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Achieving Collaboration between Employees and Leadership. Collaboration: Pull Me, Not Push Me



Most leaders have read books, attended seminars and have ideas about how to achieve collaboration between employees and leadership – and yet they still search for the answer.

Collaboration guidelines include:

- Articulate the business vision
- Engage employees in the vision through continuous sharing
- Involve employees in the business planning process
- Build processes and systems into the business environment that require collaboration
- Reward and recognise performance and growth
- Focus on a culture of learning.

And these principles actually work!

Yet, most leaders fall short of integrating them into their organisation. Why?

Because most leaders are attached to traditional concepts about leadership. Most leaders:

- Get caught in their ego. A hard-earned position and vast experience may have them

feeling falsely superior to the employee. They feel that they should have all the answers.

- Tell and direct. They use a “command and control” style of communication that works to a degree. At best, they have loyal soldiers, but not collaborative employees.
- Resort to fear and consequences. They can get a lot of people to do a lot of work using fear. What they don’t get is the employees’ best effort, their passion nor their trust.

The result of these three scenarios is competition, not collaboration. The leader pushes employees into collaboration.

By contrast, the word “collaborate” comes from two Latin root words meaning “to labor together.” This suggests everyone is pulling in the same direction.

Pull, not push.

Making the shift from competition to collaboration is not simply a new method. It is a total shift in traditional operations. To authentically collaborate, the leader has to completely give up thinking they know

everything. They must become as curious as a child.

Think about it...

- If the leader already knows, why would any of the employees want to make suggestions?
- What would happen if the leader admitted that they didn’t know?
- What would be possible if everyone agreed that the leader is not supposed to know?

To engage employees in true collaboration, leaders must completely give up attachment to position, status and authority over others. Leaders must believe that everyone has something to offer. All perspectives not only matter, but they are imperative to collaboration.

Only when this mindset takes hold will employees respond with great enthusiasm and will true collaboration take place. Until then, they will pretend to have an opinion, but the one they will have is their leader’s opinion.

This is known as the Transformational Leadership Principle. A transformed leader at heart always welcomes comments, feedback, views, suggestions, objections, concerns and

doubts of employees at every stage of growth. They believe in healthy debate, growth as a whole, embracing change, full participation and that there is no difference between the leader and the employee. They believe everyone is their equal. They believe that the only difference between a leader and an employee is in the responsibility each assumes. A transformational leader is responsible for the quality of the relationships they have with their employees.

I invite you to consider that it may not be the employee. It may be you, the leader. What traditional concepts about leadership will you have to let go of in order to achieve true collaboration?

If your employees are not engaged in collaboration, look at yourself first, focus on your own growth and be willing to let go of everything you know about leadership. You will know you have embraced these concepts fully when the burden of having to know it all and do it all disappears, and you are truly free to relate and collaborate.



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Alicia Marie, Founder and Managing Director of People Biz, Inc., has become a national leader in the field of leadership development. She founded People Biz, Inc. in 2000 with the intention of providing total personal and professional development solutions for individuals, teams and organisations. She specialises in creating customised programmes based on desired outcomes that include learning vehicles such as training, professional coaching and consulting.

This article was written in collaboration with Paula Fracasso, who specialises in supporting individuals and teams through personal, organisational and cultural change. Paula brings her experience as an executive and philanthropic manager, as well as her deep study of adult human development and learning, to foster development and transformational results for her clients.

People Biz, Inc. is a learning organisation that focuses on transformational leadership initiatives for individuals, teams and organisations. Their award winning leadership programme “Leading Change” uses the fundamental principles of Transformational Leadership to not just talk about leadership, but to develop powerful leaders.

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