

Collaborative Intelligence – The All-Terrain Skill

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Greater levels of collaboration require Collaborative Leadership. The alternative is not pretty – we are dinosaurs waiting for the meteor. Collaborative leadership is the application of a few basic principles. By embracing these principles we can harness the energy and attention of the people around us.

The core principles of Collaborative Leadership are:



Presence: The idea of '[Presence](#)' is taken from the work of Peter Senge et al. in the book of the same name. Presence is defined as the ability to be present. In a world that is engineered to grab as much of our attention as possible, being present is more difficult than it may sound. It is a significant challenge to focus our attention on the people we are with. Being present means that when we are with someone (or a group of people) our conscious mind is focused on them. This enables us to practice deep listening to what is being said. So many day-to-day challenges result from people misunderstanding each other. One of the prime causes of those misunderstandings is that most of the time we do not listen deeply enough.

An important part of practicing presence is being aware of the difference between curiosity and certainty. The former opens us up to all sorts of new possibilities and learnings, whilst the latter keeps us chained to old thoughts and old maladapted ways of doing things. It is easy to talk about but often tricky to let go of our need for certainty. In a world with increasing levels of chaos the desire to have certainty increases proportionally. Paradoxically, the best way to deal with chaos is to let go of the desire to know the right answer in advance and learn to improvise as circumstances emerge.

Another distinction that further enables us to practice our 'presence' is the one between ego size and ego strength. Everyone knows that a large ego can be a big problem in an organization or team environment. Yet we all have egos – it's how we manage them that makes the difference.

Ego size refers to how much of the world that we want to control. Ego strength refers to the self assurance we have about our place in the world. Both aspects of the ego need to be active and in balance. That can only be assured when the individual has developed a good level of self-knowledge. The quality of the outer journey in this world is highly dependent

on the quality of the inner journey, something each person has to make for themselves.

✘ Purpose: The second principle of Collaborative Leadership. All effective leaders have a strong sense of purpose. Evolving a sense of it enables us to focus our energy and resources toward what really matters. This definition of purpose is more closely aligned with Viktor Frankle's concept of 'meaning'. According to Frankle we 'are the meaning makers'. We are responsible for deciding what life means to us. This includes "What does our work mean?" If we are the meaning makers we are also the purpose makers. Co-creating a strong sense of purpose models that attribute to others and enables a team to take 'purpose' more seriously. The collaborative leader has a sense of purpose and enables the team(s) they work to evolve a 'team purpose' which acts as a guidance system through the good times and bad. ✘

Path: The third principle of Collaborative Leadership. There is a First Nations expression that goes "all paths lead nowhere, so it is better to follow a path with heart". Once the collaborative leader has Presence and Purpose, they need to begin to choose a Path, a way forward for themselves and the team(s) they work with. Businesses have objectives their teams need to achieve. Frequently the path to those objectives is ours to choose. Collaborative Leadership involves the co-creation of that path with the entire team. By doing so we have created the 'buy-in' that makes the difference between compliance and commitment.

Taken together Presence, Purpose and Path enable the Collaborative Leader to leverage the energy, engagement and enthusiasm of the entire team. The result, a team that is adapting to and embracing the opportunities in an exciting emergent world.