

# Building Collaboration

Professor Julie Hodges, Melanie Franklin & Gillian Perry



In the dynamic landscape of organisational change, the importance of fostering collaboration cannot be overstated. As Professor Julie Hodges, an esteemed authority on the subject, addressed the [Change Capability Community](#) during our recent discussion, the emphasis was clear: practical collaboration is the cornerstone of successful transformation.

Julie, author of numerous influential books on collaboration, highlighted the imperative of blending practicality with theoretical frameworks. In a world inundated with lofty theories and abstract models, she underscored the need for actionable strategies that resonate with individuals within organisations.

At the heart of collaborative change lies a fundamental truth: people are the driving force behind any transformation. Whether navigating planned initiatives or responding to emergent shifts like the global pandemic-induced remote work transition, engaging individuals is paramount. Our speaker urged us to strike a delicate balance between implementing change and involving those affected by it.

The spectrum of stakeholders involved in organizational metamorphosis extends beyond internal personnel to encompass external partners, suppliers, and communities. She advocated for proactive engagement, urging organisations to solicit input from diverse perspectives to inform change initiatives effectively.

Drawing parallels from nature, she referenced the symbiotic collaboration observed in forest ecosystems. Just as trees in a forest cooperate rather than compete, fostering teamwork within organisations is key to fostering innovation and driving growth.

Highlighting examples such as Tata's "[wise crowds](#)" initiative and the grassroots efforts on Lamu Island, which illustrated the transformative potential of collaborative endeavours. These anecdotes underscored the pivotal role of collective action in shaping organisational outcomes.

In the realm of collaborative methodologies, concepts such as design thinking and appreciative inquiry. Design thinking, exemplified by the transformational journey depicted in "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," emphasises empathy, ideation, and prototyping to drive customer-centric change.

Conversely, appreciative inquiry encourages organisations to focus on existing strengths and successes as catalysts for change. By fostering a culture of collaboration and ownership, teams can co-create solutions rooted in positivity and shared objectives.

Crucially, our speaker emphasised the importance of psychological safety in fostering collaboration. Encouraging individuals to voice their perspectives and challenge prevailing norms cultivates a culture of trust and innovation.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of organizational change, the wisdom shared serves as a guiding light. By embracing collaboration as a driving force, organisations can unleash their full potential, fostering people-centric transformations that drive sustainable success.

## Discussion Points

We asked the group to consider how you build collaboration in organisations. Our discussion groups came up with the following from their experiences as change professionals in organisations:

1. It takes courage to ask someone to co-create or join a session, especially if you don't know them well.
2. Building trust takes time, even when there's pressure to deliver quick results. Rushing can jeopardize the quality of relationships necessary for success.
3. Time constraints often hinder collaboration efforts, particularly when individuals are overwhelmed with competing priorities.
4. Different assumptions, frameworks, and cultural values can impede collaboration, particularly in environments with rigid hierarchies where dissent may be discouraged.
5. Establishing a common understanding through shared terminology is essential, especially in diverse cultural or functional settings.
6. Ensuring the right people with the appropriate skills and shared purpose are present is critical to fostering effective collaboration.
7. Organizational structures that foster silos can hinder collaboration, driven by fears of losing control or dismissing alternative perspectives.
8. Focus efforts on engaging the willing majority first, before addressing resistance from a smaller segment.
9. Avoid creating an echo chamber by seeking diverse perspectives that challenge and enrich ideas.
10. Investing in both technological and human infrastructure is vital for effective collaboration, breaking down silos and ensuring engagement.
11. Conducting upfront analysis to identify necessary skills and perspectives, including disruptors, is essential for comprehensive collaboration.
12. Approach resistance with empathy, recognizing and leveraging individuals' strengths to build confidence and encourage contribution.
13. Courage is needed to invite unfamiliar individuals to collaborate or participate in sessions.
14. Building trust takes time, even in high-pressure situations where quick results are demanded.
15. Limited time availability can hinder collaboration efforts, requiring careful prioritization.
16. Differing assumptions and cultural values may inhibit collaboration, especially in environments with strong hierarchies.

17. Establishing a common language and understanding is crucial for effective collaboration across diverse backgrounds.
18. Ensuring the right people with appropriate skills and shared purpose are involved is essential for successful collaboration.
19. Organizational barriers such as siloed thinking can impede collaboration, driven by fears of loss of control or unfamiliarity with other perspectives.
20. Begin by engaging the willing majority to make progress before addressing resistance from a smaller faction.
21. Strive for diversity of thought to avoid an echo chamber and encourage robust discussion and innovation.
22. Adequate infrastructure, both technological and human, is necessary for fostering collaboration and breaking down silos.
23. Conducting thorough upfront analysis to identify necessary skills and perspectives, including those of disruptors, is crucial for comprehensive collaboration.
24. Approach resistance with empathy, acknowledging individuals' strengths to build confidence and foster meaningful contribution.

## Next events

20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 Change Capability Community discussion on online tools for behaviour change <https://capabilityforchange.com/event/change-capability-community/>

24<sup>th</sup> April 2024 Numbers that drive change <https://capabilityforchange.com/event/numbers-that-drive-change-unveiling-the-power-of-benefits-statistics-in-change-management-2/>

On the call we had a chance to go into a draw for a copy of Julies latest book. Here is the information on the new publication.

