

# Who Shares Wins

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**Leading Edge Forum**

# **Who Shares Wins**

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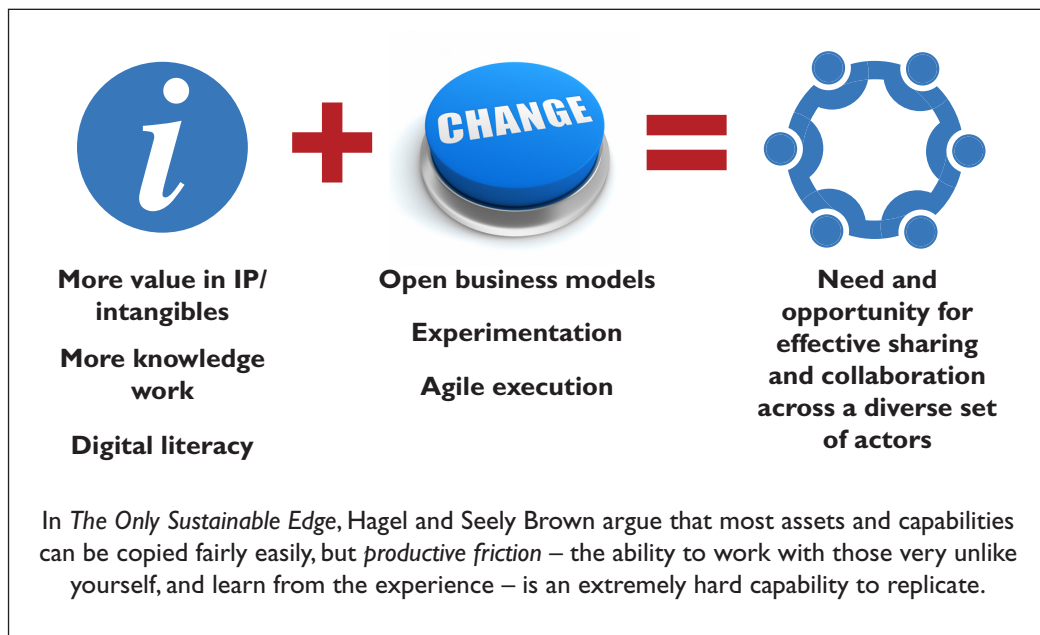
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# Sharing as the best source of advantage

- In a world of more, more fluid and more ecosystem-wide knowledge work, 'those who share, win'
- Collaboration and sharing lead to value that couldn't otherwise be achieved
- But sharing isn't easy, and examples of failure are much more common than successes

Figure 1 – The ability to share and collaborate may be the most sustainable source of advantage in the next decade



**Figure 2 – In a world of more, more fluid and more ecosystem-wide knowledge work, ‘those who share, win’**

In a prescient quote over 40 years ago, Fred Smith of Fedex said, “The information about the package is as important as the package itself.” The world is moving inexorably towards an era where information is the primary currency. Everything from missiles to dishwashers to cars is software-defined and software-controlled. Knowledge, information and intellectual property rule. As LEF’s David Moschella has noted, this creates enormous opportunities for machine intelligence, but also an imperative for collaboration.

This era is also defined by change – in the nature of the firm, work, society, industries and business models. Increasingly we see exciting businesses, societies and services that do not fit traditional models, with more adaptation and agility. Very specifically, we see *open* business models, from software development communities to pre-competitive information commons (industry-wide sharing). We also see employees bringing value through their communities – BYOC (bring your own *community*).

As a result, information and knowledge need to be shared ever more widely, quickly and seamlessly across internal functional silo, company, industry and societal boundaries. We need more cooperation, collaboration and sharing of ideas, transactions and processes. We need collaboration on a personal and an organizational level, in predictable and unpredictable ways, structured and unstructured.

In *The Only Sustainable Edge*<sup>1</sup>, John Hagel and John Seely Brown noted that collaboration between agents who were different inevitably created friction, and the winners were those who could collaborate productively with different others and learn from the experience. They labelled this *productive friction*, and argued that it was the only truly sustainable advantage. Whether or not their assertion is true, it seems clear that for the next 20 years at least, the ability to collaborate and share broadly across functional, corporate and societal boundaries, minimizing the friction and maximizing the outcomes, will differentiate the winners.

Diane Schwarz, CIO of Textron (a \$13.4 billion, 35,000 employee aircraft, defence, intelligence, industrial and finance conglomerate), told us about Kaleidoscope, a pan-organization competitive innovation initiative built on collaborative working. Teams of around eight people are given six weeks to generate ideas to present to the annual IT leadership conference – another highly collaborative initiative that brings together 100 of Textron’s 700-strong information technology community. The cross-functional composition of the Kaleidoscope teams, and the competitive element, has led to some great innovation.

1. John Hagel III and John Seely Brown, *The Only Sustainable Edge: Why Business Strategy Depends on Productive Friction and Dynamic Speculation*, Harvard Business School Press, 2005

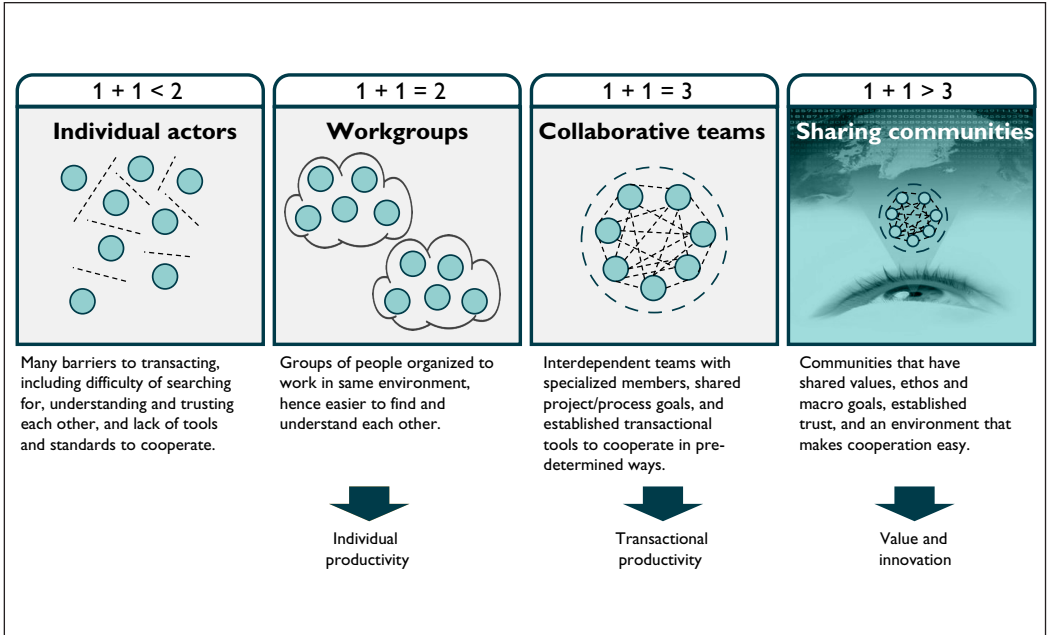


Figure 3 – 1 + 1 > 2: Collaboration and sharing lead to value that couldn't otherwise be achieved

But what exactly do we mean by collaboration and sharing? If we put aside the negative connotation of cooperating with an enemy, collaboration simply means working with others in order to achieve specific outcomes.

Without some measure of cooperation, bringing together a group of entities – people or organizations – normally results in outcomes that are less than the individual entities working separately would have achieved. There is often anarchy, conflict, confusion, and unhelpful competition for resources. We might label the outcome as  $1 + 1 < 2$ .

More common are workgroups, where individuals are brought together in structures and given some kind of common environment and practices. These groups make it easier for individuals to find and understand each other, but whether they happen upon and then sustain effective group working and sharing is a bit of a lottery. We might label this common state of affairs  $1 + 1 = 2$ .

A third, much more desirable state of affairs, is more engineered, collaborative teams, where members are able to focus on their special capabilities, and depend on each other to achieve outcomes; a characteristic called *interdependence*. If we compare a well-managed professional sports team to a group of children playing the same sport in the school playground, we begin to understand the value of interdependence. The sum of the parts is greater than the individual actors, through synergy and specialization. Here,  $1 + 1 = 3$ .

Interdependent teams may still be pursuing relatively unaligned goals. A sharing community, on the other hand, has established a shared set of values, common ethos and shared goals – or, at least, win-win desirable outcomes. Sometimes, sharing communities may not be wholly or even primarily focused on transactional outcomes, but more focused on sharing and learning. Extra value is created through more agile and less planned discovery and exploitation of capabilities.  $1 + 1 > 3$ .

As we will discuss later, some opportunities to collaborate are more limited to transactions, while others are more open to sharing communities. But all of them benefit from evolving beyond the first two states described above.

Systemic barriers to collaboration and sharing	Persistent implementation errors
Search challenges Transfer barriers 'Not invented here' Hoarding/knowledge as power Lack of trust Collaborative inertia	Lack of clear goals Focus on the tools 'Build it and they will come' Failure to integrate with other aspects of environment Tool fatigue
(Hence we hear the few success examples over and over again)	In a recent vendor study of technology leaders, the #1 reason for collaboration projects was <i>to increase individual productivity</i>
Systemic barriers adapted and extended from Morten Hansen, <i>Collaboration</i>	

Figure 4 – But sharing isn’t easy, and examples of failure are much more common than successes

Despite cooperation sounding like a ‘no brainer’ good idea, it is certainly not trivial to achieve. There are many examples of failure to collaborate or share successfully. As illustrated in the figure above, some of the barriers are systemic, unavoidable challenges to collaboration, whilst others are common mistakes often made in collaboration initiatives.

The systemic barriers include four specifically identified by Morten Hansen in his book *Collaboration*<sup>2</sup>:

- The *search* barrier is the challenge of finding the right or best others to collaborate with. Ronald Coase’s seminal 1937 paper, *The Nature of the Firm*, argued that search costs were one reason to have individuals inside your own firm, rather than traded on the market. Similarly, in large collaborative communities, it may be hard to find the person/information/capability you are looking for – indeed, the search cost may exceed the cost of recreating it yourself. It is worth noting that the perceived search cost is at least as important as the actual search cost: if an entity believes it is too costly or time-consuming to collaborate, then they won’t even try. Smart structures, ontologies, search tools and machine intelligence can all help with reducing this barrier. Enterprise social networks can help here, too.

A more subtle issue is *search bias*, the tendency to work with entities, individuals and information that you already know – this normally does reduce search costs, but it also compromises some of the value of a diverse collaborative community. An advanced concept here is the creation of efficient collaborative communities by pruning the network to reduce redundancy.

- *Transfer* barriers point to the cost of interacting with others different from yourself – different professions, organizational silos, cultures, values, norms, language and communication styles, etc. At a European healthcare provider the CIO recounted a steering group meeting around establishing a collaboration platform: “At the first meeting, the doctors told us, ‘We don’t want to be working with the nurses, porters and others – we want a doctors’ group.’ When this request was refused, the doctors didn’t show up to the second meeting.” (This example spans transfer, hoarding and not-invented-here barriers.) Famously, national cultures play into transfer barriers, but so, for example, do collaborations between large corporates and startups.

As with search costs, transfer barriers can be reduced by collaborating mainly with those similar to yourself, but in doing so, the value of diversity is damaged. Taking time and using tools to establish shared values, language and understanding can reduce transfer barriers. In the European healthcare example just mentioned, astute political play by the CIO was critical to bringing everyone along.

2. Morten Hansen, *Collaboration: How Leaders Avoid the Traps, Build Common Ground, and Reap Big Results*, Harvard Business School Press, 2009

- *Not invented here* speaks for itself – the reluctance of individuals to take on ideas or knowledge that they didn't create. Part of this lies in cultural values and habits, but part also derives from the way individuals and teams are incentivized, recognized and rewarded.
- *Hoarding* refers to the belief that 'information/knowledge is power', which creates a reluctance to share. Our research suggests that true hoarding is sometimes an issue, but often what appears to be hoarding is more a lack of time and process to share.

It is important to note two other systemic barriers to collaboration:

- *Trust* is an issue in all collaboration. It can take many forms, including issues of privacy and confidentiality ("Will they reveal what I share in unwanted ways?"), fairness ("Am I putting in more than I am getting out?") and reliability ("Can I rely on the accuracy and timeliness of their work?"). A famous example of a governmental inter-agency collaboration initiative to reduce crime included massive spending on a sophisticated platform that received almost no use, because the agencies historically didn't trust each other, and no effort was made to address this. Trust can be established through 'off-platform/off-task' interactions, and also by narrowing the initial scope of collaboration to reduce sensitivity and the stakes.
- It is worth noting that by its very nature, collaboration is a team sport; no-one can collaborate alone. This means that collaboration suffers from a 'lowest common denominator' *inertia* effect, where the quality and sophistication of collaboration is only as good as the general practice, not the skills/behaviours of the highest performers.

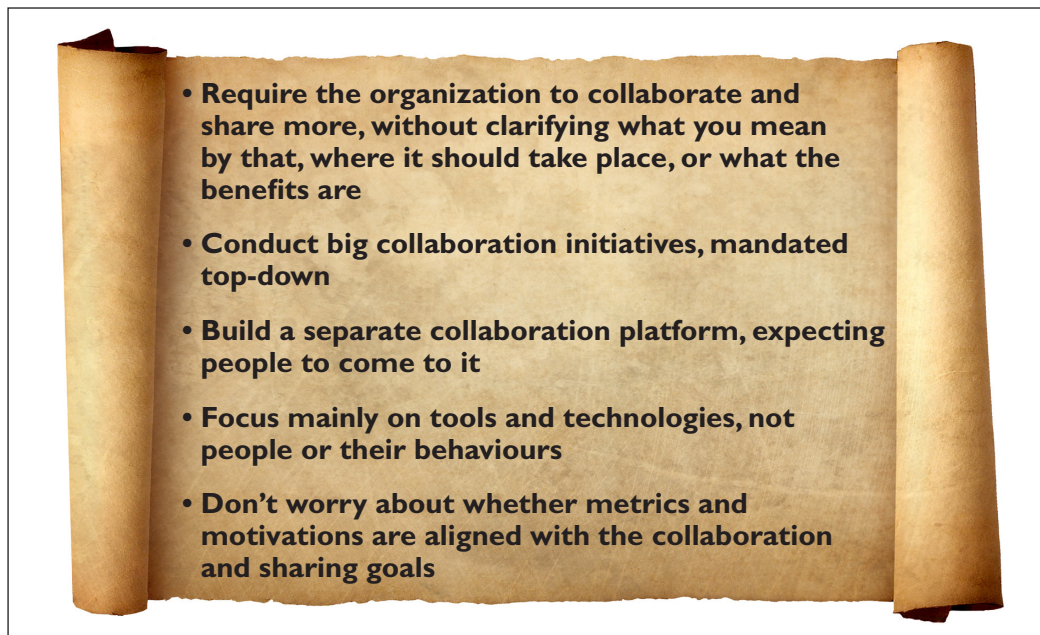
As well as these systemic barriers, we see continually repeated mistakes in collaboration initiatives. These include lack of clear goals, over-focus on tools, a 'build it and they will come approach' (i.e. making collaboration very separate from existing work practices and processes), and failure to integrate collaboration with everything else that is going on (in particular, reward systems).

In addition, we have observed that a proliferation of collaboration tools and channels (think voice, video, web conferencing, email, corporate chat, mobile messaging, external social networks like Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, LINE, etc.) cause 'tool fatigue' and confusion.

All these challenges mean that many collaboration initiatives fail, and we hear about the same few successful examples over and over again.

Throughout the rest of this report, we will highlight success practices that avoid or ameliorate these barriers to sharing and collaboration.





**Figure 5 – A charter for collaborative failure**

Just to highlight the barriers to collaboration and sharing, shown above is a tongue-in-cheek charter for collaborative failure.

1. Get all excited about collaboration and sharing, demand that your people/organization collaborate and share more, but never get specific about what that really means for you, where the collaboration should take place, or what the benefits are.
2. Pour loads of money into huge, top-down, mandated collaboration initiatives.
3. Ensure your collaboration initiatives build a platform for collaboration that is completely separate from what people do day-to-day, giving them very little guidance or motivation to use it.
4. Ensure that your collaboration efforts focus almost exclusively on tools and technologies, and ignore the people and behavioural issues.
5. Make no effort to align metrics and motivations with the goal of collaboration.

The global head of operations of a major airline spoke to us frankly and confidentially about its implementation of Office 365 and Yammer across 40,000 users worldwide. From the perspective of traditional IT metrics, the project had been successful – on time, on budget and reducing ongoing operational costs. But the business wasn't really changing its behaviours, merely working in the same ways on new tools. We were told: "We are now getting questions like 'Thanks for delivering this series of products that are clearly very powerful. But could you tell us how to exploit them?' We are spending multi-millions on stuff that everyone thinks is brilliant, but nobody really knows how to exploit it, or has it on their agenda 24/7 to exploit it. It's a complete void at the moment, and I've seen it in every company that I've worked in." The project was treated like an infrastructural change, managed by service delivery teams, rather than an opportunity to create organizational and behavioural change. There was no clear purpose to the project other than operational efficiency and effectiveness of the IT operation.

Hopefully, it is clear that this is a true recipe for collaborative failure, and the practices and advice in the rest of the report are diametrically opposite to this.

So now, enough of 'romancing the problem', and on with the success behaviours.

# First, establish the *what*, *where* and *why*

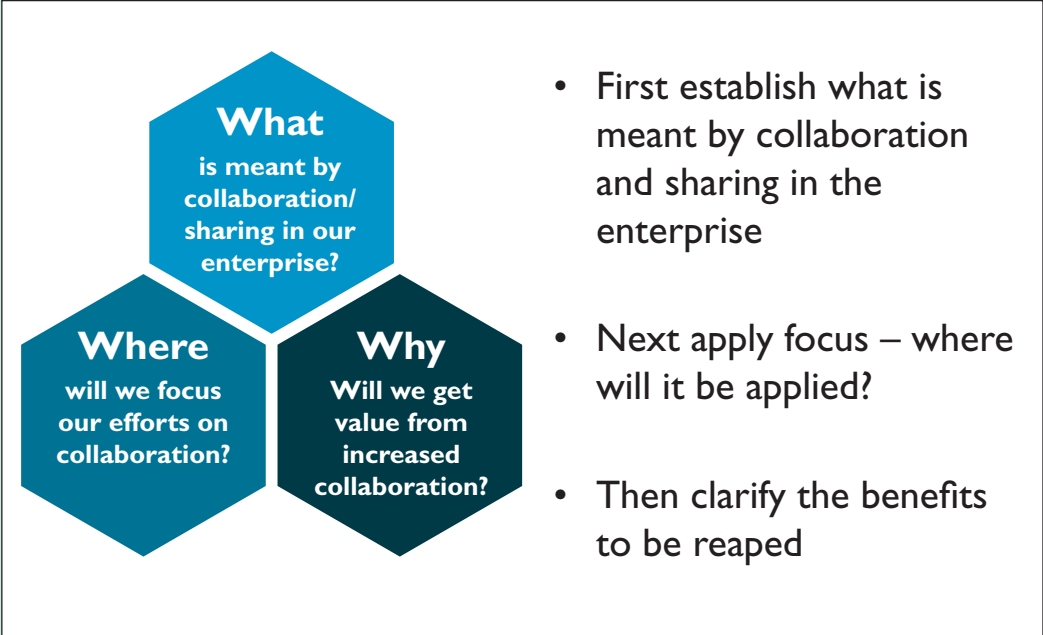
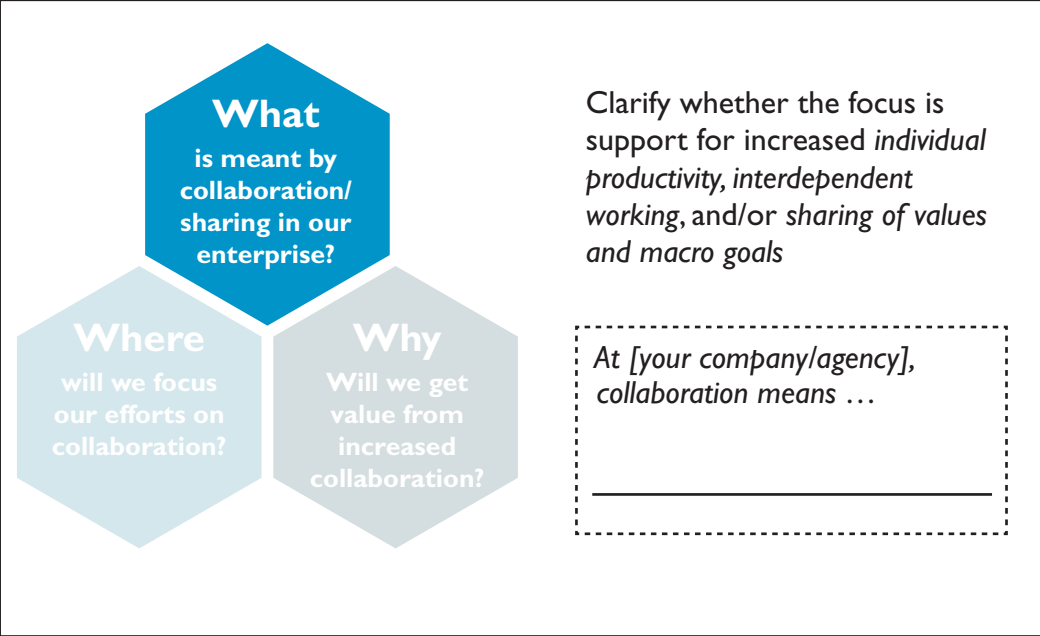


Figure 6 – Winners set up collaboration for success by establishing the *what*, *where* and *why*



**Figure 7 – First, establish *what* is meant by collaboration and sharing in your enterprise**

The worst place to be regarding a definition of collaboration and sharing is to have no definition. Without one, you have no clarity about what they mean. At best this creates confusion, demotivation and lack of action. At worst it creates a series of misdirected, value-destroying, strategically misaligned investments and activities.

It is specifically helpful to distinguish between the three types of activity and desired outcome highlighted earlier (see Figure 3). We suggest formal statements along these lines:

1. At [your company/agency], collaboration means ensuring people and teams are able to achieve their goals more efficiently and productively, by harnessing the capabilities in the collaborative community.
2. At [your company/agency], collaboration means creating synergistic teams and communities that achieve more than is possible individually, by finding synergies and specializing more.
3. At [your company/agency], collaboration means using sharing groups and communities to discover, develop and realize new forms of value.

If none of those feel quite right, or you want to express a mix of them – no problem. This is not about using the same definition of collaboration and sharing as anyone else, but about creating a definition that is shared and understood by everyone involved.

Of course, it is not enough to simply create the decision to promote collaboration. There is then an imperative to continually articulate and communicate it to all stakeholders, and measure their understanding of it. Collaboration has to become a shared meme in your business/ecosystem, which everyone understands to mean the same thing.



Figure 8 – Next, apply focus: where will it be applied?

Second is the question of where to apply this discipline – the *locus* of collaboration. Of course, ultimately greater collaboration and/or sharing can benefit every aspect of business, but it is helpful to have a prioritized list of loci of collaboration. The benefits and approach will probably differ by location. As illustrated above, there are six common locations for collaboration:

**Collaboration-centric locations (focused on better transactional outcomes)**

- **Projects and programmes.** Classic project management is usually very structured, and centred around a Gantt chart, identifying planned tasks and dependencies. But alongside this, there are less structured activities that depend on the sharing of information and ideas. Collaboration capabilities are needed to make these effective. The bigger and more complex the endeavour, and the more diverse and remote the team members are, the more important great transactional collaboration is. However, note that there is some inherent tension between a project mindset and a collaborating/sharing mindset; it is helpful to remember that open, sharing behaviours are somewhat orthogonal to a transactional, ‘get the project out the door’ mindset.
- **Operations and service delivery.** The ability to share information between participants in day-to-day operations increases service quality and facilitates learning. Such collaborative communities may be limited to internal staff, or may extend to others in the ecosystem of service delivery, including end customers, consumers and citizens. CRM systems have a role to play here, although the reality of most CRM implementations is that they are sales force management tools, rather than systems that lubricate value delivery.
- **Ecosystem relationships.** The emphasis here is on facilitating communication and shared understanding between organizations and their suppliers, or others in their ecosystem. Historically, email has been the most common tool here, but email is a poor tool for building and maintaining relationships.
- **Decision-making bodies.** Often, those involved in decision-making and oversight committees (boards, steering groups, etc.) are making important decisions with limited time and information. Almost always, the decision-making body is not their main job. Historically, tools have been lacking, and sometimes the demographics and background of the committee members have not been conducive to the use of electronic tools. Yet the potential advantages of being able to share information, including very sensitive information, are huge.

### Sharing-centric locations (focused on new value discovery and delivery)

- **Innovation activities.** Innovation is, by definition, a highly informational activity, involving experimenting, discovering, sharing and communicating results about new ways to create value. It is widely known that the best innovations often come from the meeting of different disciplines and different bodies of knowledge. (There is a well-known, possibly apocryphal, story in the innovation community about people from a large global consumer goods company's cosmetics R&D and food R&D organizations happening to have lunch together. The cosmetics R&D issue at hand was how to make lipstick stay on in water; the food R&D issue was how to make margarine come off clothing. They were able to solve each other's issues over lunch.)

Both synchronous collaboration (e.g. hack days/hackathons) and asynchronous collaboration (e.g. sharing forums) are invaluable in engaging a broader, more diverse set of stakeholders in innovation. Importantly, innovation collaborations are not just about making existing activities more efficient and productive; they are about facilitating discovery, of both capabilities and knowledge, and may result in new relationships, new projects and investments, or new approaches to existing projects.

Note that it may be helpful, or even essential, to recognize two categories of innovation: day-to-day improvements and formal R&D. Each of these may benefit from different flavours of collaborative platform and tools.

- **Communities and networking forums.** In the last few years, online networking and participation in communities has become a bigger and bigger part of personal and professional life. Indeed, in parallel to the phenomenon known as BYOD (bring your own device), one could argue that a more important – if unvoiced – phenomenon is BYOC (bring your own communities/connections.) These include communities focused on specific areas of interest (e.g. open source projects, technologies, games) and those focused more directly on building relationships (Facebook, LinkedIn etc.) There are both open forums and corporate-specific forums. The former CEO of HCL, Vineet Nayar, wrote extensively about the role of internal networking communities in turning the company around in his book *Employees First, Customers Second*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Vineet Nayar, *Employees First, Customers Second: Turning Conventional Management Upside Down*, Harvard Business School Press, 2010

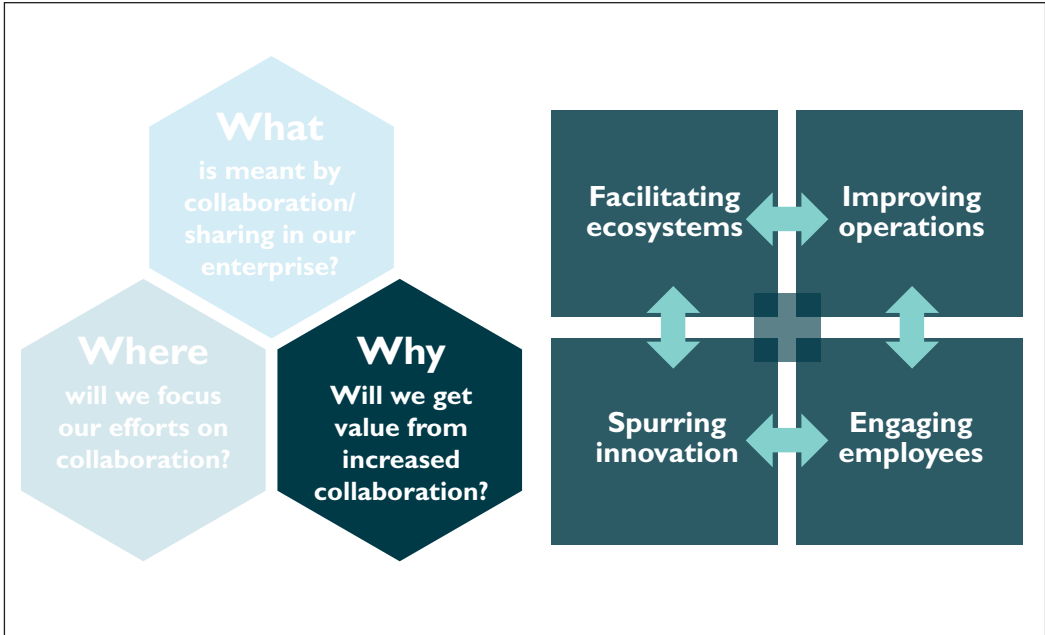


Figure 9 – Then clarify the benefits to be reaped

It is obviously important to know *why* you are collaborating. The question is one of value: what will you get out of it? The resulting metrics and goals help you choose between collaboration and other investments, choose between different collaboration investments, tailor those investments, and reap the value.

Broadly speaking, collaboration and sharing create four forms of value:

1. **Improving operations.** This could mean increasing efficiency or quality by sharing best practice, completing a project better or quicker by sharing information or ideas, or just working better together. Typically, there is direct tangible value – cost reductions or revenue increases, or a lead indicator of those, such as greater customer satisfaction. With this and other forms of value, note that where collaboration goes beyond the boundaries of the enterprise, value will be realized across the ecosystem, and there may need to be negotiation, or at least recognition, of how that is managed.
2. **Engaging employees more deeply.** Businesses, and indeed ecosystems, become to some extent our tribe, our family, our home, a part of our identity. Collaborative capabilities, whether explicitly targeted at networking or not, allow employees to discover those with similar interests, styles or capabilities, and engage with them. Lag indicators include directly measuring employee satisfaction and engagement. Lead indicators include measuring collaborative activity, in terms of quantity, breadth of connection, and breadth of topic.
3. **Spurring innovation.** Typically, this is through collaborative forums for sharing innovative ideas to solve business problems. An extreme example is creating a platform business, where others innovate and you get a piece of the value. The broader the collaboration, the more likely it is to deliver value. This creates an imperative to build a collaboration platform that brings diverse parties together with shared language and values. Lead indicators include breadth of participation. Lag indicators include number and quality of ideas generated, and ultimately revenue generated from new products and services.
4. **Facilitating ecosystems.** Within a company, collaboration improves what already exists – efficiency, innovation, employee engagement, etc. Within ecosystems, including client-supplier relationships, initiatives such as open source communities and collaboration platforms are often the primary systems that enable the ecosystem to exist and work. They allow co-creation with customers, massive open source initiatives and more. The value generated is, in a sense, the entire value of the ecosystem. In an example from a sports governing body (see under Figure 14), collaboration benefits have gone way beyond the organization, to ecosystem-wide collaboration that benefits the sport itself.

AREA	CONDITION	SCORE
What	We have a clear definition of what we mean by collaboration and sharing in our business/agency	
	We have a communications plan to articulate and continually reinforce all key stakeholders’ understanding of collaboration	
	We test their understanding, and refine our communications plan based on the outcomes	
Where	We have identified all key locations where collaboration and sharing may have value	
	We have prioritized the locations and have communicated those priorities to all key stakeholders	
	Our plans, including investments, initiatives and provision of tools, are consistent with our location priorities	
	We have mechanisms in place to review and refine our location priorities, based on performance and new opportunities	
Why	We have identified and agreed the sources of value we are looking for from our collaboration initiatives	
	We have lead and lag measures of value for each source	
	All stakeholders engaged in collaboration are aware of those metrics	
	Collaboration metrics are consistent with, and embedded in, individual, team and enterprise scorecards	
Overall	We have created an approach that matches the values of the organization and the goals of the collaboration	
	Average:	

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = partially disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = partially agree, 5 = strongly disagree

Figure 10 – Have you created the preconditions for success in collaboration and sharing?

Use this checklist to think through your readiness to invest in collaboration platforms and initiatives. The more broad, mission-critical and large your collaboration plans are, the higher you should score.

Remember the items on this checklist are connected with ‘AND’, not with ‘OR’. The weakest link here will drag you down.

# Then design the *how*: behaviour-based leadership

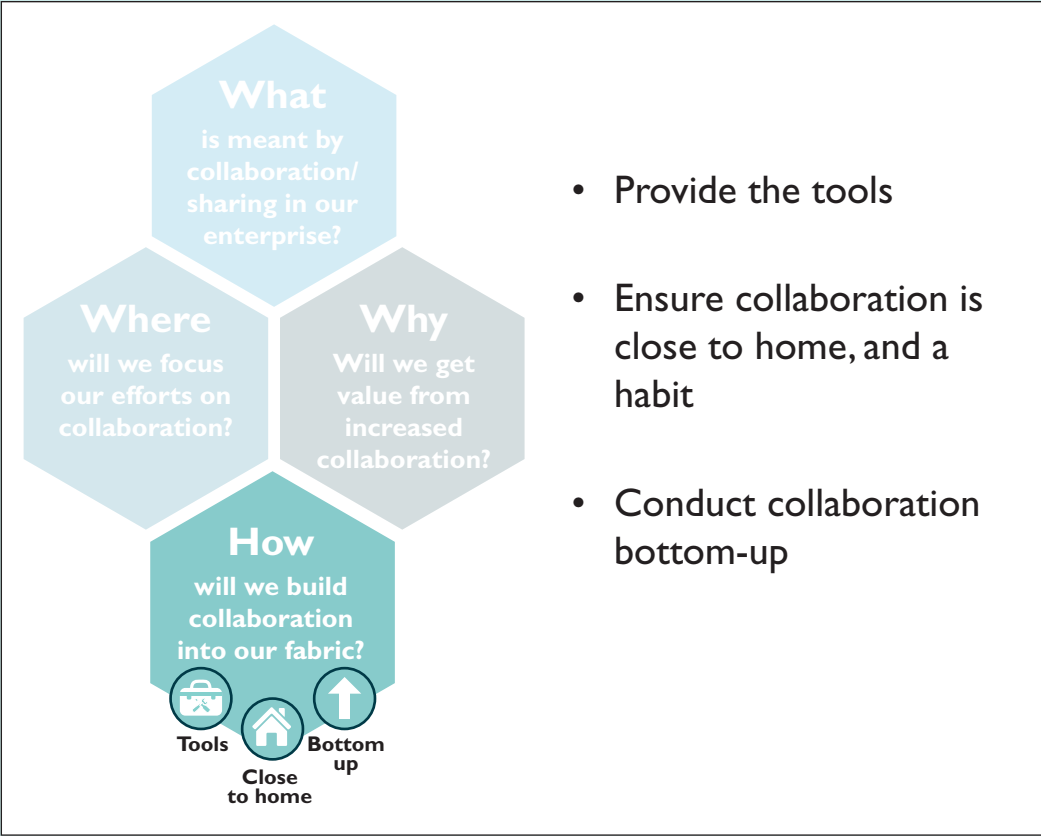
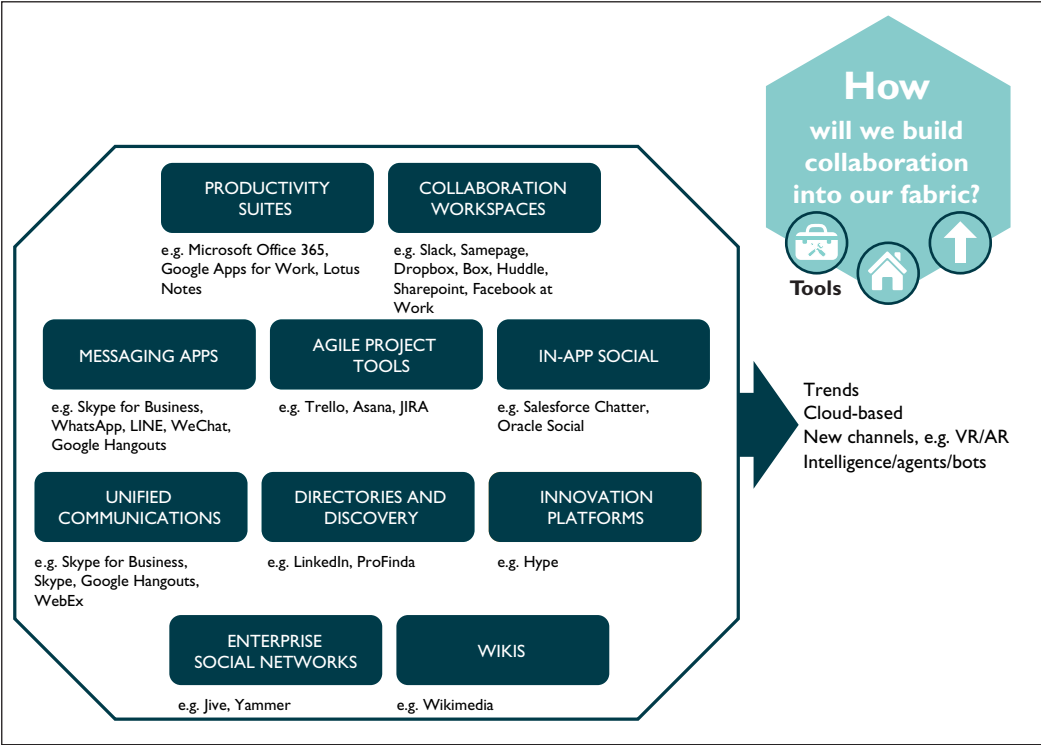


Figure 11 – The value is realized through the *how*: behaviour-based leadership





**Figure 12 – Provide the tools**

As we have gone to great pains to point out throughout this Report, collaboration and sharing are not wholly, or even mainly, about technology and tools. Having said that, tools are normally required to make collaboration successful, especially with large, complex projects, and remote and virtual collaboration.

We identify ten categories of tool in the figure above, and list a number of example products in each space. Some tools span several categories.

However, the collaboration tools space is rapidly evolving, with new tools emerging fast. The new tools support more and richer channels (notably virtual reality and augmented reality), some spanning and blurring categories, and some have more and more intelligence, bots and agents. They are increasingly based in the cloud.

Enterprises should devote a significant amount of attention to ensuring they are continuing to provide the best collaboration and sharing tools. Actions to consider include:

- Embedding ‘social’ in core applications and processes where possible. At a major German bank we heard how a discussion and messaging layer based on Jive was being built into the bank’s bespoke applications to provide contextual access to chat and discussion functionality within the heavily-regulated constraints of financial services. Salesforce Chatter is another good example of this.
- Using cloud-based collaboration apps where possible to get continual innovation, and to more easily extend collaboration beyond enterprise boundaries.
- Experimenting and allowing choice of tool where possible. But beware of ‘tool fatigue’. We have experience of one publisher where a particularly enthusiastic manager asked his teams to change collaboration tool almost every week. For some this was stimulating, but it turned many others off collaboration.
- Accommodating local language and culture. We have seen different language/geographic groups adopt different collaboration platforms. Notable examples include WeChat in China, and LINE in the rest of Asia.

At the time of writing, there is a great deal of buzz about Slack, which appears to be gaining momentum as a team collaboration tool, harnessing the power of group messaging with huge amounts of automation and interactivity. There’s also Facebook at Work, which has the benefit of more than a billion people who are already up the Facebook learning curve through personal use of Facebook.

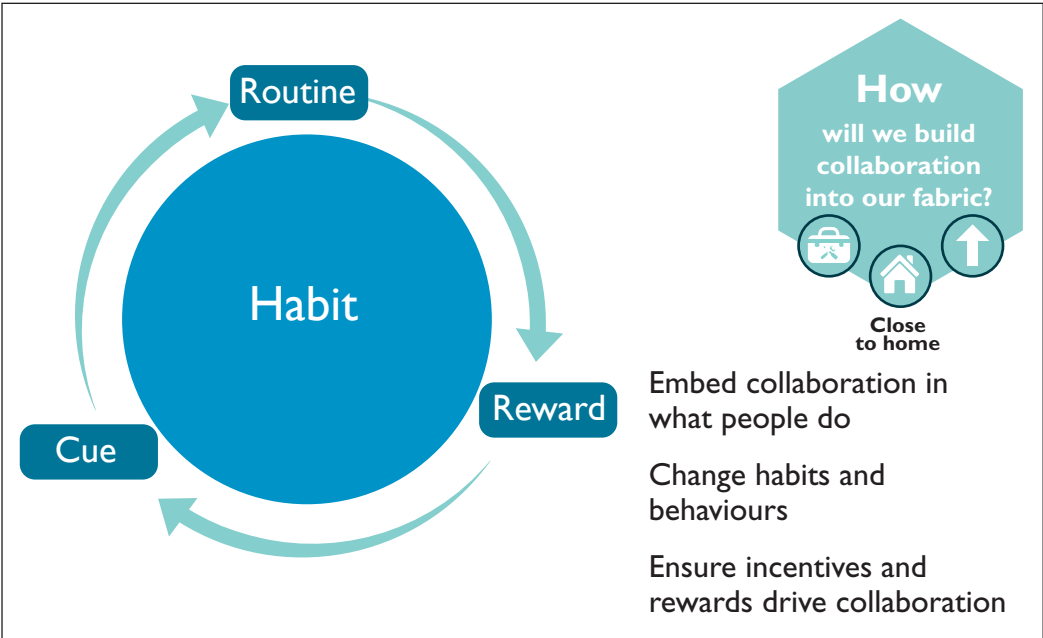


Figure 13 – Ensure collaboration is close to home, and a habit

Perhaps the most frequent mistake that collaboration initiatives have suffered from is the ‘build it and they will come’ approach – creating a separate collaboration capability that participants are expected to engage with, separate from their existing activities, and maybe using very different tools, language and approach. This is compounded by not creating the imperatives or incentives for such capabilities to be used. Think of a SharePoint implementation, languishing unused in the corporate stack.

There are three key levers to avoiding this issue, as shown in the figure above. First, try to *embed collaboration in what people do* day-to-day, in terms of location (where it is), tool (what it is) and connection to activity (contextualization). For example, consider an ERP system that allows a confused user to pop up a list of people who know the topic they are confused about and have indicated they are interruptible, then initiates a voice, video or text exchange with them. This is collaboration that clearly adds value, is highly contextual, and doesn’t require switching of environment.

Second, look to *change habits and behaviours*. Habit is a more powerful driver than most of us realize. Often, people continue to do things that are unhelpful because they have become habit, and find it hard to pick up new behaviours because they are not. You want collaboration to become a habit, even an addiction.

Originating at MIT, and referenced frequently by books such as *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg<sup>4</sup> the ‘habit loop’ is a reinforcing cycle that builds habits based on three elements: cue, routine, and reward. A cue is a stimulus that creates a habit. It could be a sound, a smell, a view. Creating cues that stimulate people to use collaboration platforms can help. Some companies experiment with gamifying collaboration; some collaboration tools build it in (think badges and mini-competitions.) As we all know, these stimuli have to be carefully chosen, otherwise they can be annoying and achieve the opposite effect, triggering cries of “How do I get off this platform?” Nir Eyal, author of *Hooked*, is an example of someone consulting to startups to help make their offerings habit-forming and psychologically addictive<sup>5</sup>.

Making collaboration routine means building it into your day-to-day activities – making it a part of what you do, not a special effort. Interventions around routine must be made in the context of the whole person and the whole organization. Understanding and intervening in people’s routines means understanding their life. Anthropology is key. More typically thought of as understanding primitive tribal behaviours, anthropology and its close cousin ethnography have begun to appear in the digital

4. Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do, and How to Change*, Random House Books, 2013  
5. Nir Eyal with Ryan Hoover, *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013

world, in the emergent discipline of *digital anthropology* – understanding the role of the digital world in the human tribe. Way beyond designing user interfaces, digital anthropology helps us understand such things as how our digital interactions fit in with the rest of our life; how we use our time; what we are comfortable sharing; who and what we trust; and what stimulates, excites and scares us. High technology companies such as Intel have had anthropologists on their staff for some time.

Most tangibly, you must *ensure your incentives, rewards and recognition support collaboration*, rather than conflict with it. In many organizations, there is a desire for sharing and teamwork, but the incentive systems reward individual behaviours and create competition. Wherever people are graded ‘on a curve’ (i.e. only a certain percentage can get high ratings), there is an incentive to compete rather than collaborate – perversely even when ‘collaborative behaviour’ is one of the success metrics. True sharing behaviours are almost impossible under such circumstances. These tensions need to be exposed and resolved for collaboration to happen.

In short – you need to use the habit loop to get people addicted to collaboration, not to make it a chore. It is also worth noting that as well as reinforcing desirable behaviours, you can use the same cycle to discourage unhelpful behaviours. For example, to discourage staff from using email instead of richer collaboration capabilities, just because email is a habit, look at the cues, routines and rewards supporting email, and use interventions to subvert them.



Figure 14 – Conduct collaboration bottom-up

Another common mistake is focusing on top-down, big collaboration projects. Time and time again, we see these large collaboration projects failing to gather the necessary momentum and participation to create value.

Along with agile project management, there is a real need for an agile approach to collaboration: start small, fail fast, learn and adapt, then grow virally in the enterprise. When small collaboration initiatives become useful, more people get involved, and yet more people get to hear about the value through word-of-mouth, which is often far more effective than top-down corporate ‘infomercials’ for collaboration. The CIO of a sports governing body talked to us about implementing the Huddle collaboration platform. Rather than making a big splash, it looked for point opportunities, like offering access to a repository of signage and graphics when it noticed stakeholders were having problems with outdated versions. We were told: “A buzz started forming. People were asking ‘What’s Huddle?’ We are now at the point where there is significant participation, and collaboration is positively changing the sport.”

Leaders should also actively search for, support, celebrate, learn from and replicate organic, grassroots activity. A greetings card and stationery chain had seen WhatsApp use grow organically across its (relatively young) in-store sales teams. The CHRO told us that as long as it was not used for sickness and absence reporting she was fine with it. We also heard from an airline cabin crew that they used a Facebook group to swap shifts, without the management knowing. Another retailer’s CIO proposed WhatsApp as a workaround for a point-of-sale (PoS) issue, but later felt concerned that it wasn’t a “proper enterprise system” with respect to security and ownership. While such concerns may be well-founded, it is important to reverse the classic trend of killing ‘shadow IT’, and instead embrace it wherever possible, particularly in the domain of collaboration and sharing.

A very graphic example of the need to listen to the grassroots staff came from Tim Edwards, CIO of UK construction company Clancy Docwra. Initially, the crews digging up and reinstating roads for scheduled and emergency repair works were issued with robust, expensive Panasonic Toughbooks, which suited the nature of their work environment, but ran relatively unfriendly software. Since the crews were incentivized on getting jobs done, anything that got in the way was unwelcome. Management didn’t realize the extent of the problem until one of the devices was found nail-gunned to the head office gatepost. This moment catalysed a sea change. Unlocked Android devices were handed out, with a new, more friendly work allocation service, and the ability to download their own apps. Crews have responded well to this trust, take care of the kit much more, and enjoy using it at home.

Another problem with collaboration is that it is often not seen as mission-critical, but instead 'nice to have' – something to get around to when you have free time (which never happens). A tactical approach to address this is to jump on urgent needs where collaboration can help.

In 2012, a large global food and drink brand sponsored a landmark sports event. Its Senior Manager of Digital Communications spotted an opportunity to use this event to help embed new staff engagement and collaboration platforms across the business as they were released into a number of territories. Training on the use of Salesforce Chatter was co-ordinated with the timing of the sports event, and the service was introduced by having regional staff provide local commentary of the occasion. This very communications-centric approach to the launch of a new platform laid the foundations for what has become a multiple-award-winning enterprise communications and collaboration suite. Staff became engaged because they were talking and reading early on about things that really meant something to them.

An even more proactive approach is to create a minor crisis in order to ramp up the sense of urgency to collaborate. We spoke with the COO of a major advertising agency whose market is suffering margin contraction, in large part because of the rise of automated exchanges provided by Google and others. This agency has set out to change its client value proposition from reseller to partner. The COO started by painting to his business a bold and self-deprecating vision of the status quo. "I knew that by saying 'Our clients think we are boring', it personalized it. I knew I would provoke a response", he told us. Now staff are encouraged to share and collaborate more on a day-to-day basis. Every month there is a cross-functional ideation session, and an annual unconference for clients, partners and suppliers. The COO told us: "The partnering model is allowing us to move up the value chain with our clients. We want to provide more upstream service and value."

AREA	CONDITION	SCORE
Tools	We have considered all categories of tools, and have a good modern set of tools available to our internal team and external team and collaborators	
	We are continually experimenting with new tools, and are evolving our collaboration stack in a timely fashion	
	Our choice of tools includes consideration of different languages, cultures and personal styles/preferences	
Close to home	We make every effort to embed collaboration in what staff already do rather than forcing them to go elsewhere to collaborate	
	We have the capability to analyze stakeholders' behaviours and habits, and create interventions to adjust them	
	Our incentives, reward systems and recognition programmes all support collaboration and sharing sufficiently	
Bottom-up	We take an agile approach to collaboration – start small, fail fast, and grow virally	
	We actively seek out, support, encourage, learn from and replicate successful grassroots collaboration	
	We look for opportunities to use collaboration capabilities to address urgent and important issues	
	We consider creating minor crises in order to foster urgency around collaboration	
	Average:	

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = partially disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = partially agree, 5 = strongly agree

Figure 15 – Are you ready to realize the benefits of collaboration and sharing?

Use this second checklist to confirm whether your business and your collaboration initiatives are likely to succeed. Have you tipped the balance in your favour, or not? If you score less than 4 on any of these items, you should consider carefully whether to delay collaboration investments, and strengthen the weak capability first.

Remember: build it and they probably won't come. Collaboration and sharing are often somewhat unnatural acts, in tension with other individual, team and business goals; collaboration and sharing need to be set up for success.

Collaboration and sharing have often been seen as 'nice to haves' by most businesses and government agencies, and operational processes as the 'real' mission-critical business. As we continue through the next couple of disruptive, information-centric decades, we will come to see effective collaboration and sharing as the only route to sustainable success.

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## About CSC

*The mission of CSC is to be a global leader in providing technology-enabled business solutions and services.*

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*CSC makes a special point of understanding its clients and provides experts with real-world experience to work with them. CSC leads with an informed point of view while still offering client choice.*

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*The Leading Edge Forum (LEF) is a global research and thought-leadership community dedicated to helping large organizations identify and adopt Next Practices at the growing intersection between business and information technology. We believe that as business and IT become inseparable, virtually every aspect of work and the modern firm will need to be re-imagined, and this creates exciting new digital opportunities.*

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