

Collaboration Versus Competition

by Jon Craighead

Michael Porter of Harvard in his 1998 title On Competition points out that awareness for regulation to protect the environment is increasingly widespread but is being met with grudging acceptance because of the lingering belief that restrictive regulation erodes competitiveness. Opponents believe regulation is costly, time consuming, demoralizing, a loss of energy, and impairs progress. Environmentalists believe that not realistically confronting this inevitable catastrophe will result in greater loss of life and cause health issues and the potential disappearance of the environmental amenities we love and enjoy. What is critically needed in this standoff is the creation of a collaborative solution.

This is a typical example of differing views toward a critical situation. This particular contentious stalemate makes us conscious of the necessity for action to prevent further environmental destruction. Any solution will require both points of view to form an agreeable approach toward a resolution. Both interpretations must be respectively acknowledged to accomplish something of this importance. Collaboration is the pathway of choice. This is even more essential because we have a limited amount of time to resolve this impasse.

The good news is Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University and The Earth Institute has begun such a process. In his 2015 book titled The Age of Sustainable Development he proposes pathways to sustainability that bring together politicians, environmental technologists, developmental specialists, economists, businesses, governments, and religious leaders. All are committed to shifting the conversation from unmovable positions to workable collaborations. Success will demand new and imaginative worldwide problem-solving approaches.

Proven best practice approaches toward problem-solving begin with these realizations:

- Having a problem is not necessarily a bad thing; it could be an unforeseen and timely forewarning.
- Just because a problem seems implausible doesn't mean that it is impossible.
- Determine what is needed to address the problem logically and unemotionally.
- Begin sorting out the actual or likely sources of the problem.
- Select a team of people to resolve the problem.

A most effective team composition for the climate change resolution would be people with varied international backgrounds and worldviews who are dedicated to a common

principle of finding a solution. Success will be accomplished by a collaborative partnership and a pledge that this issue will be resolved.

An excellent example of how an unselfish collaboration with others can promote a recurring universal success is demonstrated in the automotive industry, a bedrock of fierce competition with more than 30 major automobile manufactures in the world. Fourteen car companies comprise a combination of 55 brands. Porsche produces 21 versions of the 911 alone, yet none of their promotional advertising trashes their competitors. Each year multiple automotive improvements are introduced, such as new body designs, GPS, automatic breaking, rear cameras, vehicle internet, emergency stopping, and numerous dazzling electronic features. The following year, the competitors replicate these developments; but the originating manufacturer creates even newer styles and options the next year. Yet surprisingly, they all continue to be extraordinarily profitable.

You could make the case that they are aware that each technical advantage provides only a short-lived edge. Their focus seems to be more directed toward the customer's driving experience rather than protecting themselves. One can assume the automotive leaders' attention is on providing a more desirable automobile rather than driving, no pun intended, their competitors out of business. This methodology stimulates individual and group success year after year – a win for all. There may be an approach here to be emulated in the climate change conversation.

Historically, through unselfish teamwork we as a people have successfully overcome momentous challenges by working together. It's prudent to remember these successful experiences and continue to apply our joint contributions toward solving these encounters when we are called to action, as in saving our planet. It is our noble intentions which created our greatest collaborations, and our greatest triumphs are the results. Creative and fair competition is powerfully stimulating and much needed. Creative collaboration produces breakthrough products and services which are beneficial and profitable for all. As demonstrated by the auto industry, greater successes are realized more from our infrequent coalitions than from our ordinary competitiveness. Viewing the world from an external rather than an internal perspective results in a collective wellbeing for us all. Collaboration makes us more focused, successful, and smarter.