



# CORPORATE COLLABORATION RESOURCES

## OUR 10 CORE BELIEFS

**#1**

---

### We're developing today's teams as if it were the 1960s.

*Organizations and the world they operate in have moved on.*

In recent years, the fields of leadership and talent have drawn the lion's share of organizational attention and research. Teams have been left behind. We still base team development on theories from the 1950s and 60s. Those concepts made sense in their day but organizations and the world they operate in have moved on. Experts have been telling us for decades that teams develop in stages. Stages made sense when teams were grouped together in factories or offices, separated by hallways not continents. What's more, stage-based models assume that team development is linear. In today's volatile, uncertain world we can't count anything being that predictable. It doesn't matter when a team was formed or how much time they spend physically together: there's work to be done and people must work together to do it. What's needed are approaches that focus and energize diverse groups of smart, driven individuals no matter what their history together. Based on 8 years of research, development and practice with one of the world's premier global companies, we have just such an approach. We're ready to share it with you and your organization.

**#2**

---

### Stop all the happy talk about teamwork and start focusing on stronger collaboration.

*The words, "team" and "teamwork" have become hollow jargon.*

Our outdated ideas lead us to over-simplify and romanticize teamwork -- dangerously so. We line office walls with inspirational posters and administer personality tests and expect these things to help with teamwork. (Another trust fall, anyone?) The words, "team" and "teamwork" have become hollow jargon. As a result, the mere mention of teamwork makes people roll their eyes. They know that most of the work is done by capable individuals working on their own. In fact, teamwork feels like it gets in the way.

That cynicism is a shame. Teamwork, understood accurately, has genuine promise. It's worth aspiring to. That's why our focus is on the foundational element of all group work - collaboration. Whether you call yourselves a team, a group, a community or a committee, what matters is knowing which work requires collaboration – and which doesn't. Then it's about getting the right people involved in the right ways. It's simple, it's practical and it makes genuine collaboration possible.

### #3

#### **Strong collaboration is intentional collaboration**

*The words, “team” and “teamwork” have become hollow jargon.*

For most people, teamwork is about being helpful and supportive. The so-called great team player is there for you; she's got your back when things go south. That's a worthy attribute. The thing is, it's reactive, it's collaboration as an after-thought. Strong collaboration, on the other hand, is proactive and intentional. Great groups figure out in advance which work they must do together. They're equally clear about which work is better done by individuals. When work does need collaboration, the people involved commit to specific pieces of the task and hold each other accountable for the roles they'll play. As the work moves along they're sticklers about checking in with each other. They have each other's backs, but they're also keeping in front of their work together. Intentional collaboration unlocks energy that posters and trust falls can't.

### #5

#### **Irresistible collaboration includes shared goals, but it relies on shared work**

*Shared goals matter, but not as much as you might think.*

The gurus will tell you shared goals are essential to teamwork. They've got it wrong. Instead of fostering teamwork, shared goals drive more individual effort. Think about an office supplies sales team that's told the business wants them to grow by 10%. What will they do? The paper salesperson is going to do all they can to sell more printer paper. The tech sales person will push those high-margin laptops and printers. The person selling pens and markers will do all they can to make those writing implements fly off the shelves. Each of them will rely on what they know best and are good at to reach that shared goal. Where's the collaboration? There isn't any. Maybe there doesn't need to be, and that's okay. But calling that teamwork only confuses things. Shared work, on the other hand, focuses collaborative effort. Think about a car design team. It's a group of highly interdependent designers, engineers, marketing people, sales people and even finance folks. They labor together to create a beautiful car that's mechanically sound, will sell well at a price that makes sense and generate a profit. It's clarity about the work they share that drives their collaboration, that makes it irresistible. Again, some work doesn't demand collaboration and that's fine. It's knowing the difference that makes the difference.

### #4

#### **Intentional collaboration depends on tapping into individual motivations.**

*Shared work must be as clear and compelling as people's individual tasks.*

Successful organizations are full of driven individuals. More than anything else, these people want to achieve and be recognized for it. For them, generic, feel-good teamwork is anathema; it's a chore that takes them away from their “real work” and obscures accountability.

If you want collaboration from these folks, the pull has got to be irresistible. The shared work must be as clear and compelling as their individual tasks. It must tap into their deep-seated need for accomplishment. This is what great teams do. They isolate the work that unquestionably requires collaboration. They talk about why that collaboration is essential, how it will pay off, who should be involved and in what ways. They make collaboration clear, specific and compelling so it feels like something to be achieved. They make it irresistible.

### #6

#### **There are different levels and types of collaboration and they're not all equal.**

*Know what sort of collaboration is required and tune your team development efforts to it.*

Sloppy thinking about teamwork leads us to treat all collaboration as if it were the same. Like the office supplies sales team described in #5, some groups don't do much work together. Others, like the automotive design group, work together most of the time. Still others fall somewhere in the middle. Some version of teamwork is needed in all these cases. But would you manage the highly *independent* Sales team the same way you'd mange the highly *interdependent* car design team? Of course not. Likewise, you wouldn't you apply the same team development approaches to drastically different kinds of work groups.

Know what sort of collaboration is required and tune your team development efforts to it. Otherwise, you'll end up wasting effort and fostering cynicism. Once you've figured out what sorts of collaboration are appropriate, you'll probably discover that you need less collaboration than you thought.

## #7

### To collaborate better, collaborate less.

*Use collaboration only where it will add demonstrable value.*

The key to irresistible collaboration is understanding which work requires collaboration, which doesn't, and focusing your efforts accordingly. If your group is collaborating on just the right things involving just the right people in just the right ways, you'll quickly find that your organization is collaborating less. You're not treating teamwork like something everybody ought to be doing all the time. Now, collaboration is used only where it will add value. You'll be giving your people the gift of time. Teams won't need as many meetings. Those they do have will be irresistible, they'll be targeted at only the work that requires the team to be together. The time and energy you release through irresistible collaboration will be directed to getting more done, more effectively.

## #8

### Trust and stronger relationships are important but they're not the starting point

*Connect relationship building to specific tasks that team members care deeply about.*

Some say that to make teams more effective, start with relationships and trust. So, team building focuses on self-disclosure exercises where our "true selves" are exposed – think ropes courses and trust falls. These may be fun, scary, even interesting, but they don't do much for collaboration. Any benefits they do yield fade quickly in the face of the day-to-day pressures of work.

Trust and relationships matter a lot, but don't start there. Instead, start with the work. Things start to shift when you connect relationship building to specific tasks that team members care deeply about. When your personality type has a direct bearing on how we'll work together, I start to care about it. When I see how your natural attention to detail will make our project better, I'm more likely to invest in our rapport. Connect relationships to meaningful shared work and you create understanding and bonds that endure no matter your differences. As these bonds deepen and grow, your team grows with them.

## #9

### Focus on practices instead of stages to fuel team development

*Teams that don't adapt and grow don't last.*

Team development is essential. Teams that don't adapt and grow don't last. As we've said, team stages no longer make sense. Yet they remain part of the team development orthodoxy. Orthodoxy means "right opinions." It's the conventional wisdom, the generally accepted knowledge applied without question or challenge. Why do people stick with the orthodoxy? Because it's what they're used to. Also, because nothing better has come along. Well, now it has. Based on our research and experience, we've got a different and more effective approach. We've chosen to move away from the orthodoxy and instead move toward orthopraxy or "right practices." We've created a specific set of six proven practices that groups can take on board to create consistently more effective collaboration. No matter how long they've worked together or how well they know each other they can enhance their team performance.

We're not saying it's easy. It takes effort and persistence. But the results speak for themselves. Team after team has told us what a difference the Six Practices have made. What's more, teams enjoy the journey. They thrive on the clarity and focus the approach is built around. They enjoy growing, learning and winning together.

## #10

### Learning - the only form of sustainable team spirit.

*Learning together becomes the source of incredible energy.*

Great teams are a boon to any organization. For individuals who are part of them, superior teams can be life changing. Great groups, though, aren't an accident. They're not the result of goofy team building or pushing for a rah-rah team spirit. Team greatness comes from regularly applying the ideas we've discussed here; it's only sustained by teams learning to learn together.

The practices we've developed also act as a template for assessing where a team is, what's working, what's not. Learning as a team, though, can be challenging. It requires vulnerability and courage in dynamic balance. Team members must embrace the fact that trying, failing and talking about it are the sources of learning. Once they shift to this mindset, learning together becomes the source of incredible energy.

When a group finds its rhythm of learning, the payoff is massive. Work products and team dynamics improve. Relationships deepen. The bar of success is continually raised. A team spirit emerges that's lasting and meaningful to everyone. That's good news for the team as a whole, for each team member and for the organization.