



Lack of Collaborative Process Can Hurt Your Business

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

Published

April 14th, 2011

Collaboration is a word that is being used more and more in a number of arenas in society. It refers to groups of individuals who have common goals who work together to identify issues, consider options and come up with a creative plan that will improve the situation of the parties involved.

In recent years, for example, there has been a growing movement that has taken divorcing individuals out of a litigation model where a judge who is a "stranger" to them makes decisions for their family. The collaborative model instead allows the two individuals to become part of a team where each contributes to developing a creative plan that defines their divorce agreement and how they will care for their children in the future.

Professionals and experts in law, psychology and accounting are used as resources to provide particular information that will facilitate the process. The couple who is divorcing know their children and their hopes for the future better than anyone else. The collaborative model allows them to have more power than they would have in litigation as well as the ability to ensure that the needs of the family are met.

Collaboration can also be used in different ways to improve businesses. Groups that include management personnel, employees, suppliers or even customers can be formed to identify and solve particular problems or to develop new products and services to expand the business. There are several advantages to this as follows:

1. People with hands-on experience are involved so information that might otherwise be missed is considered.
2. Different perspectives are brought to the table.
3. A mastermind effect is created in which brainstorming of ideas can lead to creative ideas and options.
4. A top-down decision-making operation can be "flattened" when people work together with equal power.
5. Each person takes on shared responsibility for the process and outcome.
6. Even if responsibilities are assigned to smaller groups, there is usually overlap that allows solutions that would not likely be otherwise considered and a synergy to develop.
7. Communication can be enhanced and the costs for communications reduced.
8. Revenue can actually increase when new products are created and value is added.
9. Profit can also increase when problems which previously drained funds are corrected.

Collaboration is about encouraging relationships and working together for the good of the operation. Rather than depending on owners and managers to micro-manage and make all the decisions, master mind groups who have specific information and unique perspective are given responsibility to develop solutions and work on specific goals.

More traditional business models tend to be top-down and rely on the owners and managers to do what collaborative groups can usually do more effectively with less expense.

A lack of collaborative process can hurt your business not only from a financial perspective but also when those who are involved are expected to quietly take orders from above when they actually have the information and ability to provide better solutions for the organization.