



Collaboration – It's about the behaviours

In my previous post I suggested that collaborative working on engineering construction projects could contribute significantly to achieving successful delivery, and that most humans are all capable of collaborating, but the question remains – what does collaborative working entail?

To collaborate is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “...work jointly on an activity or project...” and that seems to be simple enough. But just to say “let’s collaborate” will not work – there has to be a clear objective, clear expectations and an effective process to understand and establish the behaviours necessary to make it work, so says Chris Claydon, CEO, ECITB in his introduction to the **Project Collaboration Toolkit** ecitb.org.uk/professional-management-training/project-collaboration. Since human behaviour is involved perhaps it is not that simple.

But let’s first look at it as a formula:

**Mindset + Commitment
+ Behaviours**
= **COLLABORATION**
Authenticity + Transparency

Now let’s consider what we are doing when we collaborate on a project;

▶ We are a group of named people or organisations undertaking actions with links connecting us – the collaborators.

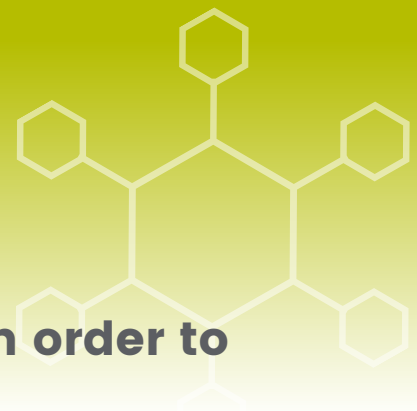
▶ We define the collaborators and relationships that are necessary to achieve a given set of purposes or outcomes.

▶ Working together provides emergent desirable functionable systems that are mutually acceptable and which all collaborators support.

▶ By working together, the collaborators are able to produce high level performance – enabling people and organisations to maximise their potential for the benefit of the project and its participants.

Collaborative working on projects encompasses a broad spectrum of engineering construction projects from, for example, we would like to collaborate in the use of Advanced Work Packaging (AWP) on our project, up to we want to undertake this entire project on a collaborative working basis.

There is no one collaborative working model that fits all – collaboration starts by the parties determining and agreeing the model that is most suitable to their project requirements. The same is true for collaborative contracting arrangements. But, in each case the basic principles remain, regardless of the model or contracting arrangement selected.



So now let's look at what we need in order to work collaboratively on projects;

Willingness:

without genuine willingness to collaborate, there will be no effective and beneficial collaboration – effective leadership is fundamental.

Long term thinking:

focus on achievable outturn results, not short-term solutions to immediate challenges.

Open-mindedness:

one of the most important aspects of collaborating well is being open to and accepting new or different ideas.

Trust:

build trust by performing promises made – it is difficult to build and easy to destroy, but it is essential to collaborative working and successful project delivery.

Debate:

without debate there will be no new or different ideas – active listening in understanding each other's views or ideas is crucial (we were given two ears and one mouth for a reason).

Organisation:

project organisation conducive to collaborative working – eliminate "silos" and create work environments that encourage and enabling effective collaborative working – transparency is a virtue, naivety is not.

Communication:

without effective communication there is no collaboration – it is "two-way traffic" in any medium.

Win-Win:

collaboration, not competition to avoid some project stakeholders being unfairly disadvantaged and others undeservingly benefited

Adaptability:

adapt project delivery approach and actions in response to challenges, which may involve acceptance of new or different ideas and treatments.

Do you want to:

- learn more about collaborative working on engineering construction projects
- share experiences and knowledge of collaborative working with your industry peers
- explore how collaboration works across multiple engineering construction industry sectors, such as oil / gas, chemicals / petrochemicals, power including renewables, nuclear, mining & minerals etc)
- consider collaboration from the perspective of owners, contractors and supply chain members?

If so, come and join us in the Global Community of Practice for Collaborative Working on engineering construction projects.