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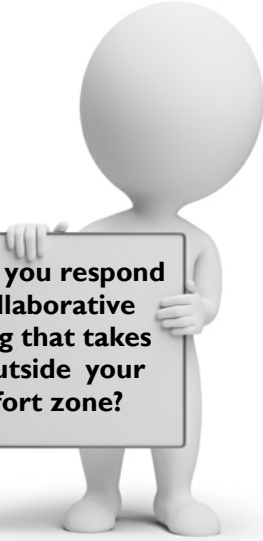# CREATING COLLABORATIVE ADVANTAGE… AVOIDING COLLABORATIVE INERTIA

This tool is designed to help you reflect on how you feel when dealing with complex and ambiguous leadership issues that arise when working in partnership with other organisations.

How do you respond to collaborative working that takes you outside your comfort zone?

Accelerating the effectiveness of individuals and teams working on:
Improved collaborative working within your organisation - Shared services - Multi-partner community safety
Alternative models of partnership - Blue-light integration - NHS transformation
Combined authorities partnerships - Health and social care programmes

Over 3,000 leaders and senior managers

have attended one or more facilitation or taught sessions in the SSA collaborative transformation programmes.

Over 500 public sector organisations

in local government, NHS, police, fire, housing, HE and FE are applying the SSA toolkits in their collaborative working.

Over 300 recognised practitioners and architects

SSA awards Collaborative Transformation Practitioner and Architect recognition, as part of the Postgraduate Certificate in Collaborative Transformation, in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University and CIPFA

Over 200 online tools, templates and techniques

for use across the partners in collaborative transformation and shared services, which can accelerate the development time of the projects and deliver savings and outcomes more quickly.

The benefits of these tools to your collaboration projects and your partnerships

What are the benefits of these tools to you and your colleagues?

For your organisation: It gives confidence to leaders to know that all their employees have access to a range of tools for building collaborative advantage across their organisation.

For your partnerships: These tried and tested tools will help accelerate your collaborations, ensuring they are set on strong foundations from the outset, and will avoid the expensive pitfalls experienced in too many partnerships.

For staff and project teams: Your staff can apply over 200 tried and tested tools, templates and techniques in any collaborative settings and across many sectors (local and central government, fire, police, HE, FE, schools, health & social care, housing and third sector). This gives them the confidence to be successful in their role, no matter who the partners are.

In-house, taught sessions on applying the tools can be arranged.

Enquire about sessions for your department, or team, by emailing
Dominic.Wallace@sharedservicearchitects.co.uk
...or phone Dominic on 0333 939 8909

These are pathway seminars to the Postgraduate Certificate in
Collaborative Transformation at Canterbury Christ Church University

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Tool: CLB0.01

CREATING COLLABORATIVE ADVANTAGE… AVOIDING COLLABORATIVE INERTIA

…ambiguous leadership occurs because the collaborative leader has not taken time to evaluate their strengths in the collaborative leadership space…

Tool CLB0.01 is designed to help you reflect on how you feel when dealing with complex and ambiguous leadership issues that arise when working in partnership with other organisations.

You have a choice as a leader. To create positive collaborative advantage, or leave a vacuum that will be filled by collaborative inertia.

Collaborative Advantage vs Inertia

Collaborative advantage happens when you create a situation where all the partnering organisations have common aims, and there are high levels of trust both personally and organisationally between the decision makers.

You have ensured that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and that leaders are prepared to share power, control, decision-making and risk, for a greater common good.

Collaborative inertia is the opposite of collaborative advantage. Through ambiguous, or even toxic, leadership, hope sets in that one day goals will align themselves, that trust will somehow happen and that shared power, control and decision making will eventually occur naturally.

Often that ambiguous leadership occurs because the collaborative leader has not taken time to evaluate their own willingness to act effectively in the collaborative leadership space, or they have failed to plan how they will lead beyond their comfort zone of command and control, to prevent inertia occurring.

Academics Huxham and Vangen explored the tensions inherent in collaborative endeavours noting the dilemma between collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia.

They went on to list seven overlapping perspectives[1] that make collaborative leadership a complex and ambiguous place to work **(Fig 10 below),**

Prof. Moss Kanter[2] identified that inter-company relations worked best when they were more family like and less rational.

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[1] Huxham C and Vangen S (2005)
[2] Moss Kanter, R. (1994) *Collaborative Advantage.* Harvard Business Review. July/Aug

Fig 10:
The seven perspectives of collaborative management

The Seven Perspectives	Collaborative Activity Required
Perspective 1 – We must have common aims but we can't agree on them	Managing and understanding aims
Perspective 2 – Sharing power is important but people behave as if it's all in the purse strings	Understanding power structures and processes
Perspective 3 – Trust is necessary for successful collaborations but we are suspicious of each other	Building trust
Perspective 4 – We are partnership-fatigued and tired of being pulled in all directions	Managing belief in the partnership when it gets complicated
Perspective 5 – Everything keeps changing	Dealing with frequent changes (to goals, boundaries, members, and structures)
Perspective 6 – Leadership is not always in the hands of leaders	Managing leadership which is enacted through structures and processes not just individuals
Perspective 7 - Leadership activities continually meet with dilemmas and difficulties	Managing ambiguity and uncertainty in a collaborative context

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'Only relationships with full commitment on all sides endure long enough to create value for the partners'.

Collaborations that had secured a collaborative advantage together were more like marriages than commercial contracts. They tended to exhibit all the hallmarks of a robust relationship. There were mutual aims, trust and openness.

However, Kanter goes on to suggest that they are also messy, emotional and rich in inter-personal communication and dialogue. She writes that *'Only relationships with full commitment on all sides endure long enough to create value for the partners'*.

Kindling the flames of collaborative advantage

To help you avoid collaborative inertia, Linden[1] identified seven effective practices adopted by successful leaders when developing a culture of collaboration between organisations:

1. Remove administrative and organisational barriers to collaboration
2. Offer training on the key collaborative skills
3. Recognise and support collaborative leaders
4. Provide some 'patient money'
5. Learn and publicise best practice from other partnerships and alliances
6. Provide experienced mentors
7. Tell stories of successful collaborative leaders.

Tool CLB0.01 is about you at this moment in time. It asks you to provide honest answers to the challenges in Huxham and Vangen's seven perspectives on collaboration management, a bit of introspection on how you would currently feel in those circumstances.

It is down to you to then look at Linden's effective practices for successful collaborative leaders and put them into play in those areas where you do not currently feel strong.

How to Use the Tool

Tool CLB0.01 is designed to help you reflect on how you feel when dealing with complex and ambiguous leadership issues that arise when working in partnership with other organisations.

It asks you to provide honest answers to the challenges in Huxham and Vangen's seven perspectives on collaboration management, a bit of introspection on how you would currently feel in those circumstances.

Step 1: Look at the seven perspectives of collaboration in the template on the opposite page, and ask yourself which are in your comfort zone, which will stretch you and which give you most concern.

Step 2: Ask yourself which of these apply to your current partnership relationships and why.

Step 3: Look at Linden's effective practices for leaders (on the left) seeking to develop a culture of collaboration with other organisations, and put them into play in those areas which are out of your comfort zone.

You may want to take advice from Linden and provide yourself with an experienced mentor to help you in this space.

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[1] Linden, R. (2003) *The Discipline of Collaboration*

Tool: CLB0.01

How do you feel about taking on the leadership activity required to handle the seven perspectives?

Seven Overlapping Perspectives	Collaborative Activity Required	Tick the box that confirms how you would feel if asked to lead on the collaborative activity required		
		I would feel comfortable	I would feel stretched	I would feel a bit panicked
1. We must have common aims but can't agree on them	Making time for managing and understanding the common aims of the partners			
2. Sharing power is important but people behave as if it's all in the purse strings	Focusing on co-creating the power structures and processes			
3. Trust is necessary for successful collaborations but we are suspicious of each other	Creating informal, trust-building activities as part of the leadership process			
4. We are partnership-fatigued and tired of being pulled in all directions	Managing belief in the partnership when it gets complicated			
5. Everything keeps changing	Dealing with frequent changes (to goals, boundaries, members, and structures)			
6. Leadership is not always in the hands of decision makers	Managing leadership which is enacted through structures and processes, not just individuals			
7. Leadership activities continually meet with dilemmas and difficulties	Managing ambiguity and uncertainty in a collaborative context			

Tool: CLB0.01

USER LOG

Project & date tool used	What was the desired outcome of using this tool?	What actually happened?	What would you do differently next time?