

Collaboration

An Element of Connective Cultures



One hallmark of a high-performing and flourishing organisation culture is collaboration, where people work together to achieve goals.

As technology and globalisation has improved our ability to connect across boundaries, collaboration is an important mechanism to leverage within human systems. Some examples of powerful collaboration initiatives crossing geographical, cultural and disciplinary boundaries:

- Collaborating nationally and globally to address climate change (e.g., COP28)¹
- Scientific collaboration to complete the sequence of the human genome (Human Genome Project)²

Collaboration has important business outcomes:

On average, when employees collaborate, work is completed

15% faster

and

56% are more satisfied³



Organisations with 'healthy' cultures also mention that they are

Collaborative

4x 

more frequently, than those with 'unhealthy' cultures⁴

Collaboration needs Connection



In Australia, one in three feel lonely according to the 2023 State of the Nation Report. The rise of loneliness in the workplace could be attributed to isolated work such as leadership and remote work, which restricts employee connection.⁵

People who feel lonely also reporting greater work impairment and lower productivity.⁶ The need to belong was found to be important for most people. Workplaces need to consider how to foster stronger connections and a sense of belonging in the workplace.⁷

The importance of impromptu connections

Trends in work habits suggest that hybrid working arrangements are the preferred mode of work by 50% of the workforce, which seem to have stabilised since COVID-19. Gallup also reports that the average hybrid employee will spend 2.6 days of the week in the office.⁸

Hybrid working can pose a challenge to collaboration. Recent research indicates that co-location is important for forming impromptu social connections that support information sharing and collaborative networks. A loss of these connections is also suggested to have negative accumulative impacts for networks over time. Conscious efforts to promote novel interactions among employees when they are working in the office and from other locations are key to mitigating these impacts.⁹

Tips for Boosting Collaboration

Connect regularly

Spend time building relationships

- Set recurring meetings so that connection time is prioritised
- Find ways to get to know people you wouldn't usually connect with
- Resist de-prioritising quick/impromptu chats with others at work

Build collaboration into work design

Design work to be collaborative

- Incorporate interdependencies in tasks to encourage people to work together (e.g., consultation points)
- Minimise spatial segregation in offices for roles that share goals or have related functions
- Reward collaborative achievements

Remove communication barriers

Set norms for how people communicate

- Be purposeful with which communication channel is used, based on functionality (e.g., teams for quick check-ins and email for sharing important business decisions)
- Set 'open door' time for leaders to connect with their team or leaders to be out of their office

Plan for collaboration

Establish case for collaboration in projects

- Plan for collaboration activities in project planning
- Identify knowledge and resources available within the organisational network that can be harnessed
- Consult with stakeholders to gain an understanding of their expectations

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