

Four Traits of Collaborative Leaders

In a September strategy + business article Zachary Tumin and William Bratton, coauthors of *Collaborate or Perish! Reaching across Boundaries in a Networked World*, introduce an excerpt from *The Collaboration Imperative: Executive Strategies for Unlocking Your Organization's True Potential*, by Ron Ricci and Carl Wiese about how managers can become collaboration catalysts.

Successful collaboration requires leadership. To become a chief catalyst for collaboration, it's vital to model behaviors that embody the way you'd like your employees to work. How you lead your people has a direct impact on your ability to eliminate or mitigate the types of behaviors that slow organizations down.

In the author's experience, highly collaborative leaders:

Focus on authentic leadership and avoid passive aggressiveness.

For collaboration to succeed, leaders need to be authentic. They must be willing to follow through on commitments. Consider how much organizational inertia is created because leaders don't always do what they say they will do. When there is disagreement about a decision, fight the instinct to make it personal. The focus needs to be on communicating what drives your decision making instead of arguing about the choice.

Relentlessly pursue transparent decision making.

Decisions are always about making choices. It's critical that you're clear about how you make them. Tell people your style and thought process for navigating tricky or even everyday decisions. Consider how much time is wasted explaining details when a decision is made and communicated because the people who are affected don't know who made the decision or who is accountable for its consequences. Transparent decision making is critical to people empowerment.

View resources as instruments of action, not as possessions.

It's not a new observation that people sometimes stockpile resources around their business unit or department, or are slow — perhaps even hesitant — to share those resources with other departments. There might even be incentives in place that discourage sharing. But are your resources truly applied as optimally as possible to your market opportunities in a way that best serves the total business? By unlocking these trapped resources, organizations can more quickly and successfully pursue emerging market opportunities.

Codify the relationship between decision rights, accountability and rewards.

Modeling the desired collaborative behaviors by showing your employees that you walk the talk is the goal. But what happens when you're not around? The more these behaviors are part of an end-to-end system across your organization, the greater the odds of collaboration succeeding when you're not there to reinforce cultural norms. Take the time to establish clear parameters. Who gets to make decisions? Are all decisions tied to funding? These are the types of questions to which everyone must know the answers.