Skillful Collaboration
Working Together for Success

AMERICAN PAYROLL ASSOCIATION

Collaborative Leadership

- Define or redefine success.
- Involve others. They are open to input, solicit different perspectives, and cultivate an atmosphere where respectful debate is welcomed.
- Hold themselves and their employees accountable. Every person is responsible for reaching his/her own decisions and goals and working well with others.
- Attempt to minimize detrimental personal traits in themselves such as defensiveness, lack of humility, arrogance, or a need for power.

Collaboration across business or functional units, which combines various areas of technical expertise, can result in innovative new products or processes.

When to Collaborate

You likely have a strong case for collaborating when working with others will:

- Allow you to achieve the desired outcome, which you can't accomplish by yourself.
- Increase the likelihood of solving complex problems or addressing complicated issues.
- Reduce costs or boost efficiency.
- Increase visibility of the project.

Establish Expectations

With your fellow collaborators, be sure to:

- ✓ Determine the objective. What outcome do we want the collaboration to achieve? What does success look like? How will it be measured?
- ✓ Define roles and responsibilities. Ideally, each person should be allowed to define his or her own role in the collaboration.
- ✓ Agree on operating norms—rules of behavior that guide interactions. Common issues include participation, communication, decision-making, support, leadership, and conflict resolution.

Develop Attitudes to Support Collaboration

The following traits reflect a collaborative mindset:

- ***Sense of personal responsibility for the quality of your relationships.*** Be someone that others want to work with.
- ***Concerned with "What's in it for us?"*** Focus on how you and the others involved can benefit.
- ***Keeping an open mind.*** Suspend judgment and avoid making assumptions.
- ***Willingness to share.*** Sharing data and experience is vital to successful collaboration.
- ***Willingness to trust others.*** Trust someone unless he or she has given you a reason not to.

Practice Behaviors to Support Collaboration

Translate your inward attitude of collaboration into observable actions and behaviors:

- Convey personal warmth.
- Be an active listener.
- Be trustworthy – reliable, competent, and sincere.
- Turn conflict into cooperation.
- Commit to completion.

The Power of Words

Words are powerful—and permanent. Being careful with your language can greatly support collaboration.

- Use "I" messages. "I feel/felt _____ when you _____ (behavioral description). I'd appreciate it if you would _____ (behavioral description)."
- Present ideas as questions. "What if we…?"
- Avoid destructive communication. For example, sarcasm, questioning integrity, dismissing people and ideas, and acting incredulous.
- Rephrase negative messages. Say what you can do, not what you can't do.
- Minimize misinterpreted emails. Be clear and succinct, and don't say anything that you wouldn't say face-to-face.

Learning Summary Points

Three benefits of collaboration:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Three challenges of collaboration:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What is the main reason to collaborate?

_____

_____

Notes