

The Ideal Collaborative Team

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A New Survey Suggests that Attitude is More Important than Experience in Collaborative Work

A recent survey conducted jointly by Mitch Ditkoff and Tim Moore of *Idea Champions*, Carolyn Allen of *Innovation Solution Center* and Dave Pollard of *Meeting of Minds* reveals that most people would rather have inexperienced people with a positive attitude than highly experienced people who lack enthusiasm, candor or commitment, on a collaborative work team.

A total of 108 people responded to the survey, which asked participants to rate 39 criteria for selection of collaboration teammates on a scale of 1 (not relevant) to 5 (indispensable). The average ratings of all participants are shown in Fig. 1 below:

Fig. 1: Summary of Collaboration Survey Results

What qualities, attitudes and skills help make a good collaborator? AN IDEAL PROSPECTIVE COLLABORATOR . . .	Avg	Overall Rank
Indispensable (3)		
Is enthusiastic about the subject of our collaboration.	4.4	1
Is open-minded and curious.	4.3	2
Speaks their mind even if it's an unpopular view point.	4.0	3
Very Important (9)		
Gets back to me and others in a timely way.	3.9	4
Is willing to enter into difficult conversations.	3.9	5
Is a perceptive listener.	3.9	6
Is skillful at giving/receiving even negative feedback.	3.9	7
Is willing to put forward unpopular ideas.	3.8	8
Is self-managing and requires "low maintenance."	3.7	9
Is known for following through on commitments.	3.7	10
Is willing to dig into the topic with zeal.	3.7	11
Thinks differently than I do/brings different perspectives.	3.7	12
Important (7)		
Can work with many different types of people.	3.6	13
Is comfortable with ambiguity.	3.6	14
Adapts quickly to surprises/changes/new requirements	3.6	15
Has a significant stake in outcome of the collaboration.	3.4	16
Has an ability to improvise.	3.4	17
Has a sense of urgency about our collaboration.	3.4	18
Encourages equal participation among all the members.	3.4	19
Some Relevance (11)		
Is optimistic and upbeat.	3.3	20
Is pragmatic and knows how ideas get executed.	3.3	21
Has lots of ideas.	3.3	22
Thinks strategically.	3.3	23
Is playful and has a good sense of humor.	3.3	24
Can think on their feet.	3.2	25
Has diverse knowledge on a broad range of subjects.	3.2	26
Has good connections and networks.	3.1	27
Is skillful at helping the group reach consensus.	3.1	28
Has deep understanding of the subject of our collaboration.	3.0	29
Is deeply reflective.	3.0	30
Not Relevant (9)		
Is well organized.	2.9	31
Is someone I immediately liked. The chemistry is good.	2.8	32
Has already earned my trust.	2.7	33
Has experience as a collaborator.	2.4	34
Is a skilled and persuasive presenter	2.4	35
Is gregarious and dynamic.	2.4	36
Is someone I knew beforehand.	2.3	37
Has an established reputation in field of our collaboration.	2.2	38
Is an experienced business person.	1.9	39
Question Categories (colour codes):		
YELLOW: Experience: history, reputation, experience		
GREEN: Attitude: germane to/displayed in situation, topic, issue, group		
ORANGE: Personality: persistent traits, thinking styles, social style, temperament		
BLUE: Abilities, Skills / persistent learned skills, natural gifts		

A Note on Sample Size: While we considered keeping the survey instrument open to increase the sample size beyond 108, the average scores for each question did not significantly change after the first 50 responses had been received. We therefore believe the responses above are representative of the online population as a whole.

Two criteria, *enthusiasm* for the subject of the collaboration, and *open-mindedness and curiosity*, are rated as the most important criteria by virtually all segments of respondents. More than half of all respondents rated these qualities as 'indispensable' in a collaboration partner. By contrast, five experience-related criteria (proven trustworthiness, collaboration experience, previous familiarity with other members of the team, reputation in the field of the collaboration, and business experience), rate at or near the bottom of the 39 criteria assessed by participants.

Candor, courage and timeliness of follow-through are also rated very important qualities in a collaborator, along with strong listening, feedback and self-management skills and diversity of ideas.

These findings, most of which are based on responses from experienced collaborators, seem to suggest that just about any group of appropriately motivated people can be effective collaborators, and that good collaboration is more art, and perhaps chemistry, than science.

The creators of the survey were somewhat surprised by these findings, since our collective past experience suggests that well-facilitated collaborations employing trained collaborators can have a powerful advantage over self-managed, untrained groups. We've found that trained, facilitated teams achieve more creative breakthroughs, faster, and are more likely to achieve extraordinary results, accomplishing things as a team that the individuals working individually could never have achieved.

To explore these findings further, we analyzed the results by gender, age, experience and occupation of respondent. These results are summarized in Fig. 2 on the following page.

Gender: Perhaps not surprisingly, women tend to rate good listening skills, self-management and tactfulness as more important in a collaborator than men, while men rate courage and candor as more important than women do.

Age & Occupation: Younger respondents, students and those in technology occupations value diversity of the team, comfort with ambiguity, and tactfulness more than other respondents. Respondents in their 30s, those with extensive collaboration experience and those in management occupations rate enthusiasm as more important than other respondents do. Older respondents, and those in education fields, tend to value follow-through, a sense of urgency, adaptability and collaborators with a stake in the outcome more than others do. And those in technology occupations are the only segment to rate diversity as more important than enthusiasm!

Group Size: Those most comfortable with small group collaborations (up to 10 people), and those in consulting occupations, rate conversational skills as more important in a collaborator than other segments. This might be due to the fact that in small-group collaborations each participant gets more opportunity to speak, and conversation (rather than just raising points) occurs more often as a result. Those more comfortable with larger group collaborations rate follow-through on commitments and comfort with ambiguity as more important. This, too, would make sense if larger group collaborations are usually associated with larger projects for larger organizations and hence rely more on individual activities and assignments both before and after the collaboration to achieve their objective. Large-group collaborations also allow less time for questions and clarifications from each participant, and hence more tolerance for ambiguity until their unanswered questions are resolved by the group.

Overall, though, there are no dramatic differences in the top 10 choices among any of the demographic segments: gender, age, experience or occupation.

Fig.2: Top 10 Ranked Criteria for a Collaborator, by Demographic Group

	Avg	Rank		Rank by Age						Rank by Collab			Rank by	Rank by Occupation					
		Overall Rank	By Gender		18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Group Size				Expert Collab	Cons	Educ	Mgmt	Student	Tech
What qualities, attitudes and skills help make a good collaborator? AN IDEAL PROSPECTIVE COLLABORATOR ...																			
Indispensable (3)																			
is enthusiastic about the subject of our collaboration.	4.4	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	4		
is open-minded and curious.	4.3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1		
Speaks their mind even if it's an unpopular viewpoint.	4.0	3	3	5	6	5	2	4	3	6	3	3	3	4	4	3	-		2
Very Important (9)																			
Gets back to me and others in a timely way.	3.9	4	6	4	-	3	4	7	4	4	-	4	4	7	5	-	-	8	
is willing to enter into difficult conversations.	3.9	5	4	7	4	6	5	5	5	3	4	7	5	3	6	4	4	6	
is a perceptive listener.	3.9	6	8	3	7	7	6	6	6	5	8	8	6	6	3	-	10	10	
is skillful at giving/receiving even negative feedback.	3.9	7	5	-	3	8	9	10	8	7	6	9	8	8	-	8	5	7	
is willing to put forward unpopular ideas.	3.8	8	7	-	8	-	7	-	9	8	5	-	7	9	-	5	6	5	
is self managing and requires 'low maintenance.'	3.7	9	-	6	9	-	10	8	-	9	-	10	-	10	8	7	7	-	
is known for following through on commitments.	3.7	10	-	8	-	-	3	7	10	9	5	10	5	7	-	-	-	-	
is willing to dig into the topic with zeal.	3.7	11	10	10	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	9	-	-	
Thinks differently than I do/brings different perspectives.	3.7	12	9	-	5	10	8	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	6	3	3	
Important (7)																			
Can work with many different types of people.	3.6	13	-	9	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	9	-	
is comfortable with ambiguity.	3.6	14	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	8	9	
Adapts quickly to surprises/changes/new requirements	3.6	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	
Has a significant stake in outcome of the collaboration.	3.4	16	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Has an ability to improvise.	3.4	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Has a sense of urgency about our collaboration.	3.4	18	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	
Encourages equal participation among all the members.	3.4	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

What are the implications of these results - for people wanting to establish, or participate on an effective collaboration team? We have defined collaboration as something more than mere coordination or cooperation. Here's how we make the distinction:

Collaboration entails finding the right group of people (skills, personalities, knowledge, work-styles, and chemistry), ensuring they share commitment to the collaboration task at hand, and providing them with an environment, tools, knowledge, training, process and facilitation to ensure they work together effectively.

Fig. 3: Collaboration, Cooperation and Coordination

	Coordination	Cooperation	Collaboration
Purpose of Using This Approach	Avoid gaps & overlap in individuals' assigned work	Obtain mutual benefit by sharing or partitioning work	Achieve collective results that the participants would be incapable of accomplishing alone
Desired Outcome	Efficiently-achieved results meeting objectives	Same as for Coordination, plus savings in time and cost	Same as for Cooperation, plus innovative, extraordinary, breakthrough results, and collective 'we did that' accomplishment
Optimal Application	Harmonizing tasks, roles and schedules in <i>simple</i> situations	Solving problems in <i>complicated</i> situations	Enabling the emergence of understanding and realization of shared visions in <i>complex</i> situations
Examples	Project to implement off-the-shelf IT application; Traffic flow regulation	Marriage; Operating a local community-owned utility or grain elevator; Coping with an epidemic or catastrophe	Brainstorming to discover a dramatically better way to do something; Jazz or theatrical improvisation; Co-creation
Appropriate Tools	Project management tools, schedules, roles, critical path (CPM), PERT and GANTT charts; "who will do what by when" action lists	Systems thinking; Analytical tools (root cause analysis etc.)	Appreciative inquiry; Open Space meeting protocols; Four Practices ; Conversations; Stories
Degree of interdependence in designing the effort's work-products (and need for physical co-location of participants)	Minimal	Considerable	Substantial
Degree of individual latitude in carrying out the agreed-upon design	Minimal	Considerable	Substantial

Our survey suggests that some of the qualities we have considered important or even essential for effective collaboration are not viewed as such by most collaborators, even those with lots of collaboration experience.

We're believers in the Wisdom of Crowds, so perhaps we worry too much about how much careful selection, training and diversity a group of people needs in order to be effective collaborators. A great attitude does go a long way to making a team work, and a group that has the three 'indispensable' qualities in our survey: enthusiasm, open-mindedness & curiosity, and candor, can probably overcome any shortage of experience and diversity to work its way around any collective lack of skills.

This is not to say that experience, diversity, and collaboration skills don't make the job of collaborating much easier and more likely to succeed. It just means that what's *most* important in collaboration, as with so many things in life, is the people and their desire to help the team achieve the collaboration objective.

It's also our assessment that the *objectives* of a collaboration will affect the optimal selection of collaborators. In groups where the objective is modest – say, to share information or even to achieve consensus, the make-up of the group is less critical (and often less open to choice) than when the objective is more ambitious – such as achieving breakthrough ideas or collective work-product. If you were George Martin trying to come up with the collaborative team needed to produce Abbey Road, for example, the chemistry of the participants would certainly be more important than if the objective of your collaboration was to brainstorm locations for this year's annual shareholders' meeting.

Applying the findings of this survey to your collaboration project

Here, then, is our suggestion on how to select collaborators for a project:

1. Establish clear **objectives** of the collaboration and the **commitments** required of team members. This will allow you to exclude people who are unable or unwilling to make that commitment up front, either for logistical reasons or because they will not sufficiently understand or appreciate the objectives.
2. Decide on the appropriate collaborator selection **process**.
 - a. Selection of members by an individual or panel
 - b. Selection of invitees by an individual or panel (where the invitees then have the option of accepting or declining membership, and additional invitations are sent until a satisfactory team has been assembled) or
 - c. Self-selection by open invitation to anyone not disqualified by the commitments or objectives (step 1 above)
3. Decide on the selection (or self-selection) **criteria**, by selecting among the 39 criteria shown in Fig. 1 above, and adding any technical skill and expertise requirements of team members. If diversity is one of the criteria (and it usually will be) consider whether it is necessary that *all* members of the collaboration team meet all of the criteria, or if it sufficient that just one, a few, or a majority of the team members meet these criteria.

If the membership is deliberately or inevitably going to be skewed by gender, age, experience or occupation, consider some of the qualities that these specific demographics consider particularly important in a collaborator, per Fig. 2 above. At the same time you will probably want to make a preliminary assessment of the appropriate **size** of the collaboration team. Note that even if you use an invitation process, determination of criteria is still vitally important, both in deciding when you have a sufficient number of appropriate acceptances, and in allowing invitees to appreciate what qualities are expected of them if they accept. This is especially important if you use the [Open Space](#) approach to invitation (“whoever comes are the right people”).

4. Review (or, if the group is self-selected, have them review) the composition of the team against the objectives, commitments and criteria. If important representation is missing, **augment** the composition of the team accordingly.

5. Allow the members of the team to **get familiar** with each other, ideally in a social setting or using team-building exercises, before they begin to address the objectives of the collaboration. If the team is virtual, this is just as important if not more so, but different familiarization activities will be needed.

A Final Note: if it's your task to assemble a collaborative team, remember that, in many cases, the team reflects the personality, style, and mindset of the people who launch it. Be aware of your own biases, talk to others about your choices, and exemplify the qualities (especially enthusiasm, open-mindedness, curiosity and candor!) that you're looking for in your team.

Survey Designers Commentary

Collaborator Comments: Mitch Ditkoff

The results of our collaboration poll confirmed some of my pre-existing assumptions and challenged others. This may be an indication that my criteria for selecting collaborators are dramatically different, in some ways, from the respondents to our survey *or* it may indicate that I need to reconsider some of my criteria. The main finding of the survey that resonates with my own experience is that attitude is one of the keys to successful collaborations. Indeed, the “right” kind of attitude (to be determined, of course, by each individual collaborator) is the glue. Since collaborations are often like marriages and go through various ups and downs, it is essential that the collaborators enter into the relationship with the kind of attitude that can weather the roller coaster ride of the sometimes chaotic and challenging creative process.

It makes me think of the recent winner of baseball's World Series: The Chicago White Sox. The White Sox, by most baseball fans' assessment, probably had a better “attitude” than the NY Yankees, who had higher paid and, technically speaking, more skilful “all stars.” The Yankees' attitude, however, seemed problematic all year long. Lots of squabbles, strutting, and lone wolfing. My ideal collaborator is someone whose “attitude” (i.e. mindset, positivity, resilience, playfulness, enthusiasm, respect for others etc.) is a contribution to the sustained effort of whatever project we're taking on together.

Another outcome of the survey that is consistent with my pre-existing assumptions is the importance respondents place on collaborators being able and willing to speak their mind and enter into difficult conversations. This is critical, I strongly believe, to mature collaborations. “Creative dissonance” is a wonderful phenomenon.. as long as the individual “dissonants” are committed to the iterative (and sometimes messy) process of “hanging in there” until resolution and/or higher ground is achieved.

The new physicists, I believe, refer to this phenomenon as the “Theory of Dissipative Structures.” Meaning? Things, in the universe, tend to “fall apart” before reorganizing themselves at a higher level. Picasso described this in other words: “The act of creation is first of all an act of destruction.” Skilful and committed collaborators know how to ride this wave...and eventually come out the “other side” with some kind of breakthrough, new insight, or renewed commitment.

In order for this to happen, collaborators must absolutely be willing to enter into difficult conversations and speak their truth. How they do this, of course, is key. “Speaking one's

truth” is sometimes tantamount to “hitting and running” or “overpowering others with one’s opinions.” Done in the spirit of true collaboration, however, “conflicting conversations” have a very healthy impact on the collaboration in question.

What surprised me about the results of our survey was the relatively low importance ascribed to: 1) “My ideal collaborator is someone I immediately liked. The chemistry is good.” Maybe, then again, this says more about me than anything else. I tend to be an intuitive. I follow my “gut” about lots of things, usually with fairly good results. This is, I believe, one of the ways I select collaborators. However, the relatively low rating of this criterion by respondents gives me pause. Methinks, it might be wise for me to check in with some kind of “criteria checklist” above and beyond my gut feel. This might serve as a kind of reality check for me, especially since there *have* been times when I have selected collaborators based on too much of a gut feel.

What I’d like to create for myself, as a result of this collaboration poll, is a short checklist of “collaborator qualities” that I need to slow down and consider before too quickly “trusting the chemistry.” Chemistry is important to me. But chemistry, I now see, can sometimes obscure a deeper look at other very important collaborator attributes as well. For example, many “single people” feel the chemistry with another on a first date. They may even follow up and create a second and third date. But this initial chemistry is not always sufficient to ensure a long-term relationship. So.. if you are like me.. and tend to rely a bit too much on initial chemistry, I recommend you create your own short list of counterbalancing “Preferred Collaborator Attributes” and actually slow down long enough to assess your potential collaborators in regard to these counterbalancing areas *before* committing to a collaborative relationship.

Collaborator Comments: Carolyn Allen

It has been fascinating to participate in this collaborative project about collaboration. The process itself reflected the final results. Attitude and Personality traits had an impact on the effectiveness of the collaboration. Gender also seemed to play a role in the productivity and balance of the process, with the lone woman on the team feeling the impact of differences in emphasis in line with what is pointed out in the survey.

The results of this survey showed that Attitude and Personality cornered the top 5 spots in what works well in a collaborative experience. These attributes ranked higher than Behaviours and Experience. That tells us that “soft” people skills that build community are vital to creativity and productivity. The question we must answer is how to enhance those kinds of skills in an increasingly isolating way of life. *Maybe we need a collaborative mission to innovate in this arena!*

The challenge of cooperation and collaboration are increasingly important as society splinters into more individualized options made available through the proliferation of media, the Internet, travel, mobile communications and educational specialties. The more we innovate, the more we need collaborative skills and opportunities.

As job opportunities and careers shift and slide, each individual carries personal thinking and group participation skills through these changes. Collaboration helps people navigate new challenges, change and membership in new communities.

Development of collaboration skills will enhance our individual and team abilities to innovate and carry through on our innovations in an environment that thrives on a balance of cooperation and competition. Collaboration within a team is essential, but

collaboration as a group in a complex global environment is also a valuable survival strategy.

This research project has identified many of the top criteria used to collaborate in everyday life – home and family, as well as business, politics and even religion. The next step is to apply this insight to collaborative opportunities and test the validity of our ideas and observations against application in the real world.

I look forward to taking that next step and hope that this study will help you in applying practical tools to your own collaborative journey of discovery.

Collaborator Comments: Tim Moore

Using just the questions ranked *indispensable* and *very important* we could write the following synopsis:

Ideal collaborators are open-minded listeners who are generally curious. They're enthusiastic, yea zealous about the topic of collaboration. Because they think differently, they bravely put forth unpopular ideas, even in difficult conversations. They are low maintenance, return calls and emails in a timely way and follow through on commitments.

Why is open-mindedness rated so highly? Simple. When everyone speaks out freely, disagreement and debate is guaranteed. Respondents want a safe space to look stupid while uttering potential heresy. They don't want to confront entrenched positions or group humiliation. The ninety-eight pound geek with the breakthrough idea might never bring it up in a room of jocks hurling sports metaphors.

Our politically sensitive need for safety is counterbalanced by our desire for others to be self-responsible and low-maintenance. People count on their colleagues to be larger than any moment of conflict that comes up. They don't want someone else's personal distress piled on top of the normal stress of staying alert, assertive and on-topic.

Google Reflects Our Survey Responses

Google's company culture mirrors many of our survey responses. With a work force of 5000 employees, dozens of projects are underway at Google at any one time. Roughly ten percent of employee work time is allocated to dreaming up blue-sky projects. Idea mailing lists circulate freely.

Google encourages food fight-like *idea moshes*. Rule number one is "no idea can be called *stupid* or *too wild*." Brilliant arrogance is okay as long as someone's brashness doesn't break positive mood and momentum. Although Google encourages "useful conflict," it's not interested in brilliant people who are difficult to work with.

The Googleplex is a fast, dense development environment. Average team size per project is six people, and an average project runs about four to six weeks. If a project doesn't pass muster by then, members break up and recombine. Any six-person team expected to brainstorm, design and build a groundbreaking feature in six weeks would need a diverse but complete inventory of resources and skills. This partially explains why our survey's youngest respondents value diversity so highly.

Google's management realizes their most valuable asset is passion. They allow and encourage workers to spend 20 percent of their time on something that truly interests them, *outside* their main assignment. And no surprise, that's right in line with our two top survey responses. *Enthusiasm* ranked number one in all but one of our five age demographics. *Curiosity* ranked second across the board.

'Tiny Hard Skill' Meets 'Big Soft Idea'

Our survey asked about a kind of "generic" collaboration that doesn't really exist. In the real world, collaborations change as the stages of a project unfold. There's a marked shift between the early 'soft' phases of a project - purposing, collecting and brainstorming - and its later, execution-oriented tasks. These later 'hard' stages often call on experts and authorities who usually have set ways of doing things based on pragmatic experience and standard practice.

Since Mitch, Carolyn, Dave and I work and/or consult in the areas of innovation and creativity, our focus is on getting "outside the box" and reinventing the wheel. But many wheels don't need to be reinvented. Execution tasks that come later in a project's timeline are the prime example.

In light of this, it's remarkable that five key survey questions about a prospect's "hard skills" and "experience" got low scores:

- Is *pragmatic* and knows how ideas get *executed*. (21)
- Has *deep* understanding of the subject of our collaboration. (29)
- Has *experience* as a collaborator. (34)
- Has an *established reputation* in field of our collaboration. (34)
- Is an *experienced* business person. (39)

Are we buying into a mythology that believes the narrow-band expert isn't open minded? - can't get out of his or her box? Do we believe experienced, rules-based people are stubborn and rigid? If so, this is the equivalent of Google saying the back-end code guys can't contribute to the English copy the user reads on the front end, or that the user interface the graphics guys design has no influence on code architecture.

Most of us may believe that while a well-synapsed generalist is more "likely" to get their head above the box top, *anyone* can have a good idea. But the limited scope of someone's role doesn't prevent them from having a sudden insight on the shop floor that improves some part of the whole.

No project's GANTT or CPM chart can predict *when* insights might take place or *who* they will come from. New ideas can appear unexpectedly, anytime in the course of the project, not just in the "brainstorming" phase. We have to be careful the role-box we put the pragmatic specialist in is not so tight that he or she isn't welcomed as an equal partner to present new ideas and insights on the fly. It should also *never* matter whether someone's idea is inside or outside their area of expertise.

So the next survey might address this question: How can generalists (big idea people driven to free-associate and innovate, like Google's idea moshers) best collaborate with specialists so that each type informs and stimulates the other?

Collaborator Comments: Dave Pollard

A considerable body of research, and my own observations in social environments and out in nature, suggest that we are normally, instinctively, cooperative, rather than competitive. It takes a lot of indoctrination to drive that out of us.

It is less clear whether we are instinctively collaborative, rather than inclined to work alone. Collaboration can be hard work, since it requires us to think outside our 'frames' and see things from others' perspectives. In creative work, especially, collaboration can cause conflict that goes beyond creative fiction to anger and intolerance. My observations in 27 years of work in large organizations suggests that we collaborate effectively when we *have to*, when we know for a fact that collaboration will achieve better results than each of us working alone would accomplish. To some extent that is the message that this survey gives us: Attitude is most important, and if we believe collaboration will succeed, it will, and if we don't, regardless of our group's skill, experience, and personality, it won't.

A new wiki by Mark Elliott called [MetaCollab](#) proposes to "create a continuously developing repository of knowledge surrounding collaboration". It is focused on the collaboration processes used in many different environments. Mitch, Carolyn, Tim and I will be contributing to the wiki to continue the investigations we have begun in this report.

A recent [study](#) by Ken Thompson and Robin Good suggests that high-performance teams believe seven things: That *each member of the team* is accountable, trustworthy & competent, willing to give & take, honest and open, willing to share credit & responsibility for the results, and optimistic about the outcome of the project, and that their collective mission is important. This certainly resonates with our survey's findings.

The same study lays out what the authors call [bioteaming](#) rules: rules for building organizational teams based on the principles of successful collaboration in nature. The twelve rules are:

1. Communicate information — not orders.
2. Mobilize everyone to look for and manage team threats and opportunities (collective responsibility).
3. Achieve accountability through transparency not permission.
4. Provide 24x7 instant in situ message hotlines for all team members (make sure the team is continually and immediately connected).
5. Treat external partners as fully trusted team members.
6. Nurture the team's internal and external networks and connections (the strength of weak ties).
7. Develop consistent autonomous team member behaviours (ensure all members agree to do a few critical things the same way).
8. Team members must learn effective biological and interpersonal co-operation strategies (find the natural win-win approaches).
9. Learn through experimentation, mutation and team review (not analysis).
10. Define the team's goals and roles in terms of 'network transformations' — not expected outputs.
11. Develop team boundaries which are open to energy but closed to waste (the right team and the right team size can't be absolutely known up front).
12. Scale naturally through nature's universal growth and decay cycles (the membership and roles of the team will evolve organically over time).

Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?

The next stage of our research will explore the process by which newly-formed collaboration teams can be most successful, the various collaboration tools available, and the various formal and informal roles that members of collaboration teams play. We hope to work with Mark, Ken, Robin and others going forward. This stage has just been launched with a 'Conversation' between the four of us. You can find it on [The Virtual Breakthrough Café](#). From there we hope to develop a set of Guiding Principles for effective collaboration – principles that will help members and organizers form, facilitate, and enhance the effectiveness of collaborative teams.

Hope you can join us!

Mitch Ditkoff
Carolyn Allen
Tim Moore
Dave Pollard

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