



CLI Quick Read

Team Building Revisited: Building Collaboration Skills Across Your Organization

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Many companies desperately need collaboration skills that span their organization. If your company is siloed, it may be losing some of the benefits of cross-collaboration.

Dr. Susan Cain of The Corporate Learning Institute is a noted content expert in building effective teams. "It is true that companies need people who have strong collaboration skills within functional units. It is also true that many companies undervalue the need to invest in building collaboration across functional units to optimize collaborative performance," Dr. Cain recently stated.

"Many companies make the mistake of thinking that building teams within functional areas also translates outside of these areas to enable collaboration across the organization. Do your employees understand the big picture and your business goals? Do they understand their role and expectations? Are there clear procedures to guide them? If so, they will be much better prepared to engage with others to achieve the results you are looking for," Cain continued.

Diagnose your organization's readiness to develop collaboration skills across your organization.

When employees see the big picture, they have a sense of clear expectations and roles, and can deliver results based on defined procedures or available resources; they are more prepared to collaborate. These areas must be clearly developed before cross-collaboration can be fully developed.

The GRPI model allows us to see the value of clear and aligned expectations:



Essential Cross-Organization Collaboration Skills

CLI identifies the following skills as being critical to the success of cross-collaboration in any organization:

1. A clear sense of mutual goals, and accountability/ willingness to collaborate.

Imagine switching on the “I care” potential of your workforce. This can only be done, with a clear sense of urgency. Clear, elevated goals that serve as targets for your employees ignite that “I care” potential that produces performance results.

2. The creation of give-and-take relationships-formal and informal information asking, giving, and taking.

The ability to form trusting relationships across the organization is critical if collaboration will move beyond functional areas in your organization. Many CLI clients help employees create and extend their networks by suggesting meetings, lunches, and informal gatherings. Breaking down the “not invented here” thinking within silos builds to cross-collaboration thinking.

3. The ability to solve problems using a team approach.

Solving problems as a team is different than the self-reliance most of us depend upon. Learning what skills and abilities team members bring to the party is important. The next step is helping teams learn to “piggy back” on each other, build better solutions based on shared ideas, and openly give and take feedback.

4. Mutual ownership of results; what is called “networked pride.”

“If organizations want to increase cross-collaboration, then employees must feel a sense of mutual pride in their work, ” Dr. Cain stated. This means that project teams must feel good about the results they produce.

Levels of Skill Building

Dr. Cain stated that there are three levels of skill building within an organization:

Level 1 Skill Building involves helping people see the business need for more collaboration. Clear goals can build a business case for increased urgency and accountability. “I was once at a Herman Miller meeting, and there was a great cascading message sent to all employees that everyone at Herman Miller was

accountable for a financial fix. That is a great example of an organizational goal messaged to each individual," Dr. Cain said. Level 1 messaging allows everyone in the organization to understand the importance the organization's goal.

Level 2 Skill Building involves mixing some collaboration skills with goal messaging that is best done with a combination of discussions and informal training. This includes meetings that can tell the important story of organizational goals, with an articulation of the collaboration skills needed to accomplish the goals. This allows employees to see the big picture and begin to align around core performance expectations. Visit CLI at <http://www.corplearning.com> for more information on how to increase the collaborative potential of your organization.

Level 3 Skill Building involves intensive collaboration skills- building. "We recently worked across a company to develop a deeper sense of cross-collaboration and skill building," Dr. Cain said. "We started each session with an overview of the organization's business goals and expected collaboration skills. We used team challenge simulations to build collaboration skills, trust and give-and-take support and sharing,"

Team building is not a fad or passing craze. By understanding the needs of your organization, you can target the best approach to meeting the needs of your employees.

CLI is an innovator in developing high quality and affordable consulting, coaching, training and strategy services. Our seasoned staff understand the demands that people in organizations face.

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