Cliff Notes on
Collaborative Project Leadership of Cross-Functional Teams

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What is constructive criticism?

The process of offering valid and well-reasoned feedback about an action, behavior, or idea of others in a friendly manner. Providing specific, actionable suggestions on how to improve. Giving and receiving constructive criticism can be difficult. There are tactics for effectively giving it.

Use nonspecific language

Use non-specific language such as "the numbers," "the performance" or "the project" rather than "your numbers," "your performance" and "your project."

Use "I" language

Using phrases like "*I think,*" "*I feel*" and "*I'd suggest*" increases the likelihood that the person receiving the feedback understands the criticism is about the action, behavior, or idea rather than about them.

Focus on the action, behavior, or idea

When delivering constructive criticism it is important to focus on the specific action, behavior, or idea that you would like to see improve.

Provide actionable feedback

Provide feedback that can be implemented immediately to improve the action, behavior, or idea.

Reference: Douglas Stone & Sheila Heen **Thanks for the Feedback** Penguin Books 2014

[1 ½ hours – 20 to 30 slides] Without interaction, this presentation will be an hour or less.

Carole Cadwalladr wrote an article for The Guardian – "35 reasons why I hate lists".
If you hate lists, you will find this exploration painful.

Prolog

1. 360° Project Challenges

    Challenging project teams and working groups

    1. Lack of trust
    2. Lack of focus
    3. Lack of constructive conflict
    4. Lack of quality results
    5. …

    Challenging stakeholders
    1. Conflicting priorities
    2. Unrealistic expectations (pressure … can't you just …)
    3. Micromanagers
    4. Inadequate commitment
    5. Stressful Styles e.g., Opposing Myers-Briggs personality types
    6. …

    Challenging individuals
    1. Naysayer
    2. Annoyer
    3. Diva
    4. Fearful
    5. Slacker
    6. …

    Project management is easier on Vulcan.

    What project challenges have you faced?

2. Collaboration may NOT be the answer

   10 + 1 Leadership Styles

   1. Democratic Leadership
   2. Strategic Leadership
   3. Coaching Leadership
   4. Laissez-Faire Leadership
   5. Transformational Leadership
   6. Transactional Leadership
   7. Visionary Leadership
   8. **Collaborative Leadership**
   9. Bureaucratic Leadership
   10. Autocratic Leadership

   10+1. Risk-guided Leadership

Commonly Effective

1. Democratic Leadership

Leader makes decisions based on the input of each team member. Although the leader makes the final call, each team member has an equal say on a project's direction.

2. Strategic Leadership

Leader has a vision they are moving toward and they care about the meticulous details. They think big picture, but also consider the steps needed to reach the goal.

3. Coaching Leadership

Leader focuses on identifying and nurturing the individual strengths of each team member. They also focus on creating strong teams that can communicate well and embrace each other's unique skillsets to get work done.

Sometimes Effective

4. Laissez-Faire Leadership

Leader follows a hands-off approach. They delegate decisions to team members and provide little to no supervision.

5. Transformational Leadership

Leader is driven by a commitment to an organization's objectives. They inspire by fostering an environment of intellectual stimulation and often delegate many tasks.

6. Transactional Leadership

Leader focuses on performance and establishing incentives, such as monetary rewards for work well done or consequences for lack of action. They value mentorship and training to achieve their predetermined goals.

7. Visionary Leadership

Leader inspires team members, boosts their confidence, and establishes strong bonds. They understand the big picture and can create a long-term vision for the organization.

8. Collaborative Leadership

Leader values a collaborative approach and encourages collective decision making. They are people-focused and believe when team members feel fulfilled they will be more effective and productive workers.

Rarely Effective

9. Bureaucratic Leadership

Leader expects their team to strictly adhere to rules and regulations. They are very "by the book".

10. **Autocratic Leadership**

Leader makes decisions without taking input from anyone who reports to them. Team members are expected to adhere to the decision at a time and pace stipulated by the leader.

Sometimes Effective

10 + 1. Risk-guided Leadership

Leader seeks to anticipate major project risks, both social and technical, and their mitigations. Mitigations may entail the use of one or more of the other leadership styles. Consider a team with a group of new developers and a group of seasoned consultants. The new developers may need autocratic or bureaucratic leadership, while the seasoned consultants may need democratic or bureaucratic leadership.

What is your most comfortable/successful leadership style?

Have you had experience with a risk-guided style? If so, what were its greatest challenges e.g., dynamic behavioral adaptation?

(8) Collaborative Project Leadership

Collaborative Project Leadership (CPL) entails tactics that heighten a sense of unity among cross-functional team members by encouraging them to:
- Actively share in planning and control processes
- Share management responsibilities
- Understand the importance of social as well as technical skills
- **Support the 15 properties of effective cross-functional collaboration**
- Identify and resolve conflicts quickly
- Actively and skeptically listen
- Dispense praise
- Identify staff and resource deficits
- Identify useful status measures
- Identify useful tools

Distinguishing characterisitics of CPL

- Collaborative problem-identification and problem-solving
- Open and shared decision-making
- Leadership of process, rather than management of people

Leading a jazz band vs. conducting an orchestra

There is a great deal of information about "collaborative leadership" on the web.

Have you experienced CPL and if so what were its major challenges?
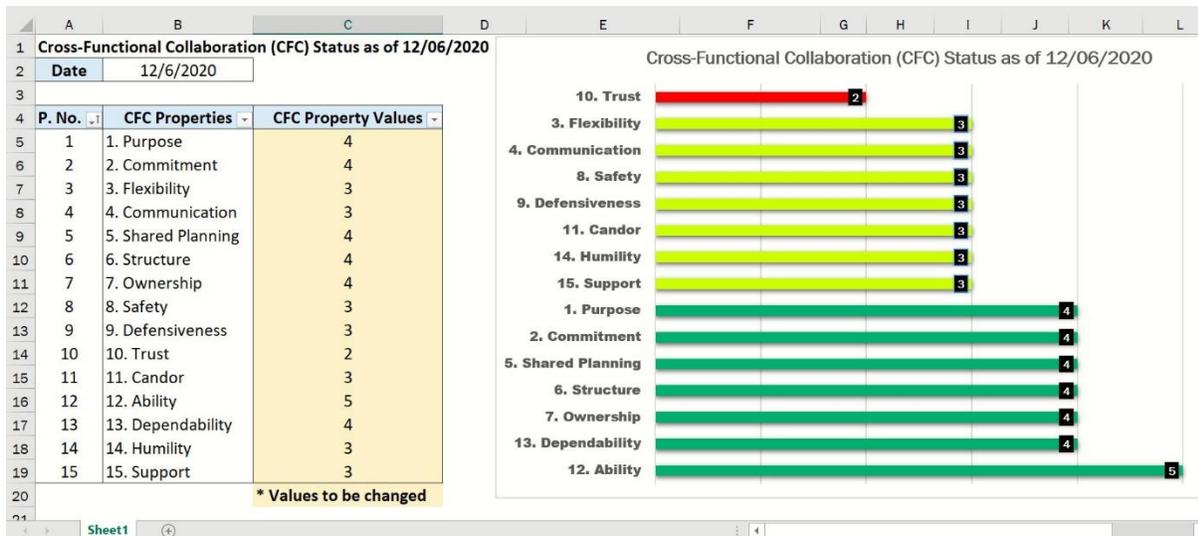
Cross-functional collaboration

Many articles describe advantages of cross-functional teams, but a Harvard Business School study found that **75% of cross-functional teams are dysfunctional**.

To quote Michael Jordan – Talent wins games, but **teamwork and intelligence win championships**.

To quote Kermit – **It's not easy being cross-functional**.

Among the essential CPL tactics, one focuses on maximizing the effectiveness of cross-functional collaboration by sharing its 15 properties with the team. Then, periodically surveying the team about these properties and generating a bar chart to display their status and identify those properties needing improvement.

An Excel 365 generator sheet displaying a status chart is shown below.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1 Cross-Functional Collaboration (CFC) Status as of 12/06/2020				Cross-Functional Collaboration (CFC) Status as of 12/06/2020							

Spreadsheet data (columns A–C):

P. No.	CFC Properties	CFC Property Values
1	1. Purpose	4
2	2. Commitment	4
3	3. Flexibility	3
4	4. Communication	3
5	5. Shared Planning	4
6	6. Structure	4
7	7. Ownership	4
8	8. Safety	3
9	9. Defensiveness	3
10	10. Trust	2
11	11. Candor	3
12	12. Ability	5
13	13. Dependability	4
14	14. Humility	3
15	15. Support	3
	* Values to be changed	

Chart (Cross-Functional Collaboration (CFC) Status as of 12/06/2020):

- 10. Trust — 2
- 3. Flexibility — 3
- 4. Communication — 3
- 8. Safety — 3
- 9. Defensiveness — 3
- 11. Candor — 3
- 14. Humility — 3
- 15. Support — 3
- 1. Purpose — 4
- 2. Commitment — 4
- 5. Shared Planning — 4
- 6. Structure — 4
- 7. Ownership — 4
- 13. Dependability — 4
- 12. Ability — 5

15 properties of effective collaboration in cross-functional teams are:

1. **Purpose**: Team members find a sense of individual purpose in the work itself or its results and believe the work matters to the company and its customers. They also view a project as a learning opportunity.

2. **Commitment**: Team members understand the advantages of collaboration. They resolve to collaborate despite the challenges of working with others.

3. **Flexibility**: Team members accept the need for functional diversity i.e., perspective and terminology, and individual diversity, e.g., in perception and decision-making style (Myers-Briggs). They understand and adjust to the challenges of diverse viewpoints and styles.

4. **Communication**: Accept the challenge of effective communication between unfamiliar specialties. Help develop a clear definition of the problem/opportunity and your role in achieving the goals. Help develop a communication strategy that encourages frequent communication including constructive criticism. Understand the benefits of sharing both information and knowledge. Invite questions and comments often.

5. **Shared Planning**: Team members help to define goals and develop achievement strategies.

6. **Structure**: Effective collaboration entails clearly defined roles, responsibilities, goals, and strategies, both primary and other. Assignments should be flexible but enable focused effort.

7. **Ownership**: Members understand they share responsibility for success and failure. There is no assignment of individual blame. Problems must be identified and addressed.

8. **Safety**: Psychological safety **engenders confidence** and entails shared talk time, active listening and respect for concerns and alternative viewpoints, and high social sensitivity to the feelings and moods of others. It entails a team environment that encourages personal risk-taking in sharing thoughts and information. Concerns and negative behavior are identified and addressed. Conflict resolution tactics are identified and ranked.

Effective collaboration entails safe co-creation

If your team doesn't feel safe, trustful collaboration is impossible

Amy Edmonson's TEDX talk about psychological safety (11:26 minutes)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhoLuui9gX8&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop

9. **Defensiveness**: Identify defensive behaviors and examine the fears that trigger them.

10. **Trust**: When members trust one another, they work interdependently. They consider and explore one another's ideas. They recognize the value of practical skeptics. Over time, members become familiar and even vulnerable.

11. **Candor**: Team members need to monitor progress and be honest about what's not working. Honesty enables strategy or performance adjustment and rework if necessary.

Culture can help or impede

12. **Ability**: Each team member has or can quickly pick up the skills needed to carry out their responsibilities.

13. **Dependability**: Effective collaboration needs members do their jobs and meet their deadlines. Team control replaces individual control.

14. **Humility**: You may not know enough. Seek knowledge from others. To err is human. Seek skeptical analysis of your work. Team ego replaces individual ego.

The devil's in the details
Everyone makes mistakes. Oh yes they do.

15. **Support**: Members are expected to know their limitations and ask for help. Helping others is also expected. Identify accessible subject matter experts outside the team.

"**A man's got to know his limitations**" - Dirty Harry

Maximizing effectiveness of cross-functional collaboration entails:
1. sharing its 15 properties with the team
2. periodically generating a property status chart
3. identifying properties needing improvement

It is likely that understanding the 15 properties and making their status visible will cause improvements in cross-functional collaboration.

Description of 15 collaboration properties, team opinion survey about collaboration properties, and an Excel 365 property status generator are freely available at http://clearspecs.com/Collaboration-Resources.php or https://tinyurl.com/y495h4tx.

What challenges associated with collaborative properties have you experienced?

Properties of toxic teams

Toxic teams lack:

- common purpose
- accountability
- feeling of safety
- trust
- confidence

- effective communication
- respect
- recognition
- risk-taking
- innovation

As with the properties of effective collaboration, the properties of toxic teams can be described, a team can be periodically surveyed, and the team's toxicity can be charted. This can be done for any team, **regardless of their style**.

Some properties of toxicity are context-sensitive. For example, on one project, success may depend on targeted risk-taking and innovation. On another, unnecessary risk-taking and innovation may increase the likelihood of failure and have nothing to do with toxicity.

Have you encountered project toxicity?

Learning Objectives & Outcomes

1. Understand a range of leadership styles
2. Learn to identify essential Collaborative Project Leadership goals and develop associated tactics
3. Learn the 15 properties of effective cross-functional collaboration
4. Learn to share their status and identify those needing improvement
5. Learn to share project toxicity