

Collaborative leadership in tough and fast-changing times

In today's highly competitive and potentially highly destructive market, business leaders need to be able to collaborate and work with the best in their industry. Being able to move forward quickly and take advantage of spur of the moment opportunities is essential for success and any delay to decisions is costly.

However, many mergers and acquisitions result in a bloodbath between those who wish to survive and those who have given up the ghost. Both ends of this scale are counter-productive and actually do long-term harm.

The problem can often be that the system inside an organisation starts to grow and develop one set of principles while the stated aim and values of the organisation shows another set of values resulting in a paradox of reality against aspiration.

The overall direction and alignment of an organisation needs to be clear so that a general pathway can be seen and people can see where they are going. This works on a number of levels:

- **Strategically**, the organisation needs to be committed to collaboration and value it
- **Organisationally**, the leaders need to understand collaborative behaviours and actions
- **Personally**, the leaders need to act in a way that is truly collaborative

So it's clear that leaders need to embrace and exhibit collaborative behaviours themselves in order to encourage people to support the overall message.

Recent research projects and reviews of key lessons and themes for collaborative leaders can be best illustrated from this 2009 study. Madeleine Carter, writing for the *Center for Effective Public Policy* a research project funded by the *United States Department of Justice* and *State Justice Institute*, defines five qualities of a collaborative leader as:

1. a willingness to take risks
2. an eager listener
3. a passion for the cause
4. optimism about the future
5. an ability to share knowledge, power and credit

It's also vital to continually develop interpersonal skills, in particular: empathy; patience; tenacity; the ability to hold difficult conversations; and to build a truly collaborative exchange of thinking.

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He began his consultancy in 1997 after working within large organisations as a senior manager and trainer. He specialises in helping medium to large sized organisations in manufacturing and service industries focusing on issues with their key people and teams. He also works with individuals who are taking the next step in their career. With a proven track record Peter's unique mix of operational improvement productivity based experiences and people based development allows him to see things from a business and personal perspective.

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