



Competence area: Communication and collaboration

Competence 3: Collaboration between student-teacher-coach

How to improve essential collaboration skills?

1. Introduction

A useful, effective collaboration requires a lot. With the right skill, collaboration is better. This document gives six skills that make collaboration better. Collaboration is all about bringing people together from different departments, locations, and teams. Also, teachers, students and coaches focus on a common goal. Collaboration is a process, but collaborating well asks more.

Collaboration is important. Here are six reasons why:

1. It helps to solve a problem,
2. Collaboration brings people closer together,
3. Collaboration helps people to learn from each other,
4. It creates new channels for communication,
5. Collaboration gives a better atmosphere in the company, both for coach and student,
6. Collaboration makes workers more efficient.

Source

Corey Moseley, <https://blog.jostle.me/blog/why-collaboration-is-important> (2019)

This article explains some of the skills needed for effective collaboration, and what coaches can do to create the conditions for collaboration and help students to develop their skills.

2. Crucial collaboration skills

2.1 Open-mindedness (flexibility)

One of the most important aspects of good collaborating, is being open to and accepting of new ideas. When people get in a meeting to discuss a project, each coming from a different perspective and area of expertise, there's a big chance, that the discussion is not so efficient. New ideas may be unfamiliar, new, exciting, and possibly difficult to understand.

People who are naturally curious will thrive in this kind of environment, but those who are a little more resistant to new ideas could potentially stall or otherwise disrupt the project before it even gets started. And because curiosity and open-mindedness are among the fundamental building blocks of collaboration, leaders will need to find ways to encourage



them in their people. That is also for coaches in their contacts with students.

Todd Kashdan wrote recommends the following:

“Begin meetings with a reminder of what type of climate is ideal for courageous and creative ideas to emerge. When ideas are in their infancy, search for what is interesting and ask questions. They can be tough questions, as long as they arise from the desire to gain knowledge (curiosity) as opposed to the need to exert control or dominance (power), or the need to impress others with your ability to outsmart others (social status).”

(Todd Kashdan, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/>, 2015)

Another thing you can do to encourage acceptance to new ideas is to set up some parameters on what will be discussed in a given meeting or discussion. For example, if your project is in need of a brainstorm session, make it clear that all ideas are on the table before any one idea can be shot down or picked apart. That way, all ideas will have equal opportunity to be heard, mulled over, and criticized or expanded upon. Formalizing this process will gradually refine one of the key skills for effective collaboration.

2.2 Communication

Clear communication is another must-have for successful collaboration. Student will need to be able to express themselves to each other. The problem is, people communicate differently. Some of us feel perfectly comfortable speaking in groups; others don't. And fostering clear and open communication means being mindful of different communication styles and adapting the way you communicate accordingly.

As Kip Kelly explains:

“Effective communication requires a substantial level of self-awareness Employees must understand their own preferences for how they approach a collaborative situation.”

(Kip. Kelly, <https://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/executive-development/>)

Because collaboration has a social component, coaches (and everyone else on a team) need to be aware that members of the project team, including students, might not feel comfortable speaking up. You can do the following:

- Communicate with people in the way they prefer to communicate. For example, shy people, who account for as much as 40% of European adults, may prefer written communication over verbal communication.
- Give everyone a voice. An Internet platform or collaboration tool that gives people a place to communicate freely, is an excellent way to facilitate collaboration in the workplace.



- If someone isn't a great communicator, and you're having trouble making sense of their idea or point of view, make an effort to understand them. This can be done privately or in a meeting room, but should always be approached tactfully. Don't discount someone's thoughts simply because they have trouble articulating them.

Fostering a collaborative environment means making room for all types of communication and communicators. Your collaborative process should incorporate alternative way of communicating; otherwise your most outspoken people will steal the show. Helping people improve their communication skills is difficult, but it can be done once they feel more comfortable.

2.3 Organization

Collaboration can't be successful unless people are able to delegate workload, take care of their responsibilities, and keep themselves organized—and that's why organization is another crucial collaboration skill. Ideally, this isn't a skill that you'll need to teach your people (assuming of course you've made an effort to hire organized people). But sometimes things don't turn out as planned.

Leaders can train people to be more organized by making collaboration a part of everyone's everyday routine. If your people regularly have to coordinate project responsibilities with each other, the odds are they're going to learn pretty quickly how to organize their time and workload, especially if it impacts their colleagues' work on the same project.

2.4 Long-term thinking

Another extremely important component of collaboration is being able to think long-term and envision the end-result of your collaborative work. Collaboration is all about working towards a common goal or shared purpose and recognizing how your contributions fit into that goal. For employees who want to improve their collaboration skills, this means gaining an understanding of a project's scope and everyone's role in it. The more you know about the focus of a given project, the better equipped you'll be to make it happen.

2.5 Adaptability

Often collaborative projects often don't go as planned. Priorities shift, obstacles delay progress, and problems occur, catapulting the whole project into complete disarray—all of which might tempt us to throw up our hands and walk away. Of course, that's typically not an option in the workplace. People will need to be able to adapt themselves to that.



Adaptability is an important collaboration skill, but it's another one of those difficult-to-teach ones. Adapting well to change comes with practice and experience. Did some unforeseen issue delay all progress on an important project? Your best bet is to keep calm and focus on what the next steps are. Encourage adaptability and brainstorm a solution to the problem. Then you are a calm, cool, and skilled collaborator.

2.6 Debate

Another skill that'll make you a more effective collaborator is being able to tactfully and productively debate ideas with your colleagues (without taking it too personally). When you're in the meeting room with your project team, debate is often the driver of innovation: good ideas take precedence, not-as-good ideas take a backseat, and the project moves forward. But debating *well* can be very difficult, especially if you're emotionally attached to your argument.

For coaches, this means establishing a collaborative environment where friendly, constructive debate is encouraged and, if necessary, regulated. Again, this doesn't necessarily have to be verbal, in-person debate (but that'll likely be one component). You could create a discussion or chat channel in which people can hash out why the project requires X. The point is to ensure that the debate is always: on task, productive, polite.

Doing so will improve your student's ability to provide constructive criticism, move ideas forward, and make collaboration happen.

2.7 Conclusion

Creating an environment where collaboration thrives means anticipating how collaboration might break down, and taking action to prevent it before it happens. A truly collaborative workplace is one where everyone throughout the organization has a voice, is on equal footing, and is able to contribute their abilities and skills to the project at hand. To infuse collaboration into your organization's culture, concentrate on nurturing your people's collaboration skills.

Source

Corey Moseley: <https://blog.jostle.me/blog/6-collaboration-skills-and-how-to-foster-them>