

**Leading through relationships**

**What kind of leadership do we need to bring to bear to get the best out of our working relationships?** At the personal level, it may require us to take a lead that we ourselves may not find easy. Not all collaboration is easy. In their book ‘Opening Doors to Teamwork and Collaboration’, Katz and Miller suggest there are four keys to successful collaboration:

* Lean into discomfort
* Listen as an ally
* State your intent and intensity
* Share your street corner

**Lean into Discomfort** is a powerful thought. It implies that we may instinctively hold back from some of the conversations we need to have in order to protect the relationship ‘as is’ or protect ourselves from discomfort. They suggest that pushing yourself to ‘lean forward into the discomfort’ may give you the mental reinforcement you need to begin a conversation that may not always be easy. Katz and Miller suggest that this ‘key’ opens the door to a deeper level of trust.

*(Note: some people we work with have found that having the phrase in their heads is enough to start the conversation they need to have.)*

**Listen as An Ally**

Sometimes we can fall into the trap of seeing ourselves on ‘other sides’ when it comes to partnering. We may think – and know, even – that we seek different things out of the same partnership. ‘Listen as an Ally’ reinforces the ‘shared enterprise’ element of our partnership. It suggests we might hear each other better from positions of being alongside, rather than opposite each other.

A test that partners are getting this right is when you hear “We” more than “You”.

**State Your Intent and Intensity**

Often, we don’t make it clear at the outset (and sometimes not at all) what we are seeking and the strength of our commitment to that agenda.

Katz and Miller suggest that our ‘statement’ (of intent) may be one of four things: either a notion or a stake or a boulder or a tombstone!

* The **notion** is an initial idea
* The **stake** is something to which you are committed, although it can be moved
* A **boulder** is an item that requires action and has little room for negotiation, while…
* A **tombstone** is a non-negotiable.

Without understanding of your level of intent and intensity, they suggest, “waste is inevitable”.

**Share Your Street Corner**

Most road junctions have four street corners, some more. Each corner ‘sees’ the junction differently. ‘Share your street corner’ is about making clear how things are seen from where I stand. It is about bringing differing perspectives into the room. There is a three-fold suggestion here:

* Share your perspective
* Accept other’s perspectives “as true for them”
* Be curious, hearing their perspectives as different and not wrong.

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| How does this resonate with you? |
| Where do you think you do this well? |
| Where might it be helpful and help build stronger relationships – or even provide a breakthrough in partnership working? |
| Where, for example, might you need to ‘lean into discomfort’? |