



## What Is Collaboration?

The introduction of computers in the 1970s transformed business practices and revolutionized how people share, communicate, and get work done. The pace and scale of how business models, and the technologies that support them, have evolved over the last decade has been breath-taking. Yet, despite all these technology-enabled capabilities, one thing has not changed. Something so important that businesses cannot function without it, and so universal that it transcends changes in business, technology, and best practice frameworks – people and their knowledge.

No matter how automated, commoditized, or simplified technology becomes, people and their knowledge remain key to an organization's success. From the moment we first banded together to hunt food, our success has depended on our ability to collaborate, and it still does today. Collaborative businesses are more profitable (we have stats on this), employees are on the same page, and information flows freely between silos to ensure that teams are moving towards corporate goals and objectives.

Collaboration can be an elusive concept to grasp. It is best described as 'a way of behaving or doing' important activities. This suggests a need to focus on

intangibles and soft skills and explains why some people struggle to understand the essence of what collaboration really is. Perhaps it is worth establishing what collaboration is not, in order to better understand what it means.

The most common misconception is that collaboration is or can be achieved with 'a tool.' But the presence or lack of a tool does not guarantee collaboration. Similarly, it may be tempting to view social media tools as collaborative platforms, but generally these are not fit for enterprise use. Enterprise tools need security and visibility control features that are tuned to the needs of the organization rather than social sharing. Email, as useful as it is, is a poor platform for collaboration.

Implementing collaborative practices can dramatically transform an organization or team's performance, improving staff retention, increasing general awareness, driving productivity, and reducing the number and duration of meetings needed to bring staff up to speed.

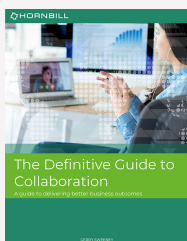
We have outlined ten key enterprise collaboration behaviors that you should consider when introducing collaboration to your organization:

- > **Conversations:** Open, transparent, and inclusive one-to-one and group communication.
- > **Information Sharing:** Enabling and encouraging the free flow of information.
- > **Tacit Knowledge:** Capturing knowledge that is not written down, but surfaces when someone asks the question.
- > **Information Visualization:** Providing ways of visualizing data to boost conversation, contribution and inclusion.
- > **Community:** Culture with a 'community' feel.
- > **Governance:** Systems and processes must be aligned with and support corporate security, compliance, and policy.
- > **Leadership:** Anyone can initiate or lead a collaboration initiative, but ultimately, they will need support and sponsorship from senior management to overcome the inevitable hurdles and objections that will be encountered.
- > **Support:** Encouraging contribution, ideation and working out loud, without fear of retribution when mistakes happen.
- > **Transparency:** Builds trust and encourages teams to share what they know, so that collaboration can occur between silos.
- > **Contribution:** If there is a good flow of information, the contribution of ideas, comments and critique should be encouraged.

Think of collaboration as the 'fitness level' of your organization. The fitter you are, the better you perform. Your level of collaboration has a direct impact on the success you are likely to achieve in your industry, in much the same way that an athlete's level of fitness directly affects their performance.

Collaboration is a team sport. Knowledge hoarding and heroics have no place in a collaborative environment. It is about sharing what you know and lifting others up, so that the entire community benefits from everyone's collective effort.

If you'd like to know more about collaboration and how it can benefit your organization, our CEO and founder, Gerry Sweeney, has published an [e-book on collaboration](#) [30 mins].



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### THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO COLLABORATION E-BOOK

A guide to delivering better business outcomes.

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