

# Team Collaboration is an Inside Job

## Collaboration is an Inside Job (Article #1)

Have you ever found yourself wondering “How can I keep up with all of this?” You have 35 emails to reply to, 12 voice mails and three meetings scheduled for the day. Then a close colleague pops into your office and asks for your urgent help.

There is no denying our society is changing rapidly. One of the most obvious and life-impacting areas is our workplaces and work practices. A senior manager in the social services lamented to me recently the amount of email he had to deal with each day. I asked him what was the most stressful part, without hesitating he replied that he missed the ‘authentic connection’ with other people. He felt severely stretched between the three channels, email, phone and face-to-face meetings.

These three channels are presently in a three-way struggle for our attention. No matter which channel triumphs we are still frequently left feeling as if we are losing ‘authentic connection’.

## Virtualization

We all realize that the quality and quantity of connection in the work place is shifting rapidly. But is

communication-technology and the associated changes in the workplace

really enabling us to be more effective? This process could be referred

to as 'virtualization'. The virtualization of teams and groups is changing the way we achieve our team and individual objectives. It began when we developed language (or earlier), then the

emergence of the Guttenberg press, followed by radio, telephone and

most recently the internet and email technology.

My definition of 'team virtualization' is any process that is introduced or expands to replace more traditional ways

of communicating with other people. For example when phone calls

replaced some or all face to face conversations, or when teleconferences replaced some or all physical meetings.

Interestingly the challenge of how we connect to each other has inspired the creation of a foundation – the '[Peer2Peer Foundation](#)'.

Created by Michel Bauwens, the P2P Foundation is a meeting place for

people interested in exploring peer-to-peer communication alternatives.

This foundation is small but growing fast as the challenge of virtualization continues to grow.

### **Two Kinds of Growth**

In his book '[Chaos Point: The World at the Crossroads](#)' [Ervin Laszlo](#) states

that our species is changing in how it develops. He claims that we are

moving from an era where the three "C's" of conquest, colonization and

consumption are giving way to connection, communication, and consciousness. Laszlo claims that these “C’s” constitute two kinds of

growth and that we are presently transitioning between the two.

Connection and communication are on the up swing, for sure.

The proliferation of cell phones and internet access is making sure of that. What is not so certain is the shift in

consciousness that we also need to make. The question I hear so often

in my consulting work is “How can we continue to embrace technological

changes and maintain ‘authentic connection’ with both clients and

colleagues?

Obviously there isn’t an easy answer to this.

However, one of the most useful assumptions we can adopt is that

building a highly collaborative work environment is everyone’s job. It’s

first an ‘inside job’. But how do we do that? A list of some of my

solutions to this tricky question can be found in an article at this

Blog.

Below are ten ways to increase collaboration in the workplace:

1. Raise awareness of the importance of shared assumptions. Assumptions cause us to run on ‘autopilot’. Individuals are not the only ones who operate this way; teams do it too.

2. Check your own assumptions before and during the project planning phase. Your own assumptions will effect

how you  
interact with others and deal with the inevitable challenges  
of working  
with other people.

3. Intention is the keynote. Just as a team's  
attention is important – so is your own. Intentions have an  
eerie way  
of manifesting into reality.

4. Encourage team members to find out about each  
others' roles. The more they know about each others'  
perspectives, the  
more likely they will empathize with them when the going gets  
tough.

5. Establish a reward system for innovation and  
creativity. Ensure that rewards are equally available for  
ideas and  
innovations that don't work as for those that do.

6. Plan to use all of the experience in the team.  
Think of the years of life experience represented in a room of  
15  
people with an average age of 35. It represents over 500 years  
of life  
experience.

7. Celebrate your successes along the way.  
Celebration acts to reinforce the progress being made. When it  
done at  
the team level it empathizes the importance of the team  
process in  
reaching desired objectives.

8. Invest resources in your own learning and when  
possible encourage others to do the same. Continuous  
improvement is  
only possible when individuals and the team as a whole are

embracing  
continuous change with continuous learning..

9. Real change only comes when people change how they behave as well as think. This is just as true for the workplace.

Never was it truer that we need to be the change we wish to see.

10. Model what you want to see more of. Providing our colleagues and clients real-life demonstrations of collaboration at work is the strongest incentive and inspiration you can provide to others.

There are things you can do to change the level of collaboration we experience within your team. Of course there are no 'silver bullets' that will create over-night results. By taking [collaborative intelligence](#) as a principle to live by you can change how your team operates. That's why I say collaboration is (first) an inside job.

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