



The Challenge of Collaboration Lies on the Outside

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Biography

Business leader, innovator, speaker, consultant, author, owner of Abelard Collaborative Consulting, and founder of the exclusive xTEN Club, William facilitates transformation of the bottom-line for established entrepreneurial businesses.

A Chartered Insurer with 23 years' experience, he was Head of Business Risk Management & Chief Underwriter for Lloyds TSB Insurance. He developed techniques and methods for getting the best out of people and helping them to deliver exceptional results. Built on real-world practical challenges, like the merger of Lloyds with TSB, and critical projects with the policy-makers for the industry, its regulators and government, his techniques have been proven time-and-time again and are supported by numerous case studies and war stories.

A seasoned expert on collaboration, teams and effective business models, he is known today for making a dramatic business impact, both for owners and executives. His often-times intuitive approach helps them uncover invaluable insights about who they are and what they do, in the process enabling them to transform their businesses quickly and sustainably.

He is also an accomplished speaker who connects with his audiences so that his knowledge is transferred effectively and insightfully – some would say incitefully! He will excite and entertain highly intelligent audiences who expect both to challenge and to be challenged. His speeches are often described as inspiring, thought-provoking and informative, leaving people feeling energised, empowered and eager to take action.

In his inimitable fun and provocatively playful style he tells terrible tales of what can happen when things go seriously wrong and how the worst situations often provide the best learning for the most profound transformations.

William blogs at <https://williambuist.com/>

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Abstract

Collaboration has long been a characteristic of high-performing organizations. To encourage it, many companies broke down cubicle walls and pushed employees to work in a communal space, but there is so much more to achieving true collaboration as the author of this article explains.

Introduction

The challenge of collaboration starts within the collaborative group. They work together, conversing, cooperating and building collective trust. They agree on mutual goals. All of that takes time and in the process, the group develops a strong alignment, reacting to events with certainty. With deep collaboration, there's no longer a need to verify everything. As a result, decisions get taken faster, and more independently, "That's what I would have done" is common, and "Why did you



Analysis

do that?" rare. From the inside, it feels safe, connected, certain, and effective. It's powerful. It creates tremendous team spirit and speed.

The outside view

From the outside, though, it can look quite different, cliquy, even conspiratorial. When people interact with any of the collaborative team they get the same response, politics doesn't work. When difficult issues hit the collaborative team the decisions in the project are taken quickly. As a result of collective action, workflow accelerates in ways that leave those outside the group scrambling to understand both what has happened, and to catch up.

Case study



In a previous, complex, project I oversaw the creation of two collaborative groups. They both were working very effectively and delivering change in two different workstreams. Whilst they both worked brilliantly on their own contexts, where there needed to undertake joint work, each group viewed the other with some suspicion. Only when we brought both together and surfaced the issues did we see the dangers for any collaborative group of being insular.

Taking action

Deep collective understanding is opaque to those outside the group. Breaking down the appearance of a clique means deliberately making elements of what you do transparent to the outside as well. That's even more important if your teams are separate, yet needing to work closely together.

Have you ever been involved in a project or part of an organization, yet felt like an outsider? It's far more likely that was because there were established collaborative relationships than a deliberate intention to exclude. Strong collaborations puts boundaries around the people involved. Yet we can take action to break down those barriers and welcome newcomers more effectively. When you have done that well, what did you do, and what difference did it make?