

Collaboration versus Cooperation

Collaboration and cooperation are both valuable modes for teams. But, it's important to remember that they're not the same. Here are three tips for how to foster each, plus three foundational tips you need for both.

COLLABORATION

Create a shared vision

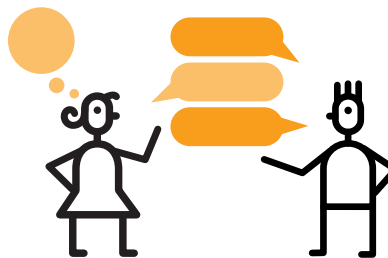
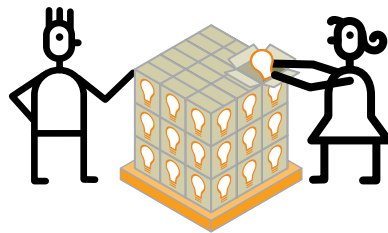
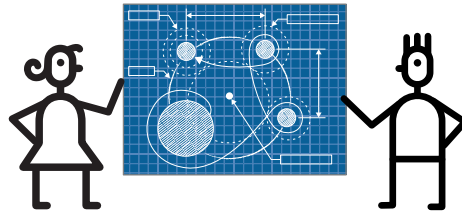
Begin with agreeing on the problem and identifying principles of a solution before diving into ideation. Then make sure you allow each team member time to process information and share their ideas.

Combine ideas

Great innovation often comes from a "mash-up" of existing ideas from across disciplines. In collaboration, ideas are combined to create wholly new ideas. Encourage participants to combine and edit their ideas to create wholly new ones.

Communicate motivations

Collaboration requires a shared purpose, defined by the team leader and shared with the entire group. To build engagement and respect, everyone must know why this work is being done and communicate their buy-in.



COOPERATION

Align to a shared vision

Begin with a straw-man vision, created by one or more team members. Explain core concepts, values, and ideas before opening it up to the team for discussion and feedback.

Contribute ideas

Ideas, visions, and strategies can be enhanced with input from others. This doesn't have to be small contributions; the ideas can be innovative and ground-breaking, but need to enhance the shared vision, not change it.

Acknowledge motivations

In cooperation, participants often have different motivations for engaging. To build trust, everyone should be transparent about their motivations, but it's okay if they are not the same.

For successful collaboration or cooperation these three foundational things are needed:

Context

Every member of the team must understand the broader environment of the problem and the solution in order to make meaningful contributions. It takes a little time and effort, but giving the background will payoff in the long run.

Information visibility

To keep everyone engaged and on the same page, make information visible. This can include preparing briefing memos and presentations, creating visual models to explain concepts, and writing and drawing notes in work sessions.

Boundaries and permissions

Let all team members know what's in and out of scope. Really focus on what you're not doing—problems you're not solving, areas you're not exploring, solution types you won't be implementing. Let participants know what you expect and you will have a better chance of getting it.

If you want to learn more about how communication can improve your teams, get in touch at www.thoughtform.com or 412.488.8600.