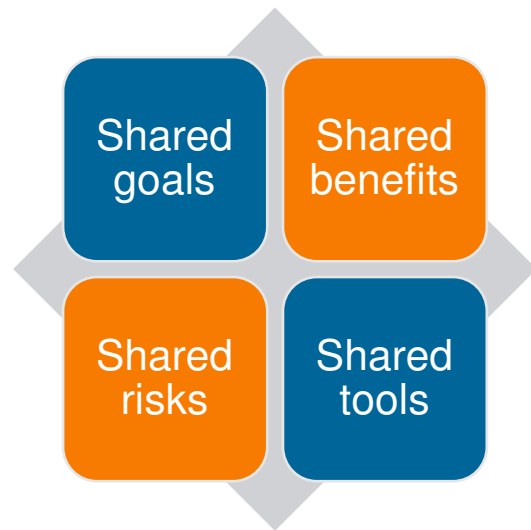
² "[Ten rules for successful research collaboration](#)"; *The Conversation*; 16 February 2016

Section One: More heads are better than one

Collaboration can take many forms:

- Inter-organisation collaboration to access capability, capacity, shared services
- Research collaboration to commercialise knowledge, often between research institutes and corporates
- Inter-agency collaboration between organisations to solve complex social problems
- Artistic collaboration to produce entertainment, music, art
- Sport team collaboration to work together playing to different strengths in a competitive environment
- Project collaboration at work to solve a problem, implement a solution, deliver a service or build a product

Collaboration is two or more people with:



All these types of collaboration share the definition of two or more people working together to achieve a common goal with shared risks and benefits.

However, this is not all that we mean when we speak of workplace collaboration. It has also come to mean breaking down internal communication barriers, knowledge sharing, space-sharing spaces for cross-fertilisation and connecting digitally to work, share and socialise.

This paper will address the core skills required for collaborative practices, whether it's in a purposeful team, across an organisation, with external parties or for digital connection.

Section Two: Smart, fast and connected

Collaboration at work is more important than ever because of the need for speed, innovation and increasing our market reach.

- Diverse expertise and viewpoints make problem solving and innovating easier, faster and more effective
- Technology means that our colleagues can work from remote environments and can still be part of the team
- We can access new skills, research, ideas and insights quickly to better address our customer needs and solve problems
- We can increase the capacity of the organisation to innovate and service different markets through partnerships and networks

Why is it hard?

While the benefits are clear, and the ambition is there, true collaboration is hard. Organisational silos create barriers, employees are unwilling to share, they don't prioritise helping others and are often shy about asking for help. There is a perception that it takes more time and adds complexity.

Workplace cultures and people also create barriers, for example:

- The fear that if they share their expertise and knowledge, individual employees will become less valuable
- A fear of losing a sense of ownership, control and identity
- Collaboration isn't rewarded for individuals or teams
- Style differences in the way people work make it difficult to develop a harmonious approach
- Differences in values and motivations in relation to the goal
- Lack of interest in learning from others
- The time required to work collaboratively as opposed to completing things individually
- Poor relationship skills
- A low trust culture
- An inappropriate leadership style

According to Ron Friedman³, collaboration can breed false confidence if there is not sufficient competency to make good judgements. It can also pressure us to conform, rather than to appreciate diverse viewpoints, and there are cases when it distributes the workload unevenly, so that some team members become lazy. He recommends that you

- Find team members who complement your skills rather than replicate them
- Differentiate team roles clearly and ensure individuals get feedback
- Promote autonomy so that everyone can work on their part of the project

In addition, it's important that organisations are setting up collaborations for the right reasons. Not all work benefits from collaboration, so it is important to take a step back and think about when and why it is needed. For example, in the case of a problem with a knowable solution, you probably don't need a collaboration to solve it, even if the problem seems complicated. Complex challenges with unknowable solutions and process or systems challenges, which have multiple agents and dependencies, benefit most from collaborative efforts.

There is a lot to be gained from collaboration around the right purpose, but employees have to feel confident and connected to be able to contribute to and benefit.

³ Friedman, R.; "[Why Working Together Doesn't Always Work](#)"; *Psychology Today*; 11 July 2014

Identifying threats to collaborative practices

These are some warning signs of threat in relation to collaboration:

- Territorialism: “This is our area of responsibility”
- Criticising other groups: “They don’t know what they’re doing”
- Excluding people or groups who should be included: “They don’t need to know”
- Covert blocking behaviours such as providing too much or too complex information for others to understand
- Covert manipulations of boundaries: framing or subtly shaping perceptions about the expertise of one’s group as being very different from the other groups¹

Reflection

Select two examples of collaboration that you have been part of—one positive experience and one negative experience.

What did you feel in those experiences? Some suggestions have been provided below, you can add feelings of your own in the blank rows.

Positive collaboration experience		Negative collaboration experience	
I felt:	Because:	I felt:	Because:
Proud		Frustrated	
Confident		Left out	
Stretched		Worried	
Useful		Angry	

Section Three: The makings of success

Collaboration Assessment Tool

Hargraves Institute's collaboration assessment tool is a good starting point for assessing the individual, the team and the organisation.

People and groups will collaborate if they are confident and connected. Your aim is to get everyone to have a score of +24/30 for both **confidence** and **connectedness**.

After answering the following questions give yourself a score between 0 and 10 (where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "totally") for each question in relation to a collaborative project you are part of. Refer to the more detailed questions that follow to have a more meaningful conversation about these questions.



Give yourself or your team a score out of ten for each individual question and then a total score out of 30 for both **confidence** and **connectedness**.

Confidence		Connectedness	
To what extent to you feel...	Score	To what extent do you feel...	Score
you have control over what you are doing? (Autonomy)		part of something and that others want you to be included? (Belonging)	
competent in what you are doing? (Competence)		that you are trusted and that you trust others? (Trust)	
you are heading in the right direction? (Sense of progress)		engaged and others engage with you? (Engagement)	
Total for confidence:		Total for connectedness:	



A closer look at confidence

In order to be confident you need to have a sense of autonomy, feel competent and feel that there is a sense of progress.



1. **Autonomy:** *The feeling that you have control over your work. Hierarchies operate so that those at the top of the structure have autonomy and people at the bottom have almost no control. Teams provide the opportunity for much more distributed control among members, however, in many cases these opportunities are not realised.*

 <p>Ask yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you understand your role within the collaboration? • Do you have the freedom to work out the process for working towards your goals? • Do you have the freedom to form relationships with others to help you achieve your goals? 	 <p>Ask your team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the team secure about its role in the organisation? • Does it understand what its role is in relation to other teams? • Is the team free to pursue its role using its own process? • Is the team accountable for outcomes?
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2. **Competence:** *The feeling that you can deliver what is asked of you. Individuals don't have to be expert, they have to be sufficiently competent to contribute, while also being able to acknowledge what they need to learn. A feeling of incompetence leads to defensiveness and ultimately disengagement.*

 <p>Ask yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have the technical expertise to deliver? • Do you have the interpersonal skills to deliver? • Do you have the technology skills to deliver? • Are you open to new skills and knowledge? • Do you ask for help when you need to? 	 <p>Ask your team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the team have the expertise required for the project? • Is the team willing to share the knowledge and expertise with each other and with other teams? • Is the team willing to learn new skills and knowledge from others?
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3. **A sense of progress:** *The feeling that you are moving forward, which comes from having an overall direction or goal and getting regular, constructive feedback. A sense of progress provides the motivation to keep going. Without it, there will be a loss of morale and momentum.*

 <p>Ask yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you clear about the goals of the collaborative work? • Are you motivated by the goals of the project? • Do you get constructive and regular feedback, so you can progress? 	 <p>Ask your team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the goal of the collaboration clear within the organisation's strategy? • Is the whole team committed to and supportive of the goal? • Are there clear milestones and accountability? • Is progress celebrated?
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A closer look at connectedness

Being connected means having a feeling of belonging, that you are trusted and trust others and that you engage well with others, online and in person.



1. **Belonging:** *The feeling that you are a valued part of something bigger and that you value others. People often default to their tribal preferences, but in an increasingly diverse workforce, we need to find the bonds between people who are different. These bonds can be forged by shared purpose, respect and finding common interests. When people don't feel that they belong, they cease to contribute.*

 <p>Ask yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that your voice is heard? • Do you seek to find things you have in common with others? • Do you volunteer for tasks and roles? • Are you aware of your personal blind spots in dealing with people who are different? 	 <p>Ask your team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does every team member have a voice that is heard? • Do team members get equal opportunity and feedback? • Does the team demonstrate behaviours that build respect, openness and friendliness to all members? • Is the team respectful of difference? • Is diversity of thinking encouraged?
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2. **Trust:** *The feeling that you will not be harmed, that your interests will be served as you will serve the interests of others. Trust provides the psychological safety for individuals to be themselves and respectfully say what they feel, without fear of ridicule or condescension. A lack of trust within a team breeds toxicity.*

 <p>Ask yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that others will help you? • Do you help others when asked? • Do you feel that others have the competence needed for the project? • Do you feel safe to challenge, ask questions and contribute? • Do you trust the organisation you work in? 	 <p>Ask your team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you trust the goals of the organisation? • Do you believe that the organisation has your team's best interests at heart? • Is credit given to people appropriately? • Do you believe that the team has the capability and process to achieve the goals? • Do all team members feel psychologically safe about airing their views?
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3. **Engagement:** *The feeling that you want to engage with others and others want to engage with you to achieve a common purpose. You feel you have the interpersonal skills to connect with others online and in person and you are open to their ideas and insights as they are open to yours. Engagement comes from regular, healthy contact between team members and the ability to develop good relationships.*

 <p>Ask yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you reach out in constructive ways, using the tools and platforms available? • Do others reach out to you and do you respond appropriately? • Do you enjoy the company of others in your team? • Are you and others reliable? 	 <p>Ask your team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do team members share knowledge and skills? • Do people use the collaborative tools available in a healthy way? • Are there ongoing, regular opportunities for team members to engage? • Do people share knowledge and skills?
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Section Four: Find your sweet spot

Building confidence

Autonomy:

Identify your work preferences and align them to the needs of the team

When you understand the overall goal of the collaboration, reflect on the aspects you believe you can contribute to and the ways you can work autonomously.

Question	Example	Your answer
Goal of the collaboration:	<i>The outcome, purpose, goal</i>	
Perspectives you can contribute:	<i>Experience of being a customer or from another context</i>	
Behaviours you can contribute:	<i>Interpersonal skills, proactivity, empathy, etc.</i>	
What you like doing:	<i>Writing, researching, presenting</i>	
How you like to work:	<i>Alone, in groups, both at different times</i>	
How you like to be managed:	<i>Formal feedback, informal feedback, written, in person</i>	

Competence:

Identify your strengths and align them to the needs of the team

Question	Example	Your answer
Why are you part of this collaboration?	<i>Technical skills, interpersonal skills, innovation skills</i>	
What skills and knowledge can you share?	<i>Specific expertise, leadership, tools</i>	
What tasks are you good at?	<i>Summarising, analysis, creative thinking</i>	
What do you want to learn?	<i>Tools, leadership</i>	
How do you learn best?	<i>Training, coaching, self-paced study, on the job</i>	

Ask for further training and development

If you find collaboration difficult, ask for training. These are the skills which are critical to good collaboration:

- **Interpersonal**—listening, asking questions
- **Innovation**—how to contribute to innovative ideas
- **Presentation**—how to present ideas and opinions well
- **Digital**—how to use tools and platforms for collaboration

Sense of progress:

Identify what motivates you and what helps you to perform and align to the purpose of the team

Question	Example	Your answer
What's the purpose of this project?	<i>Goal, customer</i>	
Why is this project important to you?	<i>Commitment to customer, organisation, team, self</i>	
What do you value most?	<i>Evidence, justice, innovation, reputation, remuneration, etc.</i>	
What demotivates you?	<i>Micromanaging, a lack of direction, time wasting</i>	
What do you need, to know you are progressing?	<i>Feedback, rewards, clear milestones</i>	

Manage your feedback

Feedback sessions:

- Select the right people to ask for feedback
- Make an appointment and don't ask for too much of their time
- Send them the questions so that they can prepare
- Listen attentively and ask follow-up questions
- Take notes of what you need to do in the future
- Thank them for their time and advice

Feedback questions:

When asking for feedback, make sure you plan the questions you need answered. Focus on questions which provide constructive feedback, rather than either criticism or praise. For example:

- Provide an example of a situation or outcome you feel disappointed about and ask for advice about what you could have done better
- Ask about a specific activity within the group, for example, making contributions to meetings, or handling difficult conversations and ask: "How could I have handled that better?"

In relation to a specific task or role, ask: "What steps do I need to take to prepare?"

Select projects that motivate you

Use this table to select collaborative projects that are appropriate:

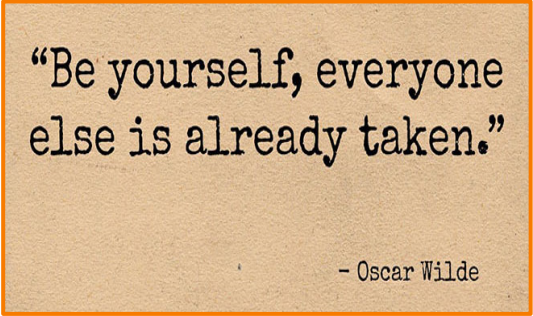
Questions	Comments
<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a project you believe in? • Will it stretch you, that is, will you learn new things? • What are the advantages for you in being part of this project? • How do your strengths align with the project goals? 	
<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the project fit with other projects in the organisation? Is it a priority? • What are the drivers for the project? • Who is the leader of this project or the sponsor? • What impact will the outcomes of this project have? 	
<p>Getting started</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who should you approach to volunteer for the project? • How do you present the project to your manager so that they see the benefits? 	
<p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can you learn from others on the team? • How can you build relationships with others on the team? • How can you influence the key decision-makers? • Do you know them directly or can you be introduced to them? • How does the key influencer prefer to communicate? How should you approach them? • What is the correct protocol in your organisation for seeking nomination to another project? 	
<p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this project right for you? • What should you do next? 	

Building connectedness

Create belonging

What can you do to feel like you belong and make others feel that they belong?

Belonging is the feeling that the whole you is accepted by others in the group. When you feel you belong, you are more likely to feel safe and, therefore, more likely to express opinions, ideas and counter arguments. In homogenous workplaces, we have shortcuts for establishing what we have in common. It may be our food, language, sport interests, entertainment and so on. In diverse workplaces, with people from different cultures and generations, and with different beliefs and experiences, creating a sense of belonging is more difficult.



“Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.”

- Oscar Wilde

The shortcuts don't work as well and people who are different can feel excluded.

This leads to impaired team outcomes, a lack of trust and a lack of engagement. It also means that we don't get the best from everyone in the team.

Tips for Belonging

- Make a habit of amplifying the ideas of others, particularly those who are in the minority
- Look for things you have in common with others in your team
- Listen and hear the experiences of others. We all have different lived experiences, find out about others and reveal your own
- Call out behaviour that erodes others' sense of belonging, for example, inappropriate jokes and references
- Join in and make a contribution to group activities, don't isolate yourself
- Ask for help when you need to and reciprocate when others ask you for help
- Don't blame yourself or others when things go wrong
- Be open to being challenged and really listen to understand others' ideas
- Be generous with praise
- Give credit when it's due

Trust

Trust at work is made up of different dimensions. Reflect on the diagram below and think about your work situation. Do you trust your work situation in all three ways?



Trustworthiness

Earning and maintaining trust is important in improvement and innovation because you may have to:

- Listen to knowledge, insights and ideas that belong to other people
- Make connections with other parties who may use that knowledge or idea
- Work collaboratively with your team and other people
- Broker and develop relationships between parties within the organisation.

It is particularly important to develop a culture of trust in order to get other employees to engage in innovation, so they feel secure that they won't be ridiculed if the idea doesn't work and that they will get acknowledgement for their ideas that do work.

Trustworthy people:

- Have others' interests as a priority and offer help
- Meet the expectations of the other party
- Ask genuine questions
- Are not afraid to disclose themselves
- Don't always have to know everything or be right
- Display empathy, respect and tolerance
- Listen deeply
- Disagree with the idea, not the person
- Give and receive honest, objective feedback
- Share information and ensure understanding
- Include others and allow for trial and error
- Act on the merit of the idea, not the status of the person
- Treat people fairly and equally
- Are reliable and do what they commit to

Engage well with others

Relationships are the core of great collaboration. In a professional setting it is important to find ways to relate to a range of people who may be different to you.

Try these strategies every day.

- Reach out when you need help
- Help others when they ask
- Ask questions, be curious and listen
- Chat and laugh
- Make regular contact
- Always be respectful
- Don't get angry
- Apologise unconditionally when you need to
- Use collaboration platforms well—write well, reply promptly and always be courteous

Enjoy your colleagues

Celeste Headlee⁴ provides great advice for having good conversations. Watch the video and then practice with your colleagues.

A conversation requires a balance between talking and listening. But with technology we're losing the art of conversation. These tips will help to relearn how to keep that balance.

1. Don't multitask—be present, be in the moment, don't be half in and half out. "You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time."
2. Don't pontificate—enter every conversation like you have something to learn.
3. Use open-ended questions—"Who?", "What?", "Where?", "When?", "Why?" and "How?" Ask simple questions so that you get more complex answers. What was that like? How does that feel? Let them use their own words.
4. Go with the flow—let thoughts and ideas come and go, don't hold on to them, it stops you listening.
5. If you don't know, say that you don't know. Err on the side of caution if you're unsure. Talk should not be cheap.
6. Don't equate their experience with yours. No two experiences are the same, and anyway it's not about you. Conversations are not promotional opportunities.
7. Try not to repeat. We have a point to make so keep rephrasing it over and over.
8. Stay out of the woods. They don't care about names, dates and details. They care about you.
9. Listen. Why do we find listening hard? Because we'd rather talk. When we're talking we're in control. Also, we listen faster than the other person talks, so you have to make the effort to slow down and listen.
10. Be brief.

For more information about making digital connections, [download](#) Alister Webb's free playbook, *Designing Collaboration for Senior Leaders*.

⁴ Ted Talk; "[10 ways to have a better conversation](#)"; Celeste Headlee

Speak up, stand up and show up—increase your visibility

Perform

The *Harvard Business Review* reported a study that highlighted the attributes which separate the competent from the exceptional⁵. They collected 50,286 360-degree evaluations over five years on 4,157 contributors. They compared the “good” performers to the “best” performers.

The results are shown below.

To stand out at work (in order):

1. Set stretch goals and adopt high standards for yourself and encourage others to achieve exceptional results
2. Work collaboratively to solve problems
3. Volunteer to represent the group—have the courage to raise your hand
4. Embrace change rather than resist it
5. Take initiative and provide a helping hand
6. Walk the talk and follow through—always do what you say you’ll do
7. Use good judgement and research to make decisions; be open to a wide range of solutions
8. Display personal resilience—if you make a mistake, acknowledge it quickly, learn from it and move on
9. Give honest feedback with kind intent

⁵ Zenger, J. and Folkman, J.; [The Behaviours that Define A-Players](#); *Harvard Business Review*; 11 April 2014

Participate

- When volunteering to participate in new projects, avoid “working parties” and instead select taskforces, action teams, project teams, that is, those teams that are visible and results oriented
- Don’t stay in the back room and allow others to be visible; make sure you get client- and executive-facing time
- Speak up when you are at a meeting or part of a team; make the effort to be noticed
- Ask for training and development opportunities

Get support

Ask for coaching, mentoring or training to boost your confidence and capability.

Section Five: Find your organisation's sweet spot

Does your organisation want to be more collaborative?

Why? Rank these reasons.

A = Extremely important

B = Important

C = Not really important

We need to be more collaborative:			
1. To share knowledge and expertise in a world of exponential knowledge growth	A	B	C
2. To solve complex problems	A	B	C
3. To improve engagement of employees and to retain them	A	B	C
4. To innovate to quickly meet customer needs	A	B	C
5. To minimise risks by getting diverse inputs	A	B	C
6. To boost productivity by accessing new skills and knowledge quickly	A	B	C
7. To break down silos so that the organisation is united by a common purpose and goal	A	B	C
8. To find external partners to help deliver new products and services	A	B	C
9. To speed up the achievement of outcomes	A	B	C
10. To improve relationships with the supply chain	A	B	C
11. To connect disparate parts of the organisation through technology platforms	A	B	C
12. To get diverse ideas and insights	A	B	C
13. Other:			

Now, in groups identify priorities to improve collaboration within your organisation.

Barriers and deterrents

As Charles Darwin notes, the ability to collaborate has always been important for innovating and succeeding. It is only recently, however, that it has become an essential for every employee and organisation. But it is not always easy in our current structures.

The industrial revolution brought the division of labour, with whole jobs broken into specialist tasks often repetitively performed, with the aim of standardising quality and saving time. Bureaucracies, corporations, factories all were based on key characteristics—division of labour, specialisation, hierarchical leadership and formal procedures. The aim was to mass produce consistent quality as quickly as possible.

The digital revolution brought the need for speed, innovation, access to knowledge and cooperation, which are difficult to achieve in the mechanistic work structures we have inherited. While they may be easier to manage, the divisions (organised around different functions, expertise, geographies, products or customers) typically have separate incentives, identities and often they compete. And so we end up with silos that are a major impediment to collaboration. However, silos are not all bad. We need to be able to organise people, resources and expertise to handle the complexity of our world. The challenge is to not allow silo thinking and behaviour to dominate.

Some organisations, particularly small start-ups, are moving towards organic structures to overcome silo thinking, which allows greater flexibility, diversity and innovation. However, they are hard to scale, and the chain of command can be difficult to understand.

Many organisations aim to find a middle way. They look for an orderly structure with cross-divisional teams to work on organisational goals and self-managed teams to work on divisional goals. Alternatively, they might form agile teams, which come together to complete a project over a short period of time. Many employees work on many different teams at the one time. They look for strategies and systems which create the desire and ability to collaborate across silos.

With changing and more flexible work roles and structures, the need for faster innovation, more focus on the customer, greater communication across boundaries and a deluge of new technologies and digitisation, all organisations share a need for new ways of working, and collaboration is at the core. That means employees need to connect, leaders need to lead in a collaborative way, and organisations need structures and systems that make healthy collaboration possible and successful.

Because we think communally, we tend to operate in teams. This means that the contributions we make as individuals depend more on our ability to work with others than our individual mental horsepower. Individual intelligence is overrated. It also means that we learn best when we're thinking with others."

—Sloman and Fernbach



Collaboration Maturity Canvas

Where does your organisation need to be?

Where is it currently?

Even if you have the most confident and connected individuals and teams, there may be barriers within your organisation to healthy collaboration.

How would you describe your organisation in terms of collaborative practices? Consider each of the following descriptors and select those that characterise your experience of collaboration in your workplace?

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Leadership	Transactional command and control	Bureaucratic Focuses on individual outcomes	Facilitative Builds consensus	Collaborative Creates emotional bonds and relationships	Transformative Mobilising employees towards goals
People	Low confidence and unconnected	Aware and interested in collaborating but low confidence and connectedness	Willing and able to collaborate for specific projects	Committed and able to collaborate across teams/divisions	Confident employees habitually connecting to enhance outcomes
Structure	Hierarchical around work groups Silos	Some cross-functional work for specific projects	Some short-term project teams for specific projects Cross-silo communication	Multiple short-term projects that breakdown silos	Flexible, flat—"a team of teams" Agile, organic structure
Goals and targets	Individual KPIs and work groups KPIs Not aligned to other teams	Exploring goals for collaborative projects	Clear collaboration goals and objectives	Clear whole-of-organisation goals and objectives for collaborative work	Alignment of goals and targets for projects and organisation Metrics used widely
Culture	Low levels of trust between managers and employees Lack of diversity	Trust within teams Lack of transparency between organisation and employees	Trust across teams and with organisation's priorities	High levels of trust among employees and also between employees and leaders	Open minded, diverse, high trust in people, systems and capabilities
Technology	Use technology for job role	Use tools with the team	Collaboration platforms available but not widely used	Collaboration platforms and tools are available and used	Collaboration platforms available and widely used by all, including leadership
Knowledge and skills sharing	Ad hoc It happens within teams at times	Tacit Team members help each other and sometimes reach out to others in the organisation	Explicit Knowledge-sharing and communication mechanisms in place	External and internal knowledge sharing widely encouraged	Ongoing sharing and exchange of ideas and insights through networks, forums, events

Action Plan

Use the suggestions below to identify critical questions for your organisation to improve collaboration.

Strategies	Priority questions
<p>Leadership for collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection • Training • Support 	
<p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills • Motivation • Optimising diversity 	
<p>Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational • Silos • Physical space • Teams • Working conditions 	
<p>Goals and targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals • Incentives • Metrics 	
<p>Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Behaviours • Norms 	
<p>Knowledge, data and skill sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platforms • Usage of platforms • External collaboration 	

“The world has become a hum of interconnected voices and a hive of interlinked lives,” Christine Lagarde, Head of the IMF observed. “...But while the world is increasingly interlinked as a system, our lives remain fragmented. Many organisations are divided, and then subdivided into numerous different departments, which often fail to talk to each other—let alone collaborate. People often live in separate mental and social ‘ghettos’, talking and coexisting with people like us. ...Is there a way to avoid the craziness—or blindness—that silos can create?”

— *The Silo Effect*, Gillian Tett

What can you do to help overcome silos, to produce great team outcomes, to be confident and connected and in the collaboration sweet spot?

Please [contact us](#) at Hargraves Institute if you would like further information or help with building collaborative practices.

