

True Collaboration

At the core of everything we do at The WildWorks Group is the belief that collaboration is the key to achieving maximum efficiency at work and in life.

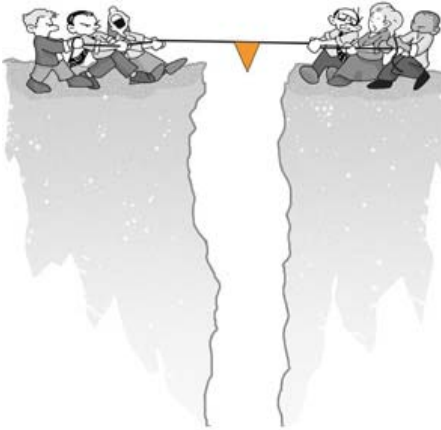
In our practice we have observed that the term collaboration is universally misunderstood and often misused. We have also found that the best way to teach an organization how to collaborate is to teach them what collaboration *is not*. We do this with a model we call the "5 C"s – *Competition, Connection, Coordination, Cooperation, and Collaboration*

Collaboration is not Competition

com-pe-ti-tion

1 : the act or process of **competing** : **RIVALRY**: as **a** : the effort of two or more parties acting independently to secure the business of a third party by offering the most favorable terms

2 : a contest between rivals; *also* : one's **competitors**
<faced tough *competition*>



Even starting at the polar opposite, competition is sometime mistaken for collaboration. Some companies feel that the best way to increase the overall is to have the parts compete. Some corporate cultures are built on creating internal competition, pitting team against team in a "winner-takes-all" race to the greatest return on investment. In this internal competition it is thought that the overall organization will emerge stronger. The losers are relegated to more mundane activities or forced to find new places to work. The winners get the "spoils" of promotion, compensation, and prestige. A company called Enron employed this strategy and dominated its industry for a time. But Enron's "entrepreneurial" culture of unrestrained competition fostered a win-at-all-costs

mindset that disregarded ethics, organizational alignment, and even the law. Resulting not in overall improvement, but overall destruction.

Collaboration is not Connection

con-nec-tion

1 : the act of **connecting** : the state of being **connected** : as **a** : causal or logical relation or sequence <the *connection* between two ideas> **b** (1) : contextual relation or association <in this *connection* the word has a different meaning>

2 a : something that **connects** : **LINK** <a loose *connection* in the wiring> **b** : a means of communication or transport

Connection is simply the "ability" to communicate or share information. Having the ability to connect does not guarantee that people *will* actually connect, much less collaborate. Connection is a tool for collaboration but the act of collaboration is



a byproduct of an organizations' culture (more on this when I discuss collaboration below).

Several years ago The Ford Motor Company learned an expensive lesson when they provided a computer to virtually all of their employees in an effort to catalyze organization wide collaboration. While Ford successfully connected their vast employee base, their patterns of work (their culture) did not change. It was business as usual, and the well established "silos" actually used the new tool to increase their isolation from each other.

Collaboration is not Coordination

co-or-di-na-tion

1 : the act or action of [coordinating](#)

2 : the harmonious functioning of parts for effective results



Coordination is the intentional act of considering the activities of others when planning or scheduling, primarily to eliminate overlap, or waste. Coordination does not necessitate the sharing of risks or rewards. Often coordination is done with regard to the use of finite resources like physical spaces, vehicles, technical tools, and staff time. Scheduling a meeting so that it does not conflict with another important event freeing up the space and allowing key individuals to attend both activities is an example of coordination. Coordination does not

necessitate a shared interest in aligning and maximizing the results of both activities, a key element of any collaboration. Success is up to each individual part, and a greater, combined success is not considered.

Collaboration is not Cooperation

co-op-er-ation

1 : to act or work with another or others : act together

2 : to associate with another or others

Cooperation involves multiple parties in a sharing of resources. Cooperative parties lend their facilities, expertise, manpower, etc. to "support" a given activity. Professional musicians enter into "cooperative" relationships with venues, audio/visual equipment companies, transportation companies and roadies to stage a tour. However, the relationships are purely contractual on a payment for services rendered basis and the contractors have no stake in the ultimate success of the event -- they get paid for and are responsible for what they do...period. Again, results of a single group may be enhanced by the support of another, but at best the results are only additive in nature.



Collaboration is...

col·lab·o·ration

1 : When people come together to intentionally achieve more together than they could separately...that's collaboration

You will not find the exact definition above in a dictionary; however you will find it in the intent of most collaborative efforts. When people say *collaboration* what they mean is “to achieve more together than apart.” If true collaboration is the intent then the actions taken to achieve it go far beyond those of other “C’s”. Organizational collaboration is a way of working that includes the other “C’s”, *connection*, *coordination* and *cooperation*, along with a shared interest in any inherent risks and eventual rewards. These “synergistic” relationships create a culture of mutual respect, shared information, clear directional understanding, and aligned decision making. The results created in collaboration are not “additive” but, in fact, “multiplicative” and create tremendously greater rewards.

