Creating effective collaboration in the remote working organisation: 5 ways to make collaboration successful

Today, as the world changes around us, literally hour-by-hour, IT is faced with enabling the greatest economic transition in world history. We face uncertainty at every level, as citizens, as family members, and as employees. Will this crisis redefine everything we once thought of as 'normal'?

Service Desks and IT functions are dealing with unprecedented levels of requests to deliver and support services, while maintaining the flow of information and knowledge to ensure that teams can cope with a huge spike in demand. Often criticized for siloed mentality, IT teams now need to work together faster, and more effectively than ever before.

For some time, research has been showing that ticket volumes areincreasing, and that resolution and fulfilment are becoming more complex. But that was before, now Service Delivery teams have been hit by a Tsunami.

Even before the pandemic sent its shock wave across the world, global consultancy groups had already sign-posted the need for a quantum shift in both IT focus and practices.

Rapid change was already identified as the new normal, but overnight, organizational landscapes and ecosystems have changed beyond recognition. Teams that once worked in information and geographic silos are now distributed.

Coping with this new dynamic means that teams must shift from traditional, linear processes, and find new ways of working together more effectively. They must collaborate.

At Hornbill, we embraced collaboration and a full digital transformation of our business more than seven years ago. Today, it is embedded in our DNA. From our own journey and learning, we strongly recommend five key things you need to address in order to deploy effective collaboration in your organization.

1. The Role of Leadership is fundamental

It starts with leadership. Show commitment from day one and every day thereafter. The cadence of communication and behavior that reinforces collaboration are fundamental. Senior IT leaders and managers need to adapt their style as your organization goes through is collaboration journey.

If your executive leadership is not initially on board, you will not get the full benefits of enterprise collaboration, but if you can demonstrate success at an IT function or even a team level, the broader organization is likely to take notice. But remember, you are asking people to fundamentally change the way they work and communicate, so it takes tenacity and persistence to get it established.

2. Destination Application

Your collaboration tool MUST be a destination application, the place your employees go to first to find out what is happening, to communicate with their colleagues, and most importantly, the tool they use most to get work done.

If it is not, you will end up with initial uptake, which eventually peters out as people quickly return to the old ways of doing things. Collaboration becomes a useless sideshow, as it's not where people go to get work done.

3. Culture Change is the Goal

You cannot simply roll out a myriad of video, document and communication tools and say you are collaborating effectively. Actively set your goal on changing the culture within your teams, by moving all internal conversations off email and onto your collaboration tool.

This will be challenging at first, so ensure that your teams are supported by their leaders. Changing behavior is difficult at any time. However, the current quantum shift where everything has changed may be the catalyst that breaks down old barriers.

Old habits are hard to break, so actively discourage the use of email for internal and team discussions. Conversations need to happen in open workspaces when everyone needs to know, and in private workspaces where specialist teams may be swarming to resolve issues. If team members revert to email, copy and paste the email content into a collaborative workspace and remind them, and everyone else, that the collaboration tool is the right place for these discussions.

Depending on your team and their readiness to accept change, the process may take weeks or months, but persevere, because behaviors will change and IT communication and practices must reinforce this cultural shift.

4. Land and Expand

Think big, but start small. Now is not the right time to try flipping your entire organization to collaboration. However, if you can crack collaboration at a team level, others will want in on the action. Is there a team in your organization that is a natural choice for making the move? Use them as the leading edge and incorporate communication strategies to start bleeding the collaboration from that team to other team workspaces.

Simple elements, such as incorporating links to collaborative workspaces, within incidents and service requests will enable the change in behavior of other teams and move them towards collaborative practices.

5. Be Relentless

Keep going – Collaboration is the most liberating thing you can do for your teams, and they will thank you for introducing it.

Teams are naturally collaborative, so sharing knowledge, information, and supporting each other are aligned with collaboration and the goals for introducing it. Bear in mind that teamwork and collaboration are not the same thing.

In a pure collaborative environment, such as a large open-source project, there is no manager or single authority. Instead, seniority, experience and contribution to the project are ultimately what drives decision making.

When we are talking about internal collaboration, it is just teamwork in the traditional sense, but vastly enhanced by open communication, knowledge sharing and ideation, using a collaboration platform as the foundation for all communication, where individuals and teams have the opportunity to shine through highly visible contribution to collaboration, as work gets done.

Do not get stuck in no-man's land. Once you start the journey, be relentless.

For more info on making collaboration work in your organisation read out latest smart guide … 'Creating effective collaboration in the remote working organisation'.

Learn more

CREATING EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION IN THE REMOTE WORKING ORGANIZATION
Collaboration Triple 5: 5 key steps to deliver, 5 tactics to avoid the pitfalls and the top 5 recommended deep dives

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