



Becoming a Collaborative Leader

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Effective leaders understand that they can't do it alone, and find ways to get things done through others. Collaborative leaders bring out God's best in others and in the organisations they serve in pursuit of shared goals. They seek out individuals, teams and organisations who can fill their gaps in knowledge, skills and wisdom and are willing to share what they have with others. They operate from an abundance mindset, celebrating the gifts and assets that are found in people and places in and beyond their congregation. Leaders who are moving towards a collaborative mindset often go through the following stages.

STAGE 1: They move beyond a "silo" mindset.

Collaborative leaders are as passionate about the church's overall health and vitality as they are about the ministries they oversee. Collaborative leaders know as much about what's happening in other facets of congregational life as their own. They know as much about their colleagues' roles and responsibilities as their own. They move from:

- telling others about what's going on in their ministry to asking colleagues about their ministries.
- using the "I" and "my" statements to "our" and "we" phrases.
- setting goals for their individual ministries to connecting them to the church's mission, vision and values.
- helping other team members only when asked to offering assistance on a regular basis.
- asking, "How does this impact my area?" to raising questions such as, "How does this impact us as a whole?"

STAGE 2: They embrace and share the benefits of collaboration with their colleagues, including:

- Bringing people together from across functional and organisational lines to accomplish shared outcomes.
- Gathering the collective knowledge and wisdom of all stakeholders to make better decisions.



- Mobilising people's gifts and passions toward goals that could not be realised independently.
- Increasing buy-in, trust and synergy among stakeholders.
- Raising up new leadership to address complex issues now and in the future.

STAGE 3: They select partners who know how to “play well together,” aligning their efforts with people who:

- are passionate about the vision that's shared, making it a priority for themselves and their organisation.
- model mutual trust and respect.
- are willing to share control related to decision-making, information and execution.
- are willing to take risks, learn from failure and try new approaches.
- plan in advance to provide appropriate lead times for all parties.
- have a bias for action and a mindset for creating excellence in all facets of ministry.
- have a willingness to address problems as they arise in transparent, grace-filled ways.

STAGE 4: They view collaboration as an intentional process that involves specific steps, including:

- Inspiring a shared goal that has buy-in from all parties.
- Identifying key players that will serve as the glue for holding together the collaboration.
- Listing each party's needs and potential contributions related to the shared goal.
- Establishing clear roles, responsibilities and expectations for all parties; create written plans, listing key milestones.

- Developing and monitoring communication channels and protocols to ensure ongoing engagement of stakeholders.

STAGE 5: They develop habits and practices that sustain collaborative efforts, including:

- Establishing group norms around meetings, communication and follow through.
- Framing conversations in ways that allow everyone to be heard.
- Building trust among team members; teaching leaders how to play well and have fun together.
- Working behind the scenes to ensure that progress is being made between meetings.
- Clarifying expectations, addressing issues as they arise, and mediating conflict.
- Soliciting people's opinions and perspectives about past, present and future projects.
- Framing decision-making in ways that address the most pressing issues and give voice to people's concerns.
- Gathering ongoing feedback needed to make course corrections and adjustments to plans and projects.

Three questions to consider when taking steps towards having a greater level of collaboration and integration:

1. What areas of ministry would benefit from increased collaboration?
2. Who do you need to collaborate more intentionally with (staff, elders, ministry teams, local churches, local government, community organisations etc.)?
3. What stages and steps do you need to address to become a more collaborative leader?

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