

An illustration featuring several stylized hands in various shades of gray and black, reaching towards and interacting with a collection of interlocking gears. The gears are also in shades of gray and red. The background is a light gray with a subtle, textured pattern of small dots and splatters.

MICHAEL SAMPSON

Collaboration Roadmap

You've Got the Technology – Now What?

“Michael integrates information, experience and knowledge about effective collaboration into a book full of wisdom.”

Martin White

Managing Director, Intranet Focus

Author, *The Intranet Management Handbook* and many other books

www.intranetfocus.com

“Michael is a world-renowned expert in collaboration. He has thought deeply about the issues of working together virtually. We have greatly benefited from his insights and research as we have evolved our 40,000 SharePoint-based extranets and our knowledge-driven intranet and web site. He contributed a great deal in helping us leverage collaboration at Fenwick & West LLP.”

Matt Kesner

Chief Technology Officer, Fenwick & West LLP

www.fenwick.com

“If you want to get past all of the hype, overselling, misinformation, and confusion that permeates far too many discussions about collaboration, then you have picked up the right book. Michael has a wonderful ability to create real clarity and add tremendous insights around both the challenges and opportunities that collaboration presents. His holistic approach, succinct frameworks, and pragmatic advice make this an actionable guide for anyone looking to have collaboration drive better business outcomes within their organization.”

Jim Hays

CEO & Principal Instigator

The ASPIRE! Group, LLC

www.aspiregroup.com

“Michael has a gift of making complex and challenging topics ‘consumable’—and his new book *Collaboration Roadmap* is no exception. The book starts with a visual table of contents—a brilliant way to introduce the concepts in the book—and includes very creative chapter titles, all of which support his goal of providing guidance in a way that is both easy to remember and easy to consume. His writing style is just like Michael himself—accessible and friendly. His frameworks for evaluating collaboration technology (Chapter 2) provide a great approach to consider what’s possible, even if you already have technology in place. His recommendations for governance (Chapter 5) include ideas for a governance structure that are practical and achievable. I think both the most seasoned collaboration professional as well as a ‘newbie’ on this journey will find a great deal of useful and actionable advice in this book.”

Susan Hanley

Founder and President, Susan Hanley LLC

Co-Author, *Essential SharePoint 2010: Overview, Governance, and Planning*

www.susanhanley.com

“Brilliant! Michael Sampson continues to lead as an Enterprise 2.0 pragmatist. His unique perspective reveals the strategies and tactics companies and individuals must follow to emerge as a truly ‘social business.’

In a world of incremental improvements, designed to squeeze the last drops of efficiency out of established business processes, Michael shows how becoming a Social Business offers a rare opportunity to achieve step change improvements which impact growth, efficiency, innovation, and competitiveness. Beyond the early novelty of blogs, wikis and forums, Michael effectively documents the steps needed to harness the creative and productive potential of employees across any enterprise and expertise across human networks.

Because the benefits of Social Business require a fundamental change in the way employees work, simply ‘installing software’ will not be enough to realize its value. Unlike the dot com boom of the 90s, companies falling behind or waiting to begin Social Business efforts will not be able to ‘buy their way back in.’ It is a new era, and Michael Sampson reveals exactly how the winners will step forward, as Social Businesses, to define it.”

Andy Carusone

Director IWE Community and Governance, Lowe’s

www.lowes.com

“Michael has an unerring knack of cutting through the hype of collaboration software and technologies, and getting to what works and what doesn’t. His understanding of the human side of the equation is rare in today’s ‘what’s hot now?’ market, and it’s that understanding which sets him apart from others who follow and analyze this segment of the industry. His writing and insight are high on my list of ‘must-reads’ every day, and I consider myself fortunate to count Michael as a colleague and friend.”

Thomas Duff

Developer, Regence

Author, *IBM Lotus Sametime 8 Essentials: A User’s Guide*, with Marie Scott

www.duffbert.com

“Michael is that rarity in the sphere of enterprise collaboration—a truly independent consultant and strategist. With no ties to any vendor but with over 15 years of in-depth knowledge and experience, he writes with authority and sensitivity on the true challenges that face organisations wishing to improve their collaborative culture. Collaboration Matters has introduced Michael into a number of our customers to run workshops and interview key players, and I can vouch for the truly transformative nature of his skills and advice. As a fan of Michael’s previous books, I am delighted that he has widened the scope in *Collaboration Roadmap*, delivering a must-read guide to the human elements of delivering projects in this area. I have no doubt it will become a key deliverable in every project we are involved in.”

Stuart McIntyre

Social Business Strategist, Collaboration Matters Limited

www.collaborationmatters.com



Collaboration Roadmap

You've Got the Technology—Now What?

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*To David, my firstborn son,
who expands my thinking through challenging questions,
and delights in the potential of ideas.*

—MICHAEL SAMPSON

Acknowledgements

The acknowledgements section of a book is one of the best sections, and as I have started to write my own books, I've started to pay more attention to the acknowledgements section in other people's books. It is "one of the best" because you get an insight into the support network behind the author—and as has been said many times before, it takes more than one person to write a book.

Eric Mack deserves first mention. It was his email to me in May 2009 that got the wheels in motion about this book. "*What about people who don't use SharePoint?*" he wrote, after looking over my early ideas in *SharePoint Roadmap for Collaboration*. "*Is there room to create a follow-on book for other tools?*" Well yes, Eric, there is ... and here it is. Thanks for being the first person to give voice to the greater opportunity. I have tested Eric's idea on other people, and have heard universal agreement that there is space for this more general treatment.

I have the privilege of working with great clients—you can see the type of engagements at michaelsampson.net/clients.html. I have learnt a lot through these projects, and while the names of my clients are not emblazoned in these pages, the lessons shine through. I am very grateful for the opportunities afforded me by my clients to both serve them directly and learn principles and lessons for wider benefit.

Many people—academics and practitioners—write on collaboration topics, and my ideas and conclusions have benefitted greatly from their respective contributions. Often my blog is the starting place for connecting with other people in this dynamic field, and that's also true of the practitioner community. While academic papers are less suited to succinct analysis on my blog, that's not to say they are not worthy of deeper reflection during the quieter hours of the early morning. There is much wisdom squirreled away in these deeper pieces of work.

While the names of my clients are not emblazoned in these pages, the lessons shine through.

For an author, in one sense, you could argue that acknowledging "my family" is kind of blasé. I'm the sole breadwinner at home, so writing a book to sell could be seen as "merely a way of winning the bread." But I'd argue that authoring a book takes more than that, and can't be neatly left behind in my writing den. An in-progress book goes with the author wherever they go, and even intrusions like getting up from the dinner table to capture an idea for a current chapter have an impact on one's family. So it isn't blasé to say "thank you" to my family, and to acknowledge that they have had to live with someone who has their head in a book and their body in the home. I've tried to drive a wedge between these two aspects, but it hasn't always worked.

Teaching the concepts and ideas in my books through public seminars has brought me into contact with many people around the world. Beginning with the publication of *Seamless*

Teamwork in late 2008, and picking up significantly with the release of *SharePoint Roadmap for Collaboration* in 2009, I have presented day-length seminars in many key cities. Throughout the course of the seminar there are many opportunities for discussion and contextualization, and I have learnt as much from these discussions as the attendees have. My thanks to all of the public seminar attendees for both their questions and input.

Writing books has also brought a raft of invitations to keynote at conferences, especially on the international scene. Whether attendees have known it or not, I try to bring my latest material to life during these conference keynotes, rather than merely repeating older material. Many of the newer concepts in this book can trace their genesis to specific conference keynotes. Hence my very real thanks to the conference organizers for the invitations to speak—even those I turned down due to prior commitments—and equally, thanks to the conference attendees for the post-keynote discussions.

Many of the newer concepts in this book can trace their genesis to specific conference keynotes.

The most delightful result for me from writing and publishing books has been the new people I've met. A book becomes many things once it is released—an orchestrator of new relationships, a doorway to new conversations, and a lightning rod for new experiences. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to have met new people through my previous books, and I look forward to the new people I will meet through *Collaboration Roadmap*. Ultimately, this is what it's all about for me—meeting new people and having an opportunity to help them in their collaboration journey.

Thanks to Ed Brill from IBM Corporation for writing the Foreword to *Collaboration Roadmap*. I have known of Ed since the late 1990s, have met him twice in the intervening years (including a one-to-one discussion over coffee in Wellington), and have watched with interest his emergence as a leader in IBM's messaging and collaboration business. I consider Ed a personal friend as well as a professional colleague, and have benefitted from his perspectives on my work over the years. Thanks to Ed for reading a near-final draft of this book and writing his Foreword during a very busy time in IBM's year!

Finally, thanks to the individuals who were influential in my decision to go with a larger-sized book. James Robertson of Step Two Designs in Australia started the process, clearly recommending that I print the book at a larger size and to give up on the A5 format I used for *SharePoint Roadmap for Collaboration* and *User Adoption Strategies*. I tested his idea with various friends and colleagues, and no one argued that it was a bad idea. So I've taken the leap and pushed ahead with it. I hope you like the new larger format.

Michael Sampson
November 2011

Visual Overview of Collaboration Roadmap

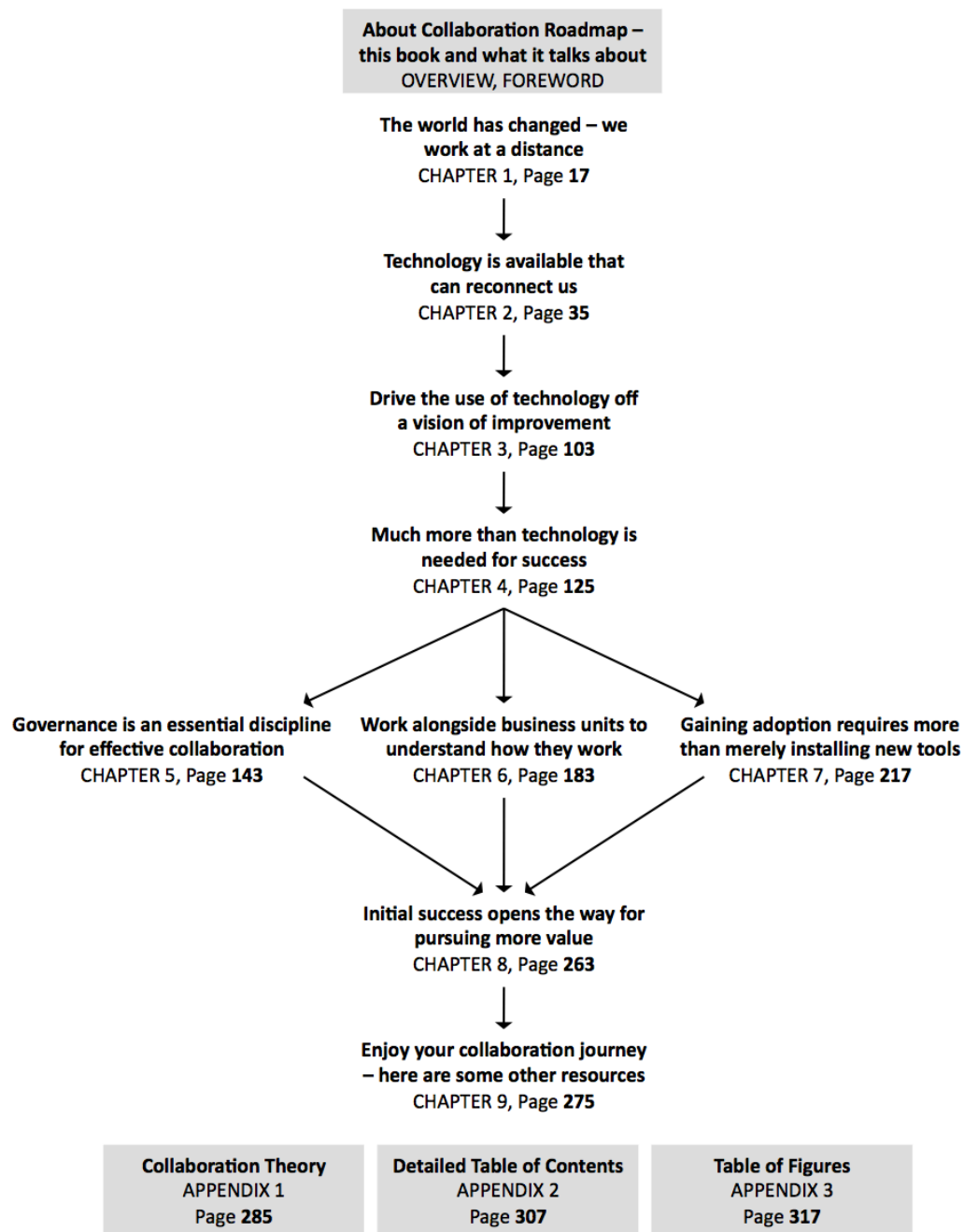


Table of Contents

Here's the brief Table of Contents. See Appendix 2 (page 307) for the detailed version.

Overview ... **11**

Foreword by Ed Brill (IBM Corporation) ... **15**

Chapter 1. Setting the Scene ... **17**

Chapter 2. **R**eally Understand the Technology ... **35**

Chapter 3. **O**utline the Vision ... **103**

Chapter 4. **A**ccept Technology is a Small Factor in Success ... **125**

Chapter 5. **D**etermine Your Governance Approach ... **143**

Chapter 6. **M**ake Every Effort to Engage the Business ... **183**

Chapter 7. **A**pply Intentional Energy to Adoption ... **217**

Chapter 8. **P**ursue Increasing Value ... **263**

Chapter 9. Your Collaboration Journey ... **275**

Appendix 1. Collaboration Theory ... **285**

Appendix 2. Detailed Table of Contents ... **307**

Appendix 3. Table of Figures ... **317**

About the Author ... **320**

Overview

After writing *SharePoint Roadmap for Collaboration* in mid-2009, my colleague Eric Mack suggested that I could easily write another book that took the principles in *SharePoint Roadmap* and made them more widely applicable. I wouldn't say it's been "easy," but here's the book.

My History with Collaboration

The area of "collaboration" has been the focus of my whole professional career. Starting with post-graduate research in the mid-1990s, continuing with a strategy role in a telecoms company, shifting to a research role at an industry analyst firm while also owning and running a software development company, to most recently—and for the majority of the past decade—to having my own research and consulting firm, the thread of collaboration runs uncut. I've written position papers, industry briefs, product reviews, collaboration strategy documents, and books—in conjunction with consulting and running workshops and seminars around the world with clients. Outside of my family, collaboration is my life.

Four Reasons for Writing Collaboration Roadmap

I wrote this book for four reasons, and the first is most important. Any conversation about collaboration technology devoid of an integrated analysis of the business and people factors is entirely inadequate. Combining these three aspects in a book and dealing with them from end-to-end creates an appropriate time and space for considering their interrelationships and interdependencies.

It's my belief that we need to talk about the technology, because specific technology products can help or hinder our efforts, but if the conversation stays on the technology for too long, we run the risk of losing sight of our ultimate aim—and that is doing business better (or for those in government and other non-"business" organizations, doing "work" better).

Any conversation about collaboration technology devoid of an integrated analysis of the business and people factors is entirely inadequate.

Secondly, *SharePoint Roadmap for Collaboration* was aimed at organizations that had already selected SharePoint as their collaboration platform. I wrote that book because I saw many firms taking dead ends in how they used SharePoint for collaboration, and wanted to signpost a better road. It turns out this lack of road sense is not limited to firms using SharePoint, and by writing a more general book I can signal its wider applicability for all road users, not just those in SharePoint-powered vehicles.

Third, I want add value to your work, and this book sets out my vision and perspective on how I can help. By all means, take the ideas in *Collaboration Roadmap* and run with them

in your firm without my involvement. However, after you have read and digested the ideas in *Collaboration Roadmap*, you'll have a much clearer sense of where I can add value if you want to work directly with me—whether through an in-house workshop, an external evaluation of your collaboration strategy, or a consulting project with specific deliverables. For examples of how I have served other firms, see michaelsampson.net/clients.html.

Finally, ideas in book form can travel when I can't. Most of this book was written during a six month interval around the time Joshua was born. A new baby in the house always brings a new set of challenges for parents and siblings, and it's important to my wife and children that I'm at home during the first months of a new life. As a result, I put my business travel on hold and stayed in the office to write.

What's New in Collaboration Roadmap

Collaboration Roadmap is a new book even though it builds on the original work in *SharePoint Roadmap*. Since publishing *SharePoint Roadmap* in 2009 my consulting work has been split between firms using SharePoint and those using alternative products—such as Jive Social Business Software and IBM Connections. Equally I have presented workshops for firms where the underlying principles of effective collaboration were the focus, and where the material I had written about SharePoint was irrelevant.

I want to call your attention to four specific features in *Collaboration Roadmap*. First, the structure of the book follows a mnemonic using the word “roadmap.” The titles of Chapters 2-8 each begin with a letter from the word “roadmap,” starting with “R” in Chapter 2 (*Really Understand the Technology*) and concluding with “P” in Chapter 8 (*Pursue Increasing Value*). I have embraced this mnemonic to help you recall the main emphasis of each subsequent chapter. See the Table of Contents for the complete mnemonic (page 9).

The second new feature is a greater emphasis on the potential value of collaboration. Two chapters—Chapter 3 (*Outline the Vision*) and Chapter 8 (*Pursue Increasing Value*)—tackle this issue head-on. The first of these chapters sets the scene for your initial foray into the use of new collaboration technology, and the second establishes the objective for your ongoing usage. Both chapters give examples of how specific collaboration technologies can be used for increasing business value. *SharePoint Roadmap* only touched on these issues.

Third, the technology chapter in *Collaboration Roadmap* is fundamentally different from the technology chapter in *SharePoint Roadmap*. The latter presupposed SharePoint as the collaboration technology of choice, and therefore focused on how to mitigate the weaknesses of SharePoint 2007 for team collaboration. The chapter in this book presupposes no product decision has been made, and as such offers advice from a number of perspectives on how to make that decision. The sections in Chapter 2 (*Really Understanding the Technology*) address aligning the technology evaluation with vendor-independent frameworks, explore non-technology aspects of the decision matrix, and provide a vocabulary for considering whether mitigation of the weaknesses in your

current product is more appropriate than migrating to a new product. While I have mentioned these topics in various conference presentations, this is the first time I have written my approach in a single place.

Finally, Chapter 7 (*Apply Intentional Energy to Adoption*) on user adoption of new collaboration technology and approaches benefits from primary research not available when I wrote *SharePoint Roadmap*. My last book, *User Adoption Strategies: Shifting Second Wave People to New Collaboration Technology (2010)*, provides my definitive account of the user adoption question, based on survey research, interview data, and various consulting projects. In relation to *User Adoption Strategies*, then, the chapter in this book provides a solid grounding in the topic, but those wanting a complete treatment should refer to *User Adoption Strategies*.

A Few Words on Independent Advice

Let's be very clear about something at the beginning of this book. I'm not vendor aligned. I'm independent—as an analyst, strategist, consultant, and thinker. The intent of my work is to help end-user organizations prosper and do better. I don't serve the vendors—be that Microsoft, IBM, Jive, Socialtext, Central Desktop, Huddle, or anyone else. If you spend money with vendors as a consequence of something you read in this book, I receive no financial kick back. And I want it that way. To state the intent of my work in a different way, while I'm deeply interested in what vendors have to offer because these offerings create opportunities for end-user organizations, it's what end-user organizations do with the technology that interests me. In summary, my “three no's” with respect to vendors are:

- I have no business partnership with any vendors.
- I have no financial stakes in vendor companies.
- I receive no commission from product or service sales.

While I'm deeply interested in what vendors have to offer because these offerings create opportunities for end-user organizations, it's what end-user organizations do with the technology that interests me.

I believe my approach has a huge benefit for you (and one that my current clients greatly value)—you get true independent advice. Because my firm doesn't do technical implementations of collaboration technology, nor custom development, my recommendations aren't about driving extra work for the rest of my firm. They are focused on making the best of collaboration technology for you.

A Note About Web Links

You will find a variety of web links throughout the book, either pointing to my online articles or to work from other people. I know you can't click them in this book, and it's a pain to have to type them into your web browser. Therefore, head over to this page on my web site—michaelsampson.net/collaborationroadmap-links.html—on which you will find clickable links for all the references in this book. They are referenced by page number.

Let's Talk

I'd love to speak with you about your work with taking a business-centered and people-centered approach to collaboration technologies. What you're up to. What you're thinking about doing. What your dream is for your organization if it embraces collaboration technology to its maximum potential. So let's talk, and I really mean that. I personally answer my phone and email messages. Call me on +64 3 317 9484, or email michael@michaelsampson.net.

I'd love to speak with you about your work with taking a business-centered and people-centered approach to collaboration technologies.

That completes this overview and the reasons for writing this book. Let's begin—we have quite a journey ahead of us!

Michael Sampson
The Michael Sampson Company Limited
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November 2011

Foreword—by Ed Brill, IBM Corporation

Information Technology as a discipline is a half-century old. In many organizations, IT is still viewed as a supporting overhead function, rather than an integral part of the business. Forward-thinking organizations and IT leaders have used the age of the Internet and Web 2.0 to become change agents, to identify and deploy technology as a strategic advantage. However, in many cases, IT is not at the table when marketing conceives of a new campaign, when engineering produces the next new offering, or when support analyzes customer situations to determine best practices.

The concept of collaboration has equally been around a long time, but many organizations suffer from lack of traction with their investments in productivity. That is because so many IT organizations are disconnected from the business they are part of, operating in a “if we build it, they will come” mindset driven by vendor roadmaps and personal interests.

In this book, Michael Sampson endeavors to help you change the way you and your organization view information technology and the opportunity for collaboration. Organized as a literal ROADMAP of chapters, *Collaboration Roadmap* helps you expand the boundaries of your role as an IT professional. The book’s subject matter and flow will help you establish the disciplines of identifying purpose before action, recruiting and developing sponsors and advocates, adopting governance, measuring success, and influencing organizational change. You will learn what the best practices are and the right ways to approach a collaboration project. You will come out the other end more successful, confident, and in tune with your organization.

I first met Michael online a decade or so ago. Despite a half a world between us, Michael quickly established himself as a trusted resource. His perceptive and deductive skills were honed even at an early point in his career, and he demonstrated a neutral, fact-based approach that is all too rare in the world of industry analysis. As a vendor, I came to rely on Michael’s daily news updates in the field of messaging and collaboration. Michael distinguished himself both through his willingness to jump into specific issues in depth from a “why this is important” and, often, a “why this is wrong” point of view. In one influential situation, Michael, with no “dog in the hunt,” took it upon himself to debunk a white-paper-for-hire analysis that portrayed my product unfairly. Since then, that willingness to take risk for no personal gain has been demonstrated frequently, and Michael remains one of the industry figures I admire the most.

Collaboration Roadmap takes all of Michael’s work as an analyst, consultant, and vendor and wraps it up into a single volume of best practices. As I read the examples in the book, I could quickly recall situations where I had seen that exact scenario played out in my work—some of which I discussed with Michael. My own career started in IT two decades ago, and my then-employer was smart enough to send network administrators to a training class in negotiation. Chapter 6, engagement, brought me back to that training, which I consider one of the strongest foundational elements of my own business success. We discussed differences in IT culture and organizational culture, and how it is easy from the

outside to recognize organizations where IT is aligned with the overall business. Sections of chapters 7 and 8 around end-user advocacy especially hit home for me, for this has often meant the difference between success and failure of so many IT projects over the years. Chapter 2's section on vendor selection also stood out.

By the way, governance and engagement is not just the purview/realm of information technology. The concepts, ideas, and processes that Michael describes can be applied throughout your career, regardless of your role in your organization. I recognize myself in so many of the examples that Michael brings to life in these pages. One that continues to stand out for me happened once I switched to the vendor side of the table. Since some of my customers will read this book, I've generalized the example just a bit!

My product development team came to me with a piece of technology that would help end-users more easily access and share within their organization, using their existing investment in Lotus Notes. It solved a need I knew existed in the market, but not in a particularly scalable or flexible way. In fact it used technology that probably had no business being used anymore, limiting which operating systems it would run on and how many users could use it. My competition was talking about a similar concept, using a new industry-standard access protocol and, at least on paper, without any limitations. I knew I had to do something to address the competition, but my only option was unattractive. We didn't do much analysis about what the long-term implications would be, and we certainly didn't apply the compliance concepts from Chapter 5. We shipped it anyway, thinking it was better to have something to blunt the competition than to come up empty-handed. In the end, the few customers who tried to deploy it found that it didn't really work, and that it had so many limitations as to make it essentially useless. We pulled it from market rather quickly. Oddly, so did our competition's more forward-looking approach. Both vendors retreated and eventually introduced new approaches to the same problem, built on a long-term architecture.

I often talk about this particular example in the context of IBM's Integrated Product Development (IPD) process. As an independent vendor, Lotus Development Corporation had no such thing—we just built and shipped product like any upstart software company. As part of IBM, we look at long-term market trends, supportability, ecosystem, and business results before we ever ship a product. Using IBM IPD, or perhaps Michael Sampson's book, we never would have shipped that handicapped add-in product; the analysis would have led to us to look for a better, more-sustainable solution.

My last thought is that you should consider not just this book, but its source. After more than a decade, I continue to find Michael Sampson one of the most approachable industry figures in the world. You would do well to engage with Michael after reading this book, to share your thoughts, experiences, and opportunities.

Ed Brill

*Director, Messaging and Collaboration
IBM Collaboration Solutions*

Chapter 1.

Setting the Scene

“Someone outside your organization today knows how to answer your specific question, solve your specific problem or take advantage of your current opportunity better than you do. You need to find them and find a way to work collaboratively and productively with them.”

A.G. Lafley, Former CEO, Proctor & Gamble

There's a rotten apple in the barrel. Or more accurately, all the good apples in the barrel have been ruined as bucket after bucket of bad apples have been tipped in, crushing the good ones. This book isn't about apples, but about the use of collaboration technology at work. The bad apple in this sense is the idea that all it takes for collaboration at work to succeed is for the IT department to choose the "right" collaboration technology, and "all will be well." The good apples that have been crushed are the important ideas about how to approach the technology and turn it to good business use. This book is my contribution to restoring the good apples to their rightful place, and protecting them against the invasion of bad apples.

In this chapter, you will:

- Consider four key trends that are making collaboration such a hot topic.
- Investigate the reasons why collaboration is not achieving its potential benefits.
- Discover the roadmap to success for making collaboration work.
- Learn about the contents of the seven core chapters in Collaboration Roadmap, along with the intended audience for this book.

What's Changed to Make Collaboration So Important?

In 1850 wealthy people traveled first class in luxurious ships, and spent with reckless abandon to keep up their grounds and establishment. If suspended animation had been possible in 1850, and one of these wealthy people had taken the plunge into hibernation for 160 years, what would they notice in coming back to the land of the living in the second decade of the 21st century? Let's look at four major changes:

1. The world is smaller.
2. The world is more complex.
3. The workforce is more distributed.
4. There is more emphasis on brain than brawn.

Difference 1. The World is Smaller

In the year 1850, colonists from England boarded ships and set sail for New Zealand. Although there was a promise of a new life at the end of the journey, the three to four months on board the ship were filled with danger. It was a common occurrence for some passengers to die on those ships—from looking at the records from ship doctors, the probability of survival was between 0.95 to 0.98 (1:20 to 1:50). It was a hard journey each way. And if you wanted to go there-and-back-again, like Bilbo in *The Hobbit*, it was up to four months each way. With a round trip of 5700 hours, only the adventurous—and the sea-hardened crew—did it.

Fast-forward 160 years. The trip from England to New Zealand and back again is a mere 57 hours, or 1% of what it used to be. Even if you are traveling economy class you have your own seat, food and drink served at regular intervals, easy access to toilet facilities, and a personal screen on the seat back in front of you so you can watch movies. While some people die every year during long haul travel, it's not a regular occurrence. In fact, the probability of surviving the trip now is close to 1.¹ Dying in-flight is an exception, not an expectation.

A lot changes when the time to travel there and back again shrinks by 99%. Activities you wouldn't even dream about in 1850 become almost everyday possibilities. It's possible now to go to the other side of the world for a two-week holiday, a two-day conference, a weeklong consulting session with a client, or to watch a sporting event. It's possible, and people do it all the time.

Looking forward 150 years on from 2011, we can postulate some travel time possibilities, but many of our assumptions are based on the extrapolation of current technology. Faster engines, bigger planes, and more leg room (says this 6'2" writer)! Imagine, though, a world

where it was physically possible to travel from England to New Zealand in a matter of minutes, with no adverse effects!

Or consider telecommunications. The passing of physical objects as a way of communicating used to rely on transportation networks—from the mailbag aboard the ship, to the pony express in the United States (with its famous cry of “the mail must get through”), to the courier and postal mail services of today. As our ability to shift people has become faster, so has our ability to move artifacts around the world with astonishing speed. FedEx has created a tremendous business for getting parcels and packages to their desired location overnight or within days.

But the real transformation in telecommunications has been the ability to shift a representation of what is being communicated to someone else in the blink of an eye—the one-page fax of the 1980s (okay, it would be a very long eye blink), the email message of the 1990s, or the Facebook or Twitter update of the 2010s. The ability to communicate with other people—to share ideas, to discuss possibilities, to develop work products together—is truly astounding.

And don’t even get me started on cost! Barely 20 years ago it was \$2 to \$3 per minute for international calling—I remember those days! Now it’s free with Skype, and you can carry the number with you on a 3G or WiFi-enabled smartphone or tablet. Free is a pretty compelling price point.

Indeed, the world has shrunk due to telecommunications networks and the widespread adoption of increasingly intelligent end-user devices. Bill Gates’ vision of a “PC on every desktop” has been met and exceeded, even if some of those PC’s are being replaced with Apple Macs. People on-the-go, from the highly-paid executive to school-goers have advanced smartphones and mobile devices in their pockets.

There have been many consequences for business operations. As just one example, software development firms are able to leverage teams at different places around the world to speed time-to-market for new products and services. Teams spaced equally in Sweden, South Dakota, and Sydney can guarantee work at 24 hours a day, and only need to allow 30-60 minutes of hand-over time as the work day in one location ends and the work day in the next begins.

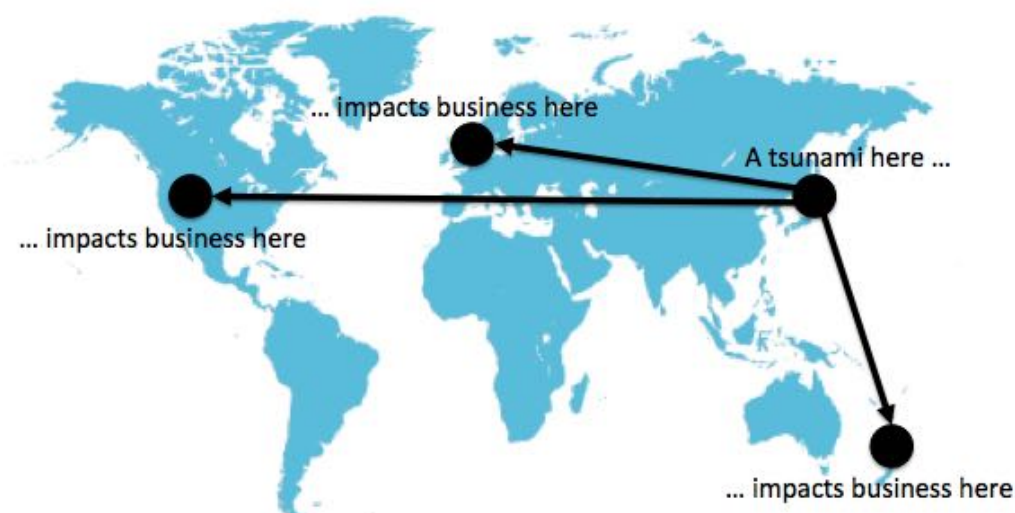
The technology available continues to advance at a rapid clip. Many businesses are buying into the use of video conferencing—and its high-end option of telepresence—for being there without being there. Giving a face-to-face-like experience, newer generations of video conferencing—with high definition cameras, large LED screens, and optimal room design at each location—give the impression that you are “just talking across the table” rather than across the world.

Even desert islands don’t offer the isolation they used to. If Robinson Crusoe was marooned today, chances are he would pull out his satellite phone, call for help and then wait on the beach for the rescue plane.²

Difference 2. The World is More Complex

The world is a more complex and interrelated place—due in the main to the effects of shrinkage. Events that are isolated to a specific geographical location have flow-on effects beyond the natural boundaries of the disaster. Japan's March 2011 tsunami affected supply chains for high-tech goods for months due to the destruction wrought on fabrication plants. These plants provided a high proportion of semiconductor components and memory chips to manufacturers around the world, and as a consequence the physical tsunami created a disruption tsunami that decimated supply chains. For firms around the world not directly affected by the tsunami, it was a reminder to re-evaluate the resilience of their internal operations and supply chains to high-magnitude disasters. Back in 1850, events at such a geographical distance wouldn't be known about for months—if ever.

Figure 1-1. Effects Are Felt More Widely Than Natural Boundaries



The March 2011 tsunami in Japan demonstrated (again) that the world is a more complex place. Global supply chains for high-tech products were disrupted, and single-site manufacturing strategies for other manufacturers were called into question.

Customers are better informed and more empowered to act outside of the constraints of the local market. Comparing prices on goods and services is simple—all you need is a web browser and one of the leading search engines. The rise of Amazon.com has had flow-on effects for book chains all over the world, as consumers have traded the ambiance of the bookshop (with its limited choices) for the austerity of the browser (with its unlimited choices). For individual consumers, paying for products sourced overseas is usually a simple matter of using a credit card or Paypal. Medical doctors find they are now competing not just with the doctor at the surgery around the corner, but with the medical expert on the other side of the world who has written medical guidance for a particular disease and which the patient has studied before making an appointment. In a bizarre

twist of reality, patients now often know more medical details about their specific health issue than their doctor.

Product designers have to create products for a global audience. In some important ways, this isn't as daunting as it sounds, due to the creation of a more global and homogeneous western culture, with especial thanks—or blame, depending on your perspective—laid on American TV programming and Hollywood movies. Certain ideas are portrayed as ideals, which begin to influence the buying behavior of people all around the world. Nevertheless, there are local nuances and sub-group preferences that product designers should know about in advance of releasing a final product. Getting it wrong is costly. Obviously one strategy for dealing with this challenge is to include people from the different markets on the initial design team. This allows local nuances to be included in the design brief as constraints or opportunities long before the design is frozen.

The competitive dynamics in the mobile phone industry provide an excellent example of designing for a global audience while paying attention to local preferences. When Nokia and Motorola ruled the roost, the strategy was to create a plethora of phones with the hope that any given consumer would find what they were looking for. With the rise of the Apple iPhone, and more recently the ascendancy of the Android operating system, it's less about having different phone designs to

whet the appetite as it is about having the best “app store” with thousands of apps to entice even the most reticent of app buyers. The dynamics have changed from a “phone for every pocket” to “an app for every phone”—a much more scalable and lucrative business model if you own the underlying platform.

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Expertise has also changed. It has become more specialized, so much so that one chemist can't talk to another chemist because they have both focused on different compounds and reactions. They're both chemists, but the similarity ends there. It's true for engineers, academics within the same disciplines, management consultants, lawyers, and more. The reaction to having more to know and understand has led to the fracturing of learning into smaller and smaller sub-disciplines, resulting in fewer common learning points.

Finally, if consumers don't like what their local supplier has on offer, it's pretty easy to find someone around the world who offers exactly what they want. Whether it's a matter of arranging physical shipment of products to a key warehouse, or the delivery of services remotely or after the supplier has spent time traveling to work with the client, nothing is impossible. Amazon.com started it with books, but now you can buy just about anything and get it delivered almost anywhere.

Difference 3. The Workforce is More Distributed

The third major difference our visitor from 1850 would notice is the geographical distribution of people who work closely together. Whether in the local village, or increasingly in industrialized cities brimming with both progress and poverty, job opportunities were defined within a specific geographical area. “Working together” used to refer to actually working together in the same place at the same time—a somewhat quaint concept today. Now there are so many nuances on the concept of working together, that it takes quite a conversation to understand how a particular team or group are doing it today.

“Working together” used to refer to actually working together in the same place at the same time—a somewhat quaint concept today.

Design and manufacturing used to be intricately linked in a single person. For example, a master craftsman would contemplate a design for a new product, and then make it. Now the two disciplines can be carried out while separated by continents! Planes that are designed in one location—although even that’s hard to say due to the geographical distribution of design engineers—are then manufactured by a loose federation of suppliers in factories around the world, with components flowing to a central location for final assembly. Global sourcing and global supply chains are a fact of life now, even for things like spices made by selected firms for restaurant food.

Multi-national enterprises, a number with an annual revenue stream that equals or exceeds the GDP of a small nation, have staff located in offices around the world. While there is often a degree of autonomy granted to local country managers to operate in a way that aligns with the local customs and culture of the host nation, much is common. Common branding allows the development of global brand recognition and customer loyalty, common operating procedures facilitate easy staff movement between offices, as well as ensuring that revenue growth is not compromised by local inefficiencies. Making this all work relies on a fabric of regular communication, coordination, and collaboration.

But it’s not just the multi-national enterprise with 100,000 employees that faces these challenges. Any firm with more than one office location has to deal with inter-office communication and collaboration—be that the 10-person consultancy with four locations in Australia, the 100-person software development firm with locations in Europe, the United States, and Asia, and anything else.

People routinely communicate with and work with people outside of their immediate office surroundings.

People routinely communicate with and work with people outside of their immediate office surroundings. From the colleague down the hall, the business partner in another part of the country, to the client on the other side of the world, customers, partners, and suppliers

meet in an intricate dance enabled by zone-spanning communication networks and technologies. In the past decade alone, the number of employees regularly working with team members in different locations grew from less than 50% to over 60%.³

Working together although apart can be a structured and ongoing strategy, or merely a short-term reaction to extraneous environmental episodes.

- Telework and telecommuting are accepted forms of work in many countries. People work from home, from a satellite office, a co-working space, or the local coffee shop. In the United States, about 3 million people consider home their primary work location, and millions more telecommute at least a day a week.⁴ The US government passed a law in 2010 requiring federal agencies to develop plans to support telecommuting by federal employees.
- After the February 2011 Christchurch earthquake shut the central business district, firms quickly had to find alternative space for staff. In addition to people working from home for the first time, firms set up in the owner's garage or purchased and converted old houses to deal with de-placed employees. Firms with spare space began offering temporary accommodation to displaced companies. People had to rapidly learn how to deal effectively with remote colleagues.
- With London preparing for the Olympics in 2012, its already overburdened public transportation services are expected to come in for a hammering. Olympic organizers are exploring possibilities with employers of reducing the need for normal Londoners to travel to work during the Olympics, with the work-from-home approach a key idea. This would free up space on the trains and roads so London doesn't grind to a standstill with the huge influx of Olympic visitors.⁵

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In an insidious twist, being a control-freak micro-manager is easier now than it used to be. Technologies that provide linkages between people can be subverted to watch their every move. By demanding a daily report by email of what a staff member has been up to—or every hour for the extreme control-freak—and then being severely critical of their decision choices can breed “yes-men” and “yes-women” who are afraid of their own voices and from whom every spark of initiative has been exorcised by relentless criticism.

Difference 4. More Emphasis on Brain than Brawn

The fourth major difference between work in 1850 and today is a much greater emphasis on brain than brawn. In New Zealand, the percentage of jobs for unskilled manual labor dropped from 75% in 1900 to less than 25% by 2000. In many countries around the world, the majority of workers are employed in service industries, and attributes of physical prowess do not appear on their job descriptions. Even farmers today have a much more cushy life than they used to, with fully air-conditioned tractors and add-on implements for a multiple of jobs around the

farm. Unless joining the Navy Seals or US Marines, the size of our biceps, the number of push-ups we can do, and whether we can lift 12 or 47 tons of pig iron a day is irrelevant. It's not on our job description, and we don't get paid for it. A visitor from 1850 would walk into the modern office, watch for a few minutes and turn to ask, *"What are these people actually doing all day?"*

Unless joining the Navy Seals or US Marines, the size of our biceps, the number of push-ups we can do, and whether we can lift 12 or 47 tons of pig iron a day is irrelevant.

What most of us are doing is brain stuff—using creativity, insight, knowledge, vision, imagination, conceptualization, and associated processes to create value. We bring our educational background and work experiences to bear on new problems and opportunities. We develop communication skills to express our ideas, and convey what we are thinking to other people. We learn to work with others, and to build strong working relationships. If we want to improve what we do, we take more formal education courses, or embrace an informal education approach and start reading widely and attending industry events and conferences.

Brain stuff has the potential for creating tremendous value. Apple is essentially a "brain" company which became the world's most valuable company for the first time in August 2011, surpassing Exxon Mobil Corp. But even then, Exxon Mobil and its oil counterparts are now more brain than brawn. Knowing where to drill for oil and how to handle tremendously complex situations in hostile environments requires a lot of brain. Someone has to be on hand to load the drill bit and run oil hoses, but the true value comes in knowing where to drill.

This is not to say that physical prowess is irrelevant, and that we should pay no attention to physical conditioning. A strong counter-argument could be made that physical prowess is even more important to brain work than brawn! Brain work requires a certain refined stamina—the strength to stay focused at work, and the ability to work long hours week-after-week.

What would be confusing for a visitor from 1850 would be even more so for the proverbial fly-on-the-wall. To our poor fly, based on the external evidence, everyone does the same thing. We push keys on a computer keyboard. We talk to people on the phone. We attend

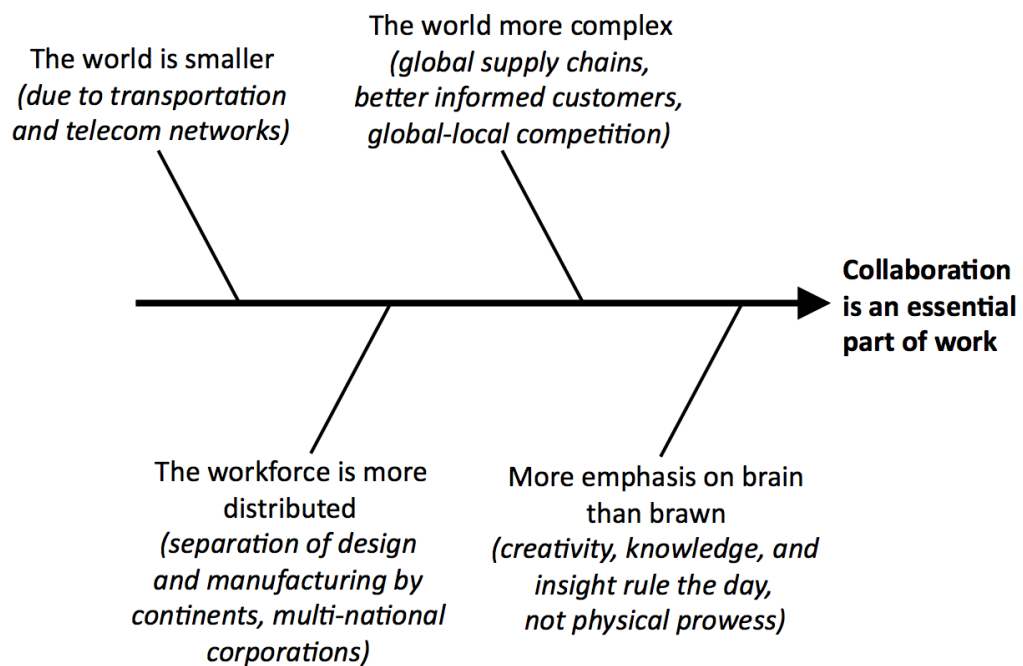
meetings. At least in 1850 the ancient ancestor of our fly could watch the blacksmith pounding metal, the baker kneading the bread, and the farmer ploughing the ground.

Summary—Collaboration is Important

The confluence of these four major differences compared to 1850 can give rise to a number of conclusions and implications, but the one to highlight in our discussion is this: effective cross-border work is now an essential part of our day-to-day working reality. We work with people across borders of departments, organizations, countries, time zones, and even continents. Unlike our ancestors, we do it all the time and treat it as a normal part of daily life.

Effective cross-border work is now an essential part of our day-to-day working reality.

Figure 1-2. Four Major Differences When Taking a Long View on Work



Working with people in different time zones, across geographical space, and in multi-organizational project teams and collaborative groups is a normal part of our day-to-day working reality. The realities of work have changed significantly since 1850.

So What's the Problem

If collaboration is important, what's the problem? Simply put, it's a technology-dominated focus. Said another way the problem is too much of a focus on the technology to support collaboration, and not enough of a focus on the business- and human-factors that comprise collaboration. That is, we're majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors.

Here are but three examples of the consequences of majoring on the minors.

- A firm was given IBM Connections as part of a wider product purchase. While the IT group was effective at rolling out other "IT systems" to the staff, and although there were pockets of strong advocacy for Connections, two-years after implementation the initiative was floundering. Few people were using it, and worse than that, there was clear antagonism from "the business" to the IT group. The biggest challenge was in explaining the added value of Connections in an environment with other tools that provided various overlapping alternatives. It was a strategy and vision problem to state it succinctly.
- Another firm implemented Jive Social Business Software for intranet, collaboration, and document management. Two years into using Jive, however, saw the system filled with Office document attachments, including an Excel spreadsheet for people's name and contact details (instead of using Jive documents and the People profile area), manually curated lists of current documents (instead of using tag-driven navigation for personalized filtering), and a steering group focused on operational concerns to the neglect of more important strategy and direction issues.
- The IT group at a large corporate organization in Europe did a companywide deployment of SharePoint, but invested no time or thought into how to work with its 30,000 end users. The mindset of "build it and they'll come" was firmly entrenched, but what they actually experienced was little or no usage. Thought the IT team: "We built it and they didn't come—curse those users."

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At a high-level, each of these examples points to a failure to see beyond the technology to the more important business and human issues. Three common themes arise in these examples.

First, decisions about “collaboration” are usually relegated to the IT department and treated as a mere purchasing decision.⁶ Apparently, collaboration is a product you

Decisions about “collaboration” are usually relegated to the IT department and treated as a mere purchasing decision.

can buy, and the best informed people to make the buying decision are those trained in the IT discipline. Unfortunately this emphasis is misplaced, for while IT departments can say “Let’s buy a blog or wiki,” few are able to explain why. Moreover, even fewer are able to demonstrate how a blog or wiki will be better at a systemic level within the organization, rather than merely a newer tool to confuse people with. Ditto with other new fangled concepts such as activity streams—IT departments can decide the what but rarely explain the why.

The second evidence for the poor ability of IT departments to make collaboration work is the rapid rise of Microsoft SharePoint. Please don’t misunderstand what I’m about to say. Too often “Microsoft SharePoint” is seen as the answer, but the question it is supposedly answering is unknown. In one of my SharePoint Roadmap public seminars in late 2009, a participant asked his fellow 25-participants this simple question: “How many of you made a deliberate or intentional decision to buy SharePoint, compared with just getting it ‘just because’?” Only one person indicated the decision was deliberate or intentional; the rest got it “just because.” I have no problem with IT departments that make a deliberate and intentional decision to buy SharePoint on the back of insightful analysis, careful thought, and pre-decision engagement with the business around key needs and areas of challenge. I have a huge problem, however, with IT departments who settle on SharePoint as the answer just because “everyone else is doing it” or “because we’re a Microsoft shop.” While both of those answers can form the backdrop to a decision and point decision makers in a certain direction (as we’ll explore in Chapter 2), being used as the only justification is flawed. Even worse are the IT departments that don’t even bother to conduct due diligence on alternative offerings.

The final evidence is the misalignment of what constitutes success with collaboration. For an IT department, success is correlated with technical factors—server uptime, service availability, and application performance. If those factors are trending positive, it’s all good—the organization is “collaborating.” However, collaboration by its very definition has nothing to do with technical factors! It’s all about the business and human factors, two areas that IT departments are not set up to deal with. While an IT department sees success if the server is turned on and connected to the network, business people see success if their work is carried out “better-faster-cheaper”.

In summary, when collaboration is all about “the technology,” we’re in trouble.

The Solution: A Collaboration Roadmap

The solution to a flawed emphasis on technology for collaboration is to deeply investigate the business and human factors essential to making collaboration work. That's the purpose of this book—giving readers a vocabulary and set of practical skills to adroitly handle the non-technology factors.

The core of *Collaboration Roadmap* sees a chapter assigned to each letter of a mnemonic of the word “roadmap”:

- Chapter 2. **Really Understand the Technology**—emphasizes the importance of knowing what opportunities specific technology offers. The chapter also discusses decision criteria and whether migration to new tools is really required.
- Chapter 3. **Outline the Vision**—focuses on five core value propositions of new collaboration technology, and how to set a vision for improvement at your firm.
- Chapter 4. **Accept Technology is a Small Factor in Success**—discusses the small role that technology plays in overall success, and investigates what else is required to achieve success with collaborative approaches and technology.
- Chapter 5. **Determine Your Governance Approach**—explores the role of governance in the effective use of collaboration technology at work. It also looks at the key governance themes that require investigation and decision.
- Chapter 6. **Make Every Effort to Engage the Business**—advocates the importance of working alongside business people, departments, and divisions to understand where and how they can make use of new technology to improve their work.
- Chapter 7. **Apply Intentional Effort to Adoption**—argues for the necessity of doing more than merely making new technology available, and promotes the criticality of developing and implementing an adoption strategy.
- Chapter 8. **Pursue Increasing Value**—outlines a strategy for continuing the collaboration journey, and how to discover additional value opportunities.

Collaboration Roadmap is drawn together in Chapter 9, which rounds out the book with signposts to additional resources to help you in your journey—including the Collaboration Roadmap Newsletter, and the In-House Workshop.

The book has three appendices. The first presents the underlying theory of collaboration at work—the pre-conditions required for it to flourish, the types of work that are collaborative, and the downsides of collaboration, among others. Understanding this material is critical to “getting” what this book is about. The second appendix offers a

detailed Table of Contents, to complement those on pages 8 and 9. The third and final appendix presents a Table of Figures.

Why the Roadmap Starts with Technology

The “roadmap” on page 28 starts with a chapter on technology. It’s not ideal given what I’ve just written but I’m doing this because it’s the predominant approach today. Here’s the reasoning for starting with technology.

First, new technology is often the most visible change the group, team, or organization experiences. If you look at any intact group or team today, they have an existing way of working together—making decisions, allocating tasks, coordinating effort, and achieving outcomes. Into this established social setting new technology is introduced, and it causes a re-evaluation of these existing patterns. Ideally there should be a bigger picture vision driving the effort (see Chapter 3, *Outline the Vision*), but that’s something which people hear and feel, while the technology changes what they do and see.

Second, the technology for collaboration is non-directive—or to state it more bluntly, “bland.” Collaboration technology can be used in a wide variety of different ways, for different purposes, and toward different ends. Therefore, the way the technology is used is paramount.⁷

Collaboration technology can be used in a wide variety of different ways, for different purposes, and toward different ends. Therefore, the way the technology is used is paramount.

Third, using collaboration technology has a degree of voluntariness that other enterprise technologies do not. When working with others on common projects, there are many options that support the communication, coordination, and interaction aspects. The traditional options are still in place—email, phone, and fax machine. But there is also a new raft of options—the externally hosted Basecamp site, the free wiki, or the file sharing service that one person has set up. With the selection of collaboration technology at work, however, the value comes when it is targeted at the right opportunities and then used. If people embrace it for lesser goals or don’t make use of it at all, the projected benefits are not attained.

Finally, technology is what IT people naturally gravitate towards, and by laying a strong foundation for how to understand and use collaboration technology, the wider discussion is set in a context of shared knowledge. Vision, governance, engagement, and even adoption—traditional airy-fairy topics—make sense in the context of the technology.

In closing, in future books I intend to redress the balance, but for now, I’m going with the flow. This book starts with the technology because that’s where the audience for this book is starting from.

Collaboration Roadmap Versus Vendor Roadmap

Vendors in the technology industry talk about their “roadmap”—a forward-looking statement about planned enhancements for a given product or product family. Vendors proclaim their upcoming “roadmap,” industry analysts critique “roadmaps,” and customer organizations make future purchasing and deployment plans based on a “roadmap.”

In this book I use the term “roadmap” in a different sense. I am not addressing the future technical capabilities that vendors will include in collaboration technology products or services. Rather, I will be examining a small number of critical issues you will have to address as you use collaboration technology in your business. This book is your guide to what’s coming up in your journey with collaboration technology. The critical issues I address will continue to be the essential part of your work with collaboration technology, regardless of what happens with the technical roadmap of your chosen product or platform over the next few years.

Let’s think about it from another point-of-view. Technically oriented roadmaps from vendors can confirm technical choices and proposed courses of action by customers, but they cannot drive business success. No technical roadmap from a vendor can become a magic wand. That’s the stuff that fairy tales are made of, not what happens in the real world.

Technically oriented roadmaps from vendors can confirm technical choices and proposed courses of action by customers, but they cannot drive business success.

By advocating that critical issues in this book are more important than the technical roadmap futures from your vendor, I am not arguing that a technical roadmap is unimportant. As you’ll see from Chapter 2 (*Really Understand the Technology*), what the technology can and cannot do is important. However, two statements need to be made and they have to sit side-by-side:

1. Even if the collaboration technology is perfect, that by itself will not drive success;
2. Having more perfect collaboration technology makes applying some of the processes in this book easier, but it doesn’t eliminate the need for them.

Come what may from your vendor and its technical roadmap, you will still need this book. The mindset, ethos, and skills addressed in this book will enable you to make collaboration technology succeed in your organization almost (but not quite!) irrespective of what your vendor does with the technology in the future. The journey is always about how you link technical capability to areas of the business that need improvement and enhancement—and that’s what this book is about.

Intended Audience

The audience for this book is diverse. Just like different people use a road map for reaching different destinations, so it is with this book.

My hope is that:

- Senior business leaders will read *Collaboration Roadmap* and embrace it as a way of improving business collaboration. They have to set the stage by saying “this is the way forward.”
- Business managers will read *Collaboration Roadmap* and work towards making the ideas and concepts in this book come to life in their teams, groups and departments. They have to reach out to the IT department for help and understanding about the possibilities when using collaboration technology.
- IT professionals will read *Collaboration Roadmap* and adopt the recommended approaches in their interactions with the business groups. They need to focus less on the finer details of the technology, and more on business engagement and user adoption.

The mindset, ethos, and skills addressed in this book will enable you to make collaboration technology succeed in your organization almost (but not quite!) irrespective of what your vendor does with the technology in the future.

In terms of specific job titles, I see this book being of tremendous value to:

- *Collaboration Strategists*. Your mandate is to explore opportunities for applying new collaboration philosophies and technologies to improve the way work is done. This book will assist you in bringing the wider organization along on the journey you have in mind.
- *IT Strategists*. You take a longer-term view of the technology available to support the effective delivery of information to business users and decision makers. Part of your responsibility involves watching the horizon for new and emerging technologies that could add significant benefit to business operations. This book provides essential guidance on how to achieve the proffered benefits of collaboration technology at work.
- *Intranet Managers and Advisors*. You have responsibility for making the intranet work at your organization, and have dealt with publishing content, business forms, and news. Increasingly though, you are being expected to provide collaborative capabilities to your staff, and you are trying to figure out how it all works together. This book will provide you with a set of frameworks and practical skills for creating and implementing an effective collaborative intranet strategy.

- *Business Analysts.* You work between the IT function and the people in the business, trying to understand and communicate needs and requirements in two languages. This book will help you in looking deeper at the challenges of introducing new collaboration technologies to existing work groups and teams.
- *Business Managers and Users.* You are on the receiving end of what the IT folks make available at a technology level, but you want a greater say in how the technology is chosen and approached for business benefit. This book shares practices and principles you can leverage when approaching the IT folk.
- *Project Managers.* It is your responsibility to ensure the new collaboration technology is implemented. This book is a resource for you to use in guiding your team in the effective delivery of the project—not just the technical details, though, but the critical business and human issues.

Ultimately someone—regardless of having a specific job title or not—has to take the lead in each firm on making collaboration come to life. At your firm it could be a business person with savvy IT

understanding, or it could be an IT professional with clear business insight. Or it could be someone in the intranet or knowledge management team, or an outside expert consultant. Regardless of who it is, it has to be done.

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job title or not—has to take the
lead in each firm on making
collaboration come to life.

Summary

There are significant differences in today's work style and approach in comparison to 1850. These include a smaller, more complex world where there is a global distribution of the workforce and where brain power plays a far greater role than physical prowess.

Against this backdrop we then looked at the major problem: an overwhelming focus on the technology. This is shown by IT departments who treat collaboration as "a technology to buy," instead of a human behavior to enable and support. It's also shown by the tremendous growth in Microsoft SharePoint, frequently among organizations that have not done due diligence on why SharePoint is the answer, nor looked at alternative technologies. While having access to appropriate technology is important, it's a small part of success.

This book presents an antidote to this approach as it seeks to address the lack of clear guidance on the business and human factors essential to success with collaboration.

¹ While this isn't the Air New Zealand figure, for US citizens in 2001, the chance of death from an air travel accident was rated at 1 in 20,000. See www.livescience.com/3780-odds-dying.html. However, when there is a death onboard a plane in New Zealand or one heading to New Zealand, it makes the national news headlines, suggesting a much lower rate of airborne mortality compared to the 2001 US figure. Regardless, death in transit today truly is an "exceptional" occurrence.

² It's not quite a desert island scenario, but in mid-2011 New Zealander Matthew Scheurich was shot with arrows in Papua New Guinea, for standing between his girlfriend and the native tribesman who took a fancy to her. His girlfriend activated an emergency locator beacon, and they were airlifted to a nearby hospital for initial surgery, and then transferred to a hospital in Australia. Without the beacon and an airstrip at the nearby village, Matthew would have bled to death. For more, see www.stuff.co.nz/world/south-pacific/5209883/Kiwi-survives-Papua-New-Guinea-jungle-attack.

³ See Majchrzak, A., et al., "*Can Absence Make a Team Grow Stronger*," Harvard Business Review, May 2004, at hbr.org/product/can-absence-make-a-team-grow-stronger/an/R0405J-PDF-ENG. The authors peg the number of employees regularly working with team members in other locations at 48%. See also the following white paper from Cisco, where an Economist Intelligence Unit report estimates the number at 62%. www.cisco.com/web/about/ac79/docs/pov/Economics_Collaboration_POV_FINAL_041009.pdf.

⁴ See the research statistics from the Telework Research Network. The latest figures are from 2009. www.teleworkresearchnetwork.com/telecommuting-statistics.

⁵ See "*Canary Wharf leads the flexi revolution*," by Simon English for the London Evening Standard. www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23978915-canary-wharf-leads-the-flexi-revolution.do

⁶ For example, in the research study by VansonBourne for Fujitsu in early 2011, the respondents from the UK and Ireland reported that IT departments lead the use of collaborative technologies in 75% of organizations. You can access the press release about the study from Realwire, at www.realwire.com/releases/Organisations-struggle-to-maximise-the-benefits-of-collaboration. You'll need to request more information to get the 75% figure; use the contact details at the bottom of the press release.

⁷ Think about a wiki: no one ever woke up in the morning, and with a sudden flash of insight said "I want a wiki." No, they wanted a better way of working on documents with other people—and a wiki can help them accomplish that. Or they wanted a better way of planning an upcoming travel schedule—and a wiki can support that. Or they wanted a greater human face to the company intranet—which the wiki can also do. A wiki enables all these goals, even though wiki technology is basically composed of a page metaphor, an open access privileges philosophy, and a way of naming and grouping different pages. As I said, it's non-directive, and therefore the purpose for which it's used is critical.

Chapter 2.

Really Understand the Technology

“Many of the early collaboration tools focused on facilitating communications among colleagues with whom you already have strong connections. Newer tools are making it easier to collaborate with those in the next concentric ring where the connections are weaker, and those in the ring beyond that where you have no connection but there is business potential.”¹

Andrew McAfee

A wide diversity of collaboration technology is readily available today, with hundreds of different products claiming to offer “collaboration” capabilities. Making sense of the multitude of offerings requires gaining a higher-level view—a way of seeing both commonality and difference. This chapter presents four frameworks for achieving this higher-level view, to help guide your evaluation of individual products. It also examines non-technology decision factors that require appropriate due diligence when choosing a product, and concludes with a discussion on mitigating current technology rather than migrating to something new.

In this chapter, you will:

- Look at three frameworks for classifying the capabilities of different collaboration technologies—at the team, group, and organizational level.
- Investigate a number of day-to-day working scenarios that can be enabled through collaboration technology.
- Discover non-product decision factors that must be kept in mind when evaluating collaboration products and services to acquire.
- Consider when new technology is needed, as opposed to doing a better job with the technology you already have.

How to Read this Chapter

This chapter is almost 70 pages long. It covers a lot of detail. While you can read it straight through—and as the author of course I think you should—here's how to read it to get what you need without getting lost in the different frameworks.

Figure 2-1. How to Read Chapter 2—Goal Alignment

Your Current State	Your Goal	What You Should Read
Your organization does not have any collaboration technology available today.	To evaluate what you need from collaboration technology.	Pages 39-79 (frameworks for collaborative teams, groups, and organizations) Pages 91-97 (how to make a decision about collaboration technology)
Your organization has collaboration technology available today, and there is no possibility of changing it	To understand what's possible with the technology you already have available.	Pages 39-79 (frameworks for collaborative teams, groups, and organizations) Pages 80-90 (using collaboration scenarios to evaluate technology)
Your organization has collaboration technology available today, and there is a possibility of changing it.	To understand what's possible in collaboration technology, as well as potential benefits of changing to new collaboration technology.	Pages 98-99 (when to mitigate what you have versus migrating to something new) Pages 39-90 (frameworks for collaborative teams, groups, and organizations, plus collaboration scenarios) Pages 91-97 (how to make a decision about collaboration technology)

Depending on where you are starting from with collaboration technology at work, take an appropriate route through this chapter to get what you need out of it. Use the different starting points above to guide your reading.

The size and diversity of your organization also has a role to play in what you should read in this chapter (see Figure 2-2). A couple of the frameworks have much greater relevancy to larger organizations—such as the frameworks for collaborative groups and organizations. Thus depending on your organization's size:

- If your organization is very small and operates from a single location, concentrate on the Seven Pillars framework (pages 39-54). Supporting collaborative teams to get their work done effectively will form the majority of your work.
- If your organization is small—less than 500 people—but works out of a couple of locations, it's likely you will need to support both collaborative teams and collaborative groups. Read the Seven Pillars (pages 39-54) and the Four Connectors (pages 55-64). Collaboration Scenarios (pages 80-90) may also be of relevance if there are particular collaborative processes that recur frequently.
- For organizations of more than 500 people, and those with multiple sites within a country or around the world, skim the whole chapter. Larger organizations have generally been well-supplied with collaboration technology to support teams and groups, and so while the first two frameworks (pages 39-64) may be of interest, the real improvement opportunity is more likely to lie with the discussion around the collaborative organization (pages 65-79). On-the-other-hand, since the changing winds of internal politics can threaten to derail current collaboration technology because it is not from the new CIO's vendor of choice, the decision strategy discussions (pages 91-99) may help those caught in the cross-fire to make a case for retaining what is already in place.

Figure 2-2. How to Read Chapter 2—Organizational Size

Size and Scope of Organization	Seven Pillars (p.39-54)	Four Connectors (p.55-64)	Four Foundations (p.65-79)	Collaboration Scenarios (p.80-90)	Decision Strategy (p.91-99)
Very small, single location	✓				
Small, 2-3 locations	✓	✓		✓	
Medium and large, multiple locations			✓		✓

Readers from small organizations should pay more attention to the frameworks to support collaborative teams (Seven Pillars) and groups (Four Connectors). Readers from larger and more diverse organizations should concentrate more on organizational collaboration (Four Foundations) and perhaps the discussion on decision strategy.

Frameworks for Evaluating Collaboration Technology

This chapter lays out four frameworks for evaluating collaboration technology. These are:

1. The Seven Pillars, a framework for collaborative teams.
2. The Four Connectors, a framework for collaborative groups.
3. The Four Foundations, a framework for organizational collaboration.
4. Collaboration Scenarios, a way of looking at common collaborative processes.

Why Are These Frameworks Necessary?

These frameworks are necessary for several reasons, but the first is most important: frameworks reduce the likelihood of being blindsided by extravagant vendor claims. For example, when SharePoint 2007 was released, the description sounded wonderful. It was collaboration “this,” and collaboration “that.” And when you took Microsoft at its word, SharePoint looked great. But after looking at the capabilities of SharePoint 2007 using the Seven Pillars model, a starkly different picture arose: SharePoint 2007 failed six of the seven pillars (it only passed Pillar 1 on its own merits). Other products were required to mitigate areas of weakness, and some problems were intractable.²

Taking a framework approach reduces the likelihood of being blindsided by extravagant vendor claims.

The second reason is that frameworks promote easier comparability across products. Vendors of collaboration technology use their own naming schemes, buzzwords, and architectural paradigms to describe what they offer. While owning the naming is good for vendor positioning, it leads to problems for end user organizations who are struggling to both make sense of multiple products, and to decide between product options. Using these frameworks gives organizations a method of translating vendor naming to a common base.

Third, the frameworks force the consideration of “what collaboration means for our organization” by emphasizing capability areas, not features and functions. Collaboration can conjure up different meanings for different people, and a divergence of imagery can lead to charging off in conflicting directions. Having a set of frameworks to guide the conversation allows people to come to a common place, or at least to have a common vocabulary when they are disagreeing with each other!

Finally, the frameworks strip away how vendors propose governance should work, and focuses plainly on what the product actually does. For example, when a wiki vendor says they have a feature that “allows anyone to edit any page,” they are confusing technical features (the access model) and how these can be used (governance). I think that’s wrong.

Framework 1. Collaborative Teams—the Seven Pillars

By 2005, I had worked as a collaboration consultant, analyst, and researcher for 10 years, and I was confused! There were so many products available describing themselves as offering “collaboration” this or that, and I was struggling to make sense of it all. So I went back to first principles. The result was the Seven Pillars framework, a way of describing what teams need from collaboration technology in a vendor-neutral way.³ The term “pillar” conveys the idea that these areas support the high goal of productive teamwork.

Collaborative teams take many forms, such as:

The Seven Pillars framework describes what teams need from collaboration technology in a vendor-neutral way.

- Product development teams, that work together to develop a new product—whether it’s a new car, a new computer, or a new travel bag.
- Project teams, that work together to execute a project for the firm—such as creating a new business website, choosing which markets to expand into, and preparing a new marketing campaign.
- Initiative response teams, who jointly create and implement a response to a particular internal or external initiative. For example, when a key competitor signals its intent to enter a new market, how does the firm respond?
- Consulting teams, who provide expertise when working with a client—such as strategic business guidance, or an assessment of investment opportunities.
- Engineering exception resolution teams, who jointly explore root causes of an engineering process fault and work to eliminate those root causes.

All of these collaborative teams exhibit the four elements of collaboration, as described in *Appendix 1*, such as engaging in many forms of communication, and having a clear end signal in mind. For example, the end signal would be that the product has been developed, the project has been completed, or the response has been delivered. The work is done; the collaborative team can disband.

Let’s look at each of the seven pillars in turn, and the particular technology requirements for each. Note that all seven pillars have been stated with three essential and two optional requirements.⁴ The two optional requirements for each pillar represent advanced capabilities, and while they are optional, it bodes well for a particular product if the vendor has addressed these. It demonstrates a maturity of understanding about the capabilities that are meaningful to real users, instead of just delivering the easy wins.

Pillar 1. Shared Access to Team Data

Teams work together to achieve a shared outcome, something which is hopefully meaningful to all the people on the team, or if not meaningful to some, at least something to which they can contribute—sometimes you just have to get the job done! A shared outcome implies a degree of shared journeying to get from here to there. Part of that journey is the ability to work from, to see, and to share information from which a final decision can be made.

People on the team need to have shared access to the data points, the documents, and the decision models that others are working with as they move toward the final outcome. It is difficult to make progress if you can not see what other people are seeing. It is more difficult to come to a point of agreement if you are unable to work with the same base data that others are working with. This is the focus of Pillar 1, and its five major requirements are:

It is difficult to make progress if you can not see what other people are seeing.

1. *Creation of Shared Space for a Team Project.* The system must provide an ability to create a separate shared space for a particular team project, for storing all relevant artifacts. All files and documents for the project should be accessible in a unified place, rather than being segregated in multiple places, or integrated with files and documents related to other projects. This is an essential requirement.
2. *Access Rights for Each Shared Space.* The system must provide a way of defining access rights for the shared space, that is a method of defining which people are (or are not) allowed to gain access to the shared space. A team usually has a defined membership at a particular point in time, and while the space must be accessible by them, it must also be possible to exclude access by other people. Access rights is ultimately a binary setting for an individual: you either have access or not. This is an essential requirement.
3. *Store Multiple Types of Files, Documents, and Data.* The shared space must be able to store multiple types of files and documents in a unified way, to eliminate content sprawl across numerous individual systems. Files and documents are a must, but so are the surrounding types of data that have a particular structure and format—discussions, contact address cards, calendar entries, and so on. This is an essential requirement.
4. *Different Access Levels Within the Shared Space.* Some teams require a more nuanced access model than the binary “yes or no.” These teams require the capability to allow particular people to do more in the system—such as adding new design components, and editing particular documents. They also require the capability to prevent particular people from carrying out certain actions—such as

preventing people from fiddling with the design of the shared space, or editing some of the documents. This is an optional requirement.

5. *In-place Editing of Attached Files and Documents.* The final major requirement is in-place editing of any files and documents that have been attached into the shared space. This means a user can edit a document and save their changes immediately into the shared space, without having to extract or download the document, make the changes locally on their desktop or tablet, and then upload the differences. This is an optional requirement.

Microsoft SharePoint is frequently used to support team collaboration. Many different research studies state that supporting collaboration is the number one reason organizations purchase and install SharePoint. A team site in both SharePoint 2007 and 2010 passes all five requirements for Pillar 1.

Figure 2-3. SharePoint 2010 Team Site

The screenshot shows the SharePoint 2010 Team Site interface for 'Project Alpha'. The top navigation bar includes 'Team Site - Alpha', 'Home', and a search bar. The left sidebar contains links to 'Sites', 'Libraries', 'Lists', 'Discussions', and 'Recycle Bin'. The main content area is titled 'Project Alpha' and includes a welcome message, 'Shared Documents' table, 'Key People' table, and 'Tasks' list.

Shared Documents

Type	Name	Modified	Modified By
Document	Alpha Focal Point	10/10/2011 9:34 AM	Leroy Graham
Document	Alpha Strategic Plan	10/10/2011 9:35 AM	Leroy Graham

Key People

Last Name	First Name	Company	Business Phone	Home Phone	E-mail Address
Gottlieb	James	Final Step Advocacy			
Hans	Martin	Extranet Target			
White	Seth	White Planes Software			

Tasks

Type	Title	Assigned To
Document	Review Focal Point and Provide Input	Mark Jones
Document	Confirm Alignment with Divisional Plan	Adelaide Craft
Document	Find Legal Counsel for Brainstorming Session	Charles Wright
Document	Post Notes from Recent Conference	Leroy Graham

A team site in Microsoft SharePoint 2010 provides a shared space for teams to work on projects, and can store many different types of files, documents, and artifacts. An area for shared documents, key people, and tasks are shown above. Separate team sites can be created for different projects, along with detailed access rights matrices.

Strong support for the five Pillar 1 requirements is shown in products from numerous vendors aimed at supporting collaborative teams. Products or services that show critical weaknesses in Pillar 1 are fundamentally flawed and should be avoided.

Pillar 2. Location Independence

We live in a highly mobile world, and teams that meet solely in person are a relic of history. Our individual work has its own particular mobility profile—we have meetings to attend in the office building, calls to make on customers, conferences to attend (or present at), and coffee shops to visit with colleagues. With everyone having their own mobility profile, it's a surprise that we can make our paths cross in real life at all!

A lifestyle of mobility means we need to be able to access the working artifacts of the teams we are on from anywhere. We also need access to fellow team members for interactive or non-interactive

communications. We can't rely on being in a specific physical place to get to our work items, and neither can we rely on face-to-face interactions as the sole channel for communication.

We can't rely on being in a specific physical place to get to our work items, and neither can we rely on face-to-face interactions as the sole channel for communication.

We need the ability to work from any place.

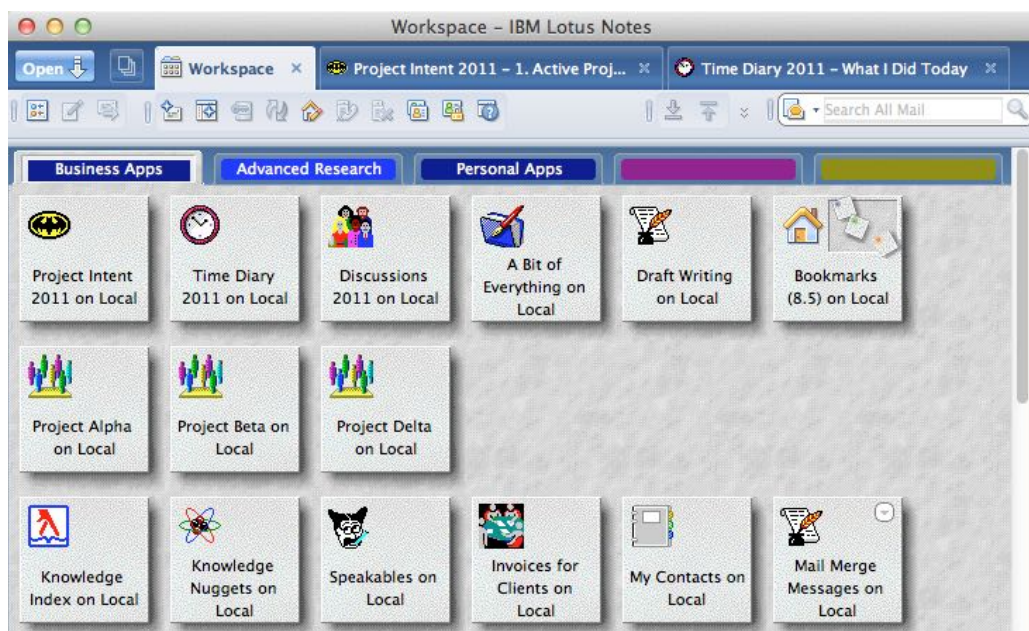
The rule of thumb is that wherever team members go physically to do their work, they will need access to the data of the team from there. They may be out-of-sight, but they cannot become out-of-mind. Clearly this can become complicated due to individual technology choices.

The five requirements for Pillar 2 explore different aspects of location independence:

1. *Access from Your Standard Computer.* The first and most basic requirement is the ability to access the team's shared space from an individual's computer. Historically this meant installing client software on the individual's computer, and while that's still a predominant approach, the increasing richness of web-based applications has provided a software-less model. This is an essential requirement.
2. *Web Browser Access from Another Computer.* Desktop computers are locked to an individual's desk, and even laptops aren't carried at all times. The second requirement therefore is access from a web browser on another computer to the team's shared space. In principle, the individual should be able to enter the web address for the shared space, type their user name and password, and be able to see what's going on. This is an essential requirement.⁵
3. *Mobile Device Access.* The past few years has seen the proliferation of smartphones and slate tablets—such the iPhone, Android-based devices, and the iPad. Ordinary people carry these devices now and rely on them to complete work tasks; it's not just the highly-paid executive nor the IT-savvy professional touting the latest gadget. Thus the ability to access the team's shared space via a mobile browser or app is an essential requirement.

4. *Offline Access, Read-Only.* The three essential requirements focus on providing access when a network connection is present. Requirement four assumes this is not the case, and provides a mechanism for gaining read-only access to the team's shared space in an offline mode. This means that team members are able to browse the shared space, review recent discussion topics, and read a document from the shared space but not make changes. This is an optional requirement.
5. *Offline Editing with Synchronization and Conflict Flagging.* Read-only access can be a severe limitation for team members, preventing them from making a contribution while out-and-about. The final requirement—albeit optional—provides a mechanism for team members to edit, change, re-organize, contribute, comment on, classify, author, and create discussions, documents, tasks, meetings, and other artifact types when offline, with these changes automatically flowing back to the shared space when the individual next has a network connection.

Figure 2-4. IBM Lotus Notes TeamRoom with Offline Access



The offline capabilities in IBM Lotus Notes demonstrate the gold standard for location independence: what the user gets on their desktop when they are connected to the corporate network is what they get when they're on the airplane and disconnected. Full offline capabilities with support for both reading and editing are provided, with out-of-the-box support for synchronization and conflict flagging. Few other products support location independence with such principled simplicity.

Pillar 3. Real-Time Joint Authoring and Editing

Access to the collected resources, thinking and working documents of the team from anywhere is an important first step (Pillars 1 and 2), but there are many times when working in true back-and-forth, interactive style is essential to meeting deadlines, stimulating creativity, and pushing ahead with an outcome that cannot be adequately met by one person working alone.

Teams need the ability to share documents, reports, spreadsheets and presentations in real time—meaning that everyone can see the same item on their computer screen at the same time, and that when one person makes a change to the item on their screen, that change is immediately promulgated to the screens of everyone else. One person makes a change, and everyone sees the

change immediately. One person highlights some text or shifts to a certain slide, and everyone has their screen go there automatically. This ends the need to constantly email changes back-and-forth, and also ends the dreaded line of, “*We are now looking at page 3, paragraph 4 that starts ...*” We merely point with our mouse and everyone else sees where and what we are looking at.

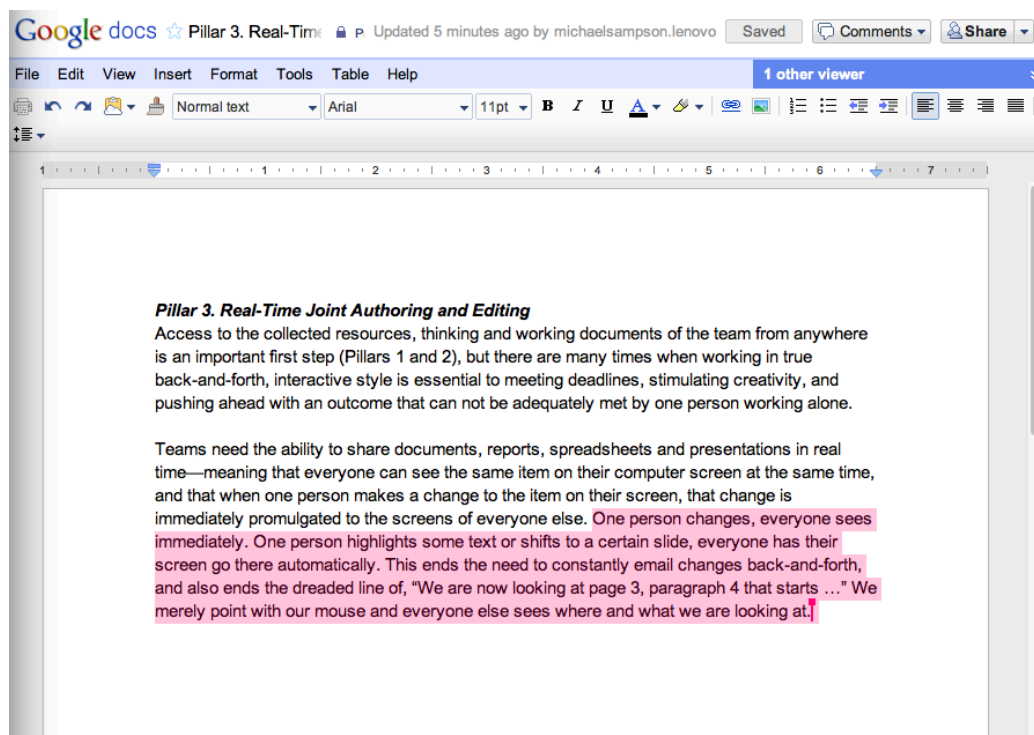
One person makes a change;
everyone sees immediately.
One person highlights some
text or shifts to a certain slide;
everyone has their screen go
there automatically.

The five requirements for Pillar 3 enable this style of interaction:

1. *Real-Time Joint Viewing.* Team members have the ability to view the same screen or artifact at the same time, not because each person has individually opened the same screen or artifact, but because one person has done this and that automatically updates what everyone else sees. For example, Sally and Bryce are viewing Tom’s screen. When Tom clicks to open a new document, Sally and Bryce automatically and immediately see the new document too. This is an essential requirement.
2. *Invite Others to a Real-Time Session.* A team member who wants to share their screen with another team member needs a way of inviting them to do so. This could be enabled by sending the team member an email invitation, by highlighting and clicking their name in a member’s list, or by using instant messaging to quickly share the link. This is an essential requirement.
3. *Gift Control to Another Person.* The person who began the real-time session and is currently in control of the screen or document under joint analysis needs the ability to pass control to one of the other participants. For example, Tom can give control of the document to Sally, so she can type in the document and control the screen. This is an essential requirement.

4. *Changes Tracked to the Actual Author.* When the team is working on a document together—or a spreadsheet, presentation, or discussion response—any changes should be tracked to the actual author, not to the person who started the shared session. This allows traceability after the shared session has finished to the person who made a particular comment, so that if a team member who was not involved in the session has a follow-on question, they know who to talk to. This is an optional requirement.
5. *Real-Time Joint Editing.* There are some situations where round-robin authoring is insufficient. In such situations, multiple people need to be able to access the same document or spreadsheet at the same time, and each have the ability to make changes that other people can see (if they're looking at the same place) without having to email changes back-and-forth. This is an optional requirement.

Figure 2-5. Google Docs with Real-Time Joint Editing



Google Docs allows multiple people to work on a document, spreadsheet, or drawing at the same time. The highlighted text above shows what the other person is highlighting in the document. If the other person started typing, that would display immediately. Google Docs also features in-document comments (not shown above), which allows instant messaging-style conversations directly inside the document being worked on. In-document comments eliminates the need for separate discussions by email about the document.

Pillar 4. Team-Aware Calendaring

Meetings are the lifeblood (and sometimes the death knell) of teams and organizations—a time for everyone to step aside from the minute-by-minute tasks of the day and re-connect with everyone else who is working on the same project. Everyone is able to get the latest details about what is happening on the project, any outstanding concerns can be aired and examined, and a new “same page” is created as a reference point in the life of the project. Knowing about these upcoming meetings is important to everyone on the team.

Achieving a single consolidated view of a given person’s upcoming meeting schedule, accounting for all of their current commitments, is a complex undertaking.

It is more complex than it sounds, due to two factors. The first factor of complexity is that many people are simultaneously working on multiple projects. The second factor of complexity is that many project teams are staffed by people from multiple organizations. Being able to get a single consolidated view of a given person’s upcoming meeting schedule, taking into account all of their current commitments, is a complex undertaking. But if people cannot see at a glance where they are supposed to be at a given point in the future, quickly and easily with full comfort that they have taken all advance commitments into consideration, then collaboration software is a waste of time.

The five requirements for Pillar 4 are:

1. *Create a Team-Specific Calendar.* The ability to create a calendar of upcoming meetings and events exclusively for a particular team project is an essential requirement. The team-specific calendar allows team members to schedule meetings, note deadlines, and otherwise put day- and time-specific commitments in a shared space. When looking at the team-specific calendar, it should not display calendared meetings and events from other calendars. This is an essential requirement.
2. *Consolidate Calendars at the System-Level.* Due to being involved in more than one project at the same time, people have commitments from multiple places. There should be a system-level capability to consolidate all of the calendared meetings and events for a given individual, looking across all of the team projects they are involved in. If there’s a meeting for Project Alpha at 9am, one for Project Beta at 10am, and a third for Project Delta at 11am, these should show in a consolidated list, even though the actual meetings have been set up in three different team calendars. This is an essential requirement.
3. *Integrate Team Calendars with the Individual’s Personal Calendar.* Many people maintain an electronic calendar—there is one by default in Microsoft Outlook, IBM Lotus Notes, Google Apps, and other systems. It is essential that team

calendars can be integrated with an individual's personal calendar. This allows the individual to see what they are supposed to be doing on any particular day, without having to manually reconcile multiple calendars.

4. *Factor Team Meetings into Free-Busy Search.* Free-busy search enables the system to find the next time that everyone is available to meet. It works on the assumption that if you don't have a meeting or scheduled event in your calendar, then you are available. Meetings scheduled in team collaboration spaces should be taken into consideration during a free-busy search; they should not be ignored. This is an optional requirement.
5. *Mobile Device Calendaring through Calendar Client Integration.* Mobile executives and staff often rely on their mobile device—particularly a smartphone—to remind them of upcoming meetings. Meetings and events scheduled in a team calendar should integrate with the calendar client on the individual's mobile device—an iPhone, Windows Phone, or BlackBerry—to support seamless access to meeting information. This is an optional requirement.

There are few team collaboration products that fully meet the calendaring requirements of Pillar 4. Even SharePoint, the market leader for team collaboration at the moment, has severe limitations in the team calendaring area.

Figure 2-6. SharePoint 2010 Calendaring in Outlook 2010

	7	8	9	10	11
7 - 13 Nov	Review with Mark		10:00a.m. Alpha Team Meeti		
14 - 20 Nov	14 Review with Adelaide	15	16 10:00a.m. Alpha Team Meeti	17 8:00a.m. Project Beta Team 1:00p.m. Divisional Budget	18 4:00p.m. Review and Forwa
21 - 27 Nov	21 Review with Leroy 5:00p.m. Deadline: Proposi	22 10:30a.m. Strategy Review	23 10:00a.m. Alpha Team Meeti	24 8:00a.m. Project Beta Team	25

While SharePoint 2010 offers the ability to set up a specific calendar for a team project and provides some basic capabilities for system-level consolidation, it struggles with the other three requirements. Integration with the Outlook 2010 calendar involves many steps and clicks, free-busy search ignores SharePoint-scheduled meetings, and even Windows Phone devices from Microsoft do not integrate SharePoint meetings into its native calendar.

Pillar 5. Social Engagement

A reality of modern business life is that we frequently work a long distance away from our co-workers. Some people never meet their co-workers in person. They work for a different organization, or a different division. They or we are traveling. They are in a different country, but have expertise that we need on a project, so we draw them in from half way around the world. The communication technologies we use to do this are amazing.

There is, however, a cost to this way of doing business, a cost that strikes at the heart of our humanity. When we are geographically separated from the people we work with, we lose our ability to know what is going on with them. We can't see the look of delight in their face, or perhaps the look of pain and distress. We can't see the paint under their fingernails, borne from a weekend of home maintenance, and thus be able to make an appropriate comment. In short, our ability to relate to others is significantly curtailed once we don't see them.

There is a cost to working remotely from co-workers as the way of doing business—a cost that strikes at the heart of our humanity.

The very technologies that brought about this curtailment can be used, to a degree, to restore the balance. They can provide us with a way of telling others what is going on with us, and a way for others to share what is going on with them. This isn't focused on getting one-up on others; it is about being interested in other people so as to promote effective team work. This is the focus of Pillar 5.

The five requirements for Pillar 5 are:

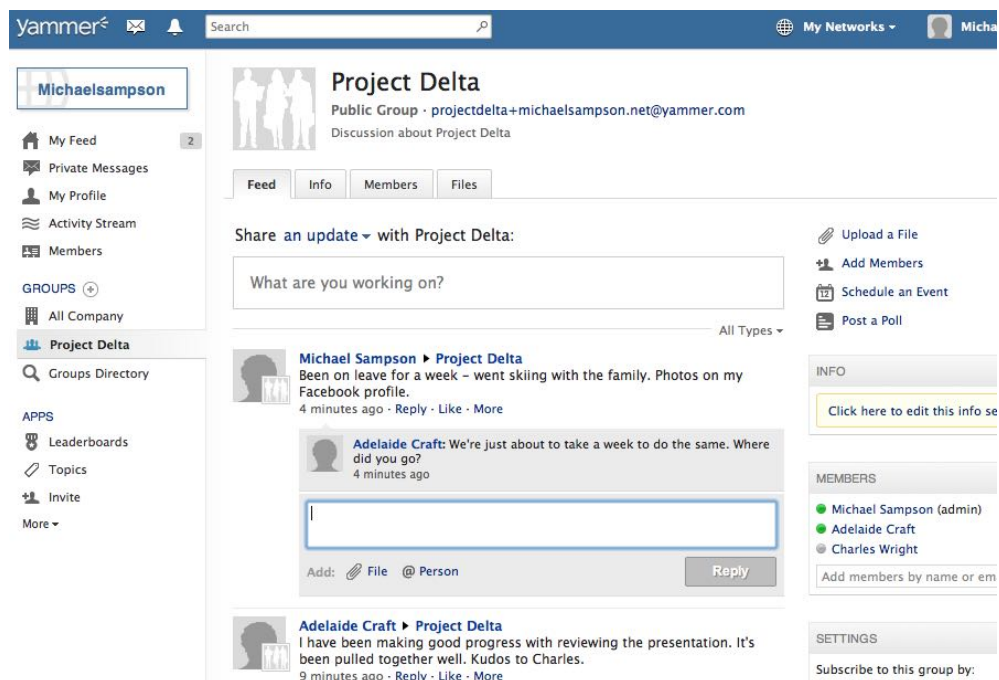
1. *Social Signaling about Activity.* Individuals have the ability to tell their team colleagues what is going on for them, without having to do it verbally on the regular team conference call, or in any form that demands immediate attention. They can publish a written update—weekly, daily, or more regularly if desired—about their current and upcoming events. This is an essential requirement.
2. *The Ability to Opt-in (and Out) for Receiving Updates from Others.* Other team members have the ability to opt-in and opt-out of receiving updates from other people. The choice to receive the update is that of the recipient's, not of the sender. This is an essential requirement.
3. *Integrated Presence and Availability.* Network presence and communication availability are displayed for each individual—so that while team members can't see if others are present and available, the system indicates whether they are or not. Network presence signals whether the individual is connected to the network (it's a binary setting). Communication availability is more nuanced, and includes

availability states such as “on the phone,” “in a meeting,” “available,” and “do not disturb,” among others. This is an essential requirement.

4. *Real-Time Text Interaction Tools.* Team members can interact in a text-based conversation. Those included in the conversation open a special window for the interaction, and what’s typed can be seen immediately by the other communicants. Longer conversations scroll off the screen as newer comments are made, but can be recalled for later review. This is an optional requirement.
5. *Real-Time Rich Media Interaction Tools.* Text-based interaction is supplemented by possibilities for rich media interaction. What starts as a text-based conversation can be turned into a voice discussion. Or a video call. Or a screen sharing session. This is an optional requirement.

Pillar 5 mixes two different existing IT product categories into a single concept. The first two requirements call for something like a blog or micro-blogging service, while the remaining requirements talk about presence and enterprise instant messaging services. Indeed, delivering the requirements of Pillar 5 may involve the installation and support of multiple products by the IT department, but the overriding intent is a seamless presentation of these differently-sourced capabilities to individuals and teams.

Figure 2-7. Yammer for Social Engagement



Using Yammer, team members can share what they have been working on and what they have been doing away from work—to build social engagement with remote team members.

Pillar 6. Team Task Management

Being involved in the work of a specific team implies a willingness to focus on the work at hand, and to pay particular attention to the components of the overall work that have been assigned to you. But for most of us, life is one of constantly balancing and re-balancing the plates we have spinning from our involvement in multiple projects. *“What tasks do I absolutely have to do today?”* we ask ourselves, *“and which ones, given the deadlines and milestones that I have coming up, can I afford to put off until tomorrow?”* It is hard to do this if we are not confident that we have a full awareness of everything we are supposed to be working on.

Life is one of constantly balancing and re-balancing the plates we have spinning from our involvement in multiple projects.

Pillar 6 does for tasks what Pillar 4 does for calendared events. It provides a way for seeing the immediate tasks-at-hand for a particular project, along with a higher-level view that places project tasks in the context of all project and personal tasks.

The five requirements for Pillar 6 are:

1. *Create a Team-Specific Task List.* The ability to create a list of tasks and assign each to an individual within a particular team project is an essential requirement. The team-specific task list allows team members to create tasks and assign responsibilities for completion to other team members in a shared space. When looking at the team task list, it should not display task items from other projects.
2. *Consolidate Tasks at the System-Level.* With people being involved in multiple projects simultaneously, they have commitments from multiple places. There should be a system-level capability to consolidate all of the assigned task items for a given individual, looking across all of the team projects they are involved in. For example, if Adelaide has to write a report for Project Alpha, research a new supplier for Project Beta, and review a presentation for Project Delta, these should show in a consolidated list, even though the actual tasks have been set up in three different task lists (see Figure 2-8). This is an essential requirement.
3. *Integrate Team Tasks with the Individual's Personal Task List.* Many people maintain a list of their tasks in a software program like Microsoft Outlook, IBM Lotus Notes, or Remember The Milk. It is essential that team tasks can be integrated with an individual's personal task list. This allows the individual to keep track of the tasks they have been assigned and are responsible for, without having to manually reconcile multiple task lists. This is an essential requirement.
4. *Support Mobile Device Task Management through Task Client Integration.* Mobile executives and staff often rely on their mobile device—particularly a smartphone—to track assigned task responsibilities. Tasks assigned in a team task list should

integrate with the task client on the individual's mobile device—an iPhone, Windows Phone, or BlackBerry—to enable easy and integrated access to task responsibilities. This is an optional requirement.

5. *Automatically Expire Tasks When the Project Ends.* When the project ends, all associated tasks should be automatically expired and marked completed in the individual's task list. This ensures that people don't unintentionally keep working on tasks that are no longer required—although of course they can keep going if they perceive ongoing value despite the project being completed. This is an optional requirement.

Figure 2-8. Huddle for Team Task Management

The screenshot displays the Huddle web application interface for user Adelaide Craft. The top navigation bar includes a 'My Dashboard' dropdown, user information 'Adelaide Craft (upgrade)', and links for 'My Dashboard', 'My Files', 'Search', 'Help', and 'Sign Out'. A 'Create a new workspace' button is visible on the left.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- My Tasks:** A list of tasks with filters for 'late task(s)' and 'Upcoming'. Tasks include 'Research a New Supplier' (1 day late, due 03/10/2011), 'Write a Report' (due today, 04/10/2011), and 'Review a Presentation' (due today, 04/10/2011).
- My Calendar:** A 2-week view calendar showing tasks scheduled for October 4th, including 'Research a New Supplier', 'Review a Presentation', and 'Write a Report'.
- My Notifications:** A section showing 2 notification(s).
- Files I'm Working On:** A section showing 0 files locked for editing.
- My Workspaces:** A section showing a 'Create a new workspace' button and a workspace named 'Project Delta'.
- What's New:** A section showing recent updates, including 'User Adelaide Craft added to Project Delta' and 'Task Review a Presentation updated by Leroy Graham in Project Delta'.

Huddle, an online team collaboration service, provides team task management capabilities. Team-specific task lists can be created in different team spaces, and these automatically consolidate to give the user—Adelaide Craft, in the screenshot above—a list of overdue or upcoming tasks. Additional capabilities support the integration of team task lists with the individual's personal tasks. See www.huddle.net.

Pillar 7. Collaboration Auto-Discovery

As individual contributors to many team efforts, we know what we know—the body of knowledge we have acquired, the inter-personal collaborative skills we have cultivated, and the type of environment in which we do our best work. Sometimes we also have an awareness of what we don’t know, and what we need to do about that. Perhaps we need to find other people who have knowledge and skills we lack, or have a deeper knowledge than we do. There are times when we immediately know by name the person who could help us, but other times we are pulling at straws to determine who to speak with.

It is times like this that we need systems to link us up with other people who can help. We need ways to be alerted to help that others can give, without necessarily having to go and search explicitly for it. That is, we need something that watches what we are up to and gives directions on where and how to find others who are expert in this, or who have some insight that might be able to help us make progress. We need a system that creates connections with other relevant people and content, rather than just storing our collaborative artifacts. Pillar 7, collaboration auto-discovery, is focused on this enabling scenario for collaborative teams.

We know what we know—the body of knowledge we have conquered, the inter-personal collaborative skills we have cultivated, and the type of environment in which we do our best work.

The five requirements for Pillar 7 are:

1. *In-Space Automatic Link to Out-of-Space Resources.* When the team is working inside their shared space, links to relevant, related resources outside of the space should be automatically created and displayed. Based on automatic text analysis—for both key words and phrases—the system should be looking for people and resources outside of the team that offer supporting analysis. This is an essential requirement.
2. *System-Built Expertise and Interest Profiles.* Team members demonstrate their expertise and interests through the things they write, the discussions they engage in, and even the team projects they contribute to. The system should be able to ascertain expertise and interests based on repeated contributions, rather than individuals having to manually maintain a list of expertise and interests. This is an essential requirement.
3. *Clickable Link to a Person’s Profile.* Users should be able to click to visit a person’s profile, for a quick pre-engagement assessment of alignment between the expertise that is required and that which is on offer. Within the profile, a team member should see links to recent contributions across the system, to enable a quick drill-down into topics of interest. This is an essential requirement.

4. *Brokered Access to Out-of-Space Resources and People.* When experts or out-of-space resources have been identified, there should be a means of requesting more information. Access to experts should be brokered in some form, so that subject matter experts are not overwhelmed by demands for immediate input. Perhaps it's a written request for assistance. Perhaps it is a request to their manager for the right to speak with them. In terms of resources, sometimes these are locked away in access-controlled spaces. If so, having a means of requesting access to these resources should be provided. This is an optional requirement.
5. *Opt-Out Controls for Subject Matter Experts.* A person may have clear expertise in a given topic based on their past contributions, but for whatever reason they don't want to make further contributions. And they don't want to be asked about what they have done previously. We need to respect this in collaborative efforts, and as long as there are other people who can provide the same or better expertise, it should be fine at an organizational level. The net implication, though, is that people should be able to opt-out of being listed as an expert for particular expertise areas. This is an optional requirement.

Currently there are no great examples of these collaboration auto-discovery capabilities in products aimed at collaborative teams. The majority of current products rely on manually-created and maintained user profile data, and lack the more advanced capabilities for brokered access and opt-out controls for experts. There's a number of products that offer basic capabilities in this area, and while this can signal potential for the future, what's available today is still limited.⁶ For example:

Currently there are no great examples of collaboration auto-discovery capabilities in products aimed at collaborative teams.

- Socialtext 360, the user profile part of the Socialtext collaboration product, will graphically display similarity between people across four dimensions.⁷ But each user must manually maintain their lists of expertise and interest (these are not system-built), and it only works for creating connections with people, not with other resources. But it holds potential for auto-discovery.
- SharePoint 2010 can be configured to provide some of these capabilities. A search pane can be added to a team site to point to related resources in other places. My Site includes links to documents, blog posts, and other content written by a given user. Many organizations find that NewsGator Social Sites adds an enhanced way of working with the profiling part of SharePoint 2010.⁸

This is an area of great possibility for enhancing the work of collaborative teams and overcoming a blindness to what else is available in our organizations.

How to Use the Seven Pillars Framework

If you already have collaboration technology to support the needs of collaborative teams, use the Seven Pillars framework to describe what is possible within the technology you have today. In Figure 2-9, you can see the seven pillars listed down the left-hand side, and in the “Current Product” column you can see a quick statement of how your current product means the requirements (this is a fictitious example). The third column—“What We Need”—contains a brief summary of where future capability would be best focused.

Figure 2-9. Analyzing a Fictitious Collaboration Product Against the Seven Pillars

Pillar	Current Product	What We Need
1. Shared Access to Team Data	Yes	
2. Location Independence	Partially	Better support
3. Real-Time Joint Authoring and Editing	No	New capabilities
4. Team-Aware Calendaring	No	New capabilities
5. Social Engagement	Yes	
6. Team Task Management	Yes	
7. Collaboration Auto-Discovery	No	Not required

The Seven Pillars framework can be used to assess the capability of your current collaboration technology to support the needs of collaborative teams. Areas of opportunity can be highlighted, and methods of mitigating the identified weaknesses can be sought.

Once you have completed this analysis, you can start looking for third-party products that cover over the weaknesses you have identified, or if the situation is more stark than that presented above, begin the search for a new collaboration product altogether.

Two final comments on the Seven Pillars for collaborative teams:

- A perfect Seven Pillars product will not make governance, engagement, and user adoption irrelevant. It will simplify some of the planning and execution activities of those disciplines, but it won’t eliminate the need for them.
- The broader the audience you are looking to support, the more generalized your list of requirements will become. That is, if you only need to support one team you can create a list of precise requirements for their current and intended work style, and carefully select the perfect product. If you have to support 100,000 people in 50 different countries, a more generalized set of requirements will be required.

Framework 2. Collaborative Groups—the Four Connectors

Collaboration in groups is different from collaboration in teams (see Figure 2-10). This means the Seven Pillars framework is not the best lens for evaluating technology needs for groups. In line with the four elements of collaboration (see *Appendix 1*), both team and group collaboration is intentional and outcome-oriented. Unlike teams that collaborate directly on immediate work outcomes, group collaboration is focused on learning and capability development. Teams collaborate when doing the work—designing a product, creating a service, or resolving a process exception. Groups collaborate to enhance the ability to work.

Figure 2-10. Collaborative Teams and Collaborative Groups

Element	Collaborative Teams	Collaborative Groups
Communication	Many forms of real-time and time-shifted communication	Mainly time-shifted conversation and discussion
Agreements	Focused on task allocation and performance standards	Focused on conversation dynamics and topic appropriateness
Action	Together, in the team	Separately, away from the group in teams and processes
Outcome	Explicit end goal in view, with an end signal	Learning, capability development, staying current.
Examples	Product development team, Service creation team, and Process engineering team	Executive Assistants group, Widget fabrication group, Large accounts salespeople

Collaborative teams and groups have a differing profile against the four elements of collaboration. Groups have a much higher emphasis on learning and capability development.

Another way of showing the difference is to look at membership requirements. Becoming a member of a team requires nomination from a manager, and only those on the team can do the work. If you leave the team, you lose the official capability to contribute. Group membership is less directive. Many groups are open to anyone, although some groups moderate membership to those with particular characteristics. Leaving a group means you don't keep up with learning and capability development, not that you can't do your work.

Note that some people prefer the terms “community of practice” and “community of interest” to “collaborative group” for this type of collaboration. That's fine—either term works. In this book, however, the term of choice is collaborative group.

Connector 1. Common Area for Conversation and Discussion

Providing a common area for conversation and discussion between people is at the heart of the technology needed to support collaborative groups. Learning and capability development happens within an ongoing conversation on topics of shared interest, where people compare and contrast their experiences, perspectives, and tentative conclusions.

Key attributes of the common area are:

- A place for conversations to be started, using a conversational style of interaction. One person starts a conversation on a particular topic, and other people have the opportunity to respond with their thoughts and comments. Essentially, anyone looking at the conversation needs to be able to see what each person has said, and if they so choose, add their thoughts on the main topic or any of the responses.
- A way of grouping conversations and discussions about similar topics. For an Executive Assistants group, discussions about travel bookings, good hotels for executives, and foreign car hire should be grouped together. Grouping of similar topics is generally achieved through classification labels such as metadata or tags (see Figure 2-11).
- A method of visualizing the reputation of a particular individual within the group, based on the contribution they have (or haven't) made and the reaction of others to that contribution. A simplistic measure of reputation is a count of the conversations the individual has been involved in; it's simplistic because it doesn't say anything about the reactions of other people. A more meaningful measure includes explicit rating by other people of an individual's conversation and discussion content—although one piece of research I read said for internal collaboration few people will give any rating other than a 4/5 or 5/5. The pinnacle of reaction is a constellation of implicit factors derived from behavioral analytics. These are individual factors such as the number of times a conversation item has been read, the link forwarded to other people, the number of discussion responses it garnered, or the number of times it is quoted in other conversations and organizational documents.
- The ability to moderate content in a conversation and discussion, in order to keep the group focused on its outcome. While content can always be moderated external to the technology by talking with the group member about their content contributions (and thus suppressing unwanted conversation topics or styles), there also needs to be the ability to moderate it within the technology using explicit or implicit means. Explicit moderation calls attention to particular

Learning and capability development happens within an ongoing conversation on topics of shared interest.

conversation topics or discussion styles—and requests that they cease-and-desist. Implicit moderation involves quietly deleting offending posts.

- The ability to retain conversations after they are no longer active. When members have moved on to new topics and issues, non-active conversations should be archived. Group members should still be able to access previous conversations, and even re-ignite the conversation at a later date, but if there is no current discussion taking place the conversation should become deemphasized within the group's space.

Figure 2-11. Common Area for Conversation and Discussion

Dashboard > Executive Assistants Group > Browse Space > Labels
> travel-and-accommodation

Browse Michael Sampson Search

Label: travel-and-accommodation

Pages Blog Labels Attachments Mail Advanced Space Admin

View: Popular Labels | All Labels

Content with label **travel-and-accommodation** in **Executive Assistants Group** (See content from all spaces)
Related Labels: [laptop](#), [luggage](#), [accommodation](#), [gear-bags](#), [europe](#), [checklists](#), [ipad](#), [travel](#)

[Best Luggage for Executive Travel - especially in the age of the iPad](#)
short trip, our executives are increasingly leaving their laptops behind and traveling with their iPads. What's the best gear bag to recommend to them
Other labels: [ipad](#), [laptop](#), [luggage](#), [gear-bags](#)

[European Travel Tips](#)
our recent strategy change about expanding into Europe, what do we as EAs know about travel there - to help our executives transition to working in that new environment
Other labels: [travel](#), [accommodation](#), [europe](#)

[Packing Checklists for International Travel](#)
We know that executives are too busy for their own good - how can we help them get ready for their trips? Does anyone have packing checklists that we could make available as a starting place
Other labels: [checklists](#), [travel](#)

Recent Labels

- [travel](#)
- [checklists](#)
- [europe](#)
- [gear-bags](#)
- [luggage](#)
- [laptop](#) [ipad](#)
- [travel-and-accommodation](#)
- [accommodation](#)

Popular Labels

- [travel-and-accommodation](#)
- [travel](#)

Atlassian Confluence, an enterprise wiki, provides a common area for group members to engage in conversation and discussion. Conversations can be classified using “Labels,” and conversations with the same label can be browsed in a unified list. Multiple labels can be created on each conversation topic, thereby creating a rich collection of related material.

There are several technical ways of achieving a common area for conversation and discussion, including threaded discussion databases in Lotus Notes, a multi-author blog with commenting in Jive, or a wiki on Atlassian Confluence. Each technical implementation provides a means of supporting conversation and discussion, although in different forms.

Connector 2. Common Storage of Shared Artifacts

During the group's interaction they will author, refer to, or create a copy of one or more artifacts. Individual artifacts may only have transitory value within a particular conversation, or could offer value over a longer time. An artifact could be:

- A document, such as a report about fabrication processes from an outside research group.
- A photo, for example of a hotel in West London executives have stayed at and recommended for future business trips.
- A video, of the Q&A session at a conference on selling into large accounts
- A web link, to an interesting resource page on the internet.
- The names of outside people who can help with particular topics.

Group members who were involved in the conversation when the artifact was created or mentioned will have an associative search pattern. *"We were talking about hotels for the San Francisco event, and Sally casually mentioned that if we were planning the event for West London she knew of the perfect place."* The group members who were there when the topic was discussed will have nuanced associative pointers to help them re-find the artifact that members who were not involved will lack.

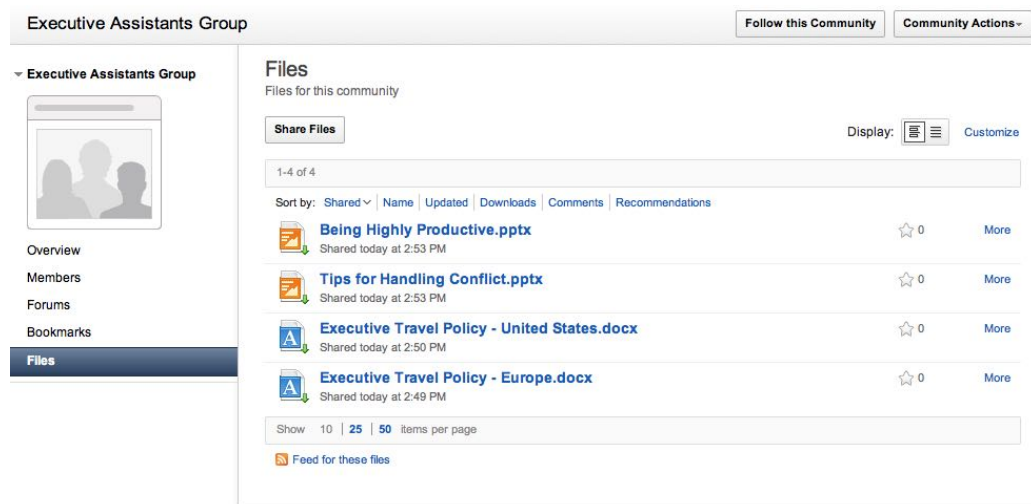
For people who were not involved in a conversation when it happened, and for any group member who wanted to browse the group's space instead of searching for something specific, a common storage area for shared artifacts is helpful. The following capabilities are important:

The group members who were there when the topic was discussed will have nuanced associative pointers to help them re-find the artifact that members who were not involved will lack.

- A way of grouping artifacts by topic. For the Fabrication group, topics could be industry trends, potential suppliers, and process integration. For the Executive Assistants group, topics could be travel and accommodation, meeting scheduling tips, key contact people, and Office tips. Clicking into or opening the topic label gives a list of artifacts associated with that topic.
- A way of grouping artifacts by type. Documents across all topic groupings should be accessible in a single browsable screen—enabling a group member to quickly get a sense of the documents available in the group. The same applies for such items as the collection of photos, videos, and web links.

- A way of visualizing and navigating the differences between an initial and refined set of artifacts. For example, when opening the “travel and accommodation” label in the Executive Assistants group, the space returns 108 possibilities. About half of these are related to “Europe,” a quarter to “North America,” and the remainder to other geographical areas. The Executive Assistant who is planning a trip for an executive to North America can click into the “North America” label, and eliminate artifacts that are not related to the current task. Technical approaches like tag clouds and faceted search panes are current ways of enabling this capability.

Figure 2-12. Common Storage of Shared Artifacts



IBM Connections offers a Files tool for making documents and other files available in a group setting. Files can be tagged to enhance findability, and in-line comments centralize what other group members are saying about each file.

Broadly speaking, artifacts play an opposite role in a collaborative group compared to a collaborative team. In a collaborative team, artifacts are created as a consequence of conversation and discussion, either for the team’s internal use (a project plan) or delivery to an outside party (the request-for-proposal, the product design, or the pricing strategy). In a collaborative group, artifacts are referred to so as to inform conversation and discussion. The artifact is the starting point for a conversation, or a reference point within a conversation, but not the outcome of it. Clearly there are exceptions to this principle.

Connector 3. Common Calendar for Upcoming Real-Time Events

You know a group is alive—you feel its “heartbeat”—by observing the conversation and discussion taking place through time-shifting technology, as we discussed in *Connector 1*. The number and range of topics. The depth of discussion. The nature of disagreement. The speed of response. These attributes give evidence of group life.

However, there are times when a real-time event—usually through online tools rather than face-to-face—is useful. Such events provide an opportunity to bring people together around a common topic, and to give a much more rapid way of learning and capability development.

Examples include online Q&A sessions on a topic, a web seminar with an internal expert or an outside speaker, or even a gathering of the group for a one- or two-day conference. If the value to the organization is there and can be recognized by the people holding the purse strings, you can do anything!

Events provide an opportunity to bring people together around a common topic, and to give a much more rapid way of learning and capability development.

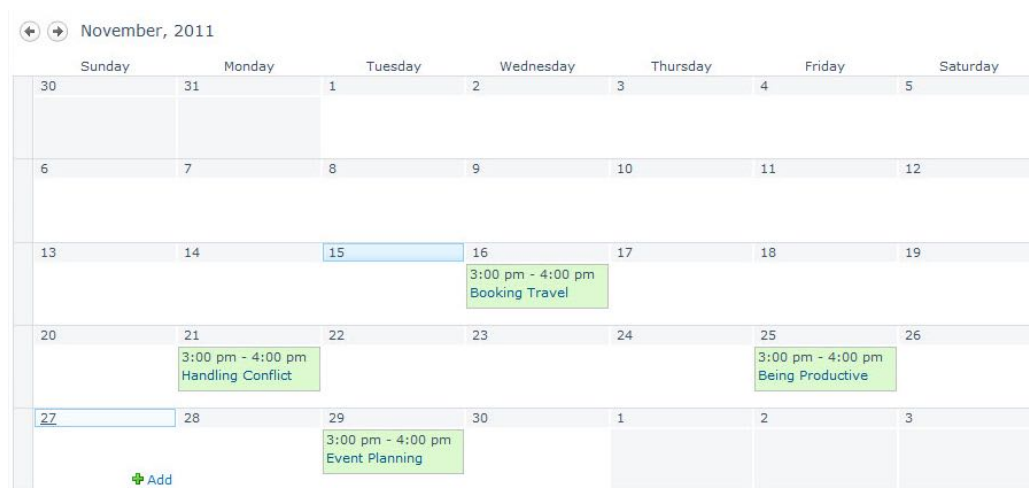
While Connector 3 is conceptually similar to Pillar 4 (*Team-Aware Calendaring*), there are two major differences: a group event does not have free-busy implications, and it does not need to synchronize to a member’s mobile device. This is because the event is an offer to attend something, compared to a team environment where it is closer to a demand for something to attend. In the group environment, a member should have to make a deliberate choice to attend an upcoming event—for example by clicking a button to add the event to their calendar. In such situations, both free-busy and mobile synchronization are handled by other calendaring capabilities.

The essential technical capabilities to support planning and holding real-time events are:

- A method of scheduling upcoming events in a common group calendar. A group member can enter the details of an upcoming event—title, date, time (and time zone for organizations spanning multiple locations), and an overview of the nature and ethos of the event. Other group members can review the upcoming entries in the calendar when they are visiting the group space.
- A way for a group member to add the event to their calendar. As above, since an event is an opportunity (“invitation”) to do something at a particular time, an intentional choice is required by group members to attend and participate. A common way of showing that you want to attend an event is to click a button on the screen, which then adds the event to your own calendar.

- A means of holding an online event, where group members can attend and participate from wherever they are—in their office, in a coffee shop via a laptop, or highly mobile with an iPad. The tool needs to support having a moderator, one or more lead speakers, screen sharing, and a way for anyone to participate by asking a question. For organizations that have a broader strategy for online meeting services, the group tool should link to existing capabilities.
- A means of recording the conversation and interaction that takes place during the online event and storing it in the group's common storage area (see *Connector 2*). This allows post-event review of what was discussed—by people who attended and those who were unable to—and may even ignite ongoing time-shifted conversation (see *Connector 1*).

Figure 2-13. Common Calendar for Upcoming Real-Time Events



SharePoint 2010 supports the creation of group-specific calendars for upcoming real-time events, to allow coordination of capability development and learning events. In this group space for Executive Assistants, four learning events have been scheduled.

Events that are held in person rather than via online tools require specialized event management capabilities—such as searching for a location and room, negotiating on catering, making travel bookings, and getting contract approval for an external speaker. Generally speaking, these would be excluded from technology requirements for Collaborative Groups, but if conference event planning is a key emphasis at a specific organization, add these to your evaluation criteria. Nevertheless, it is still more likely that you would link to a specialized system.

Connector 4. Surfacing of Related Groups and Conversations

The final part of the Four Connectors framework for groups is a means of surfacing related groups and conversations. One major challenge with any group is that over time it can become isolated from the wider

organization in which it exists—usually as a consequence of stable membership that becomes closed to new ideas.

Technology-facilitated groups are no different. It is sad that the technology that is supposed to create connections and allow collaboration to flourish can become the driver to create silos and reinforce segregation. The purpose of

Connector 4 is to provide some way of counteracting this normal process.

A challenge with any group is that over time it becomes isolated from the wider organization and closed to new ideas. Technology-facilitated groups are no different.

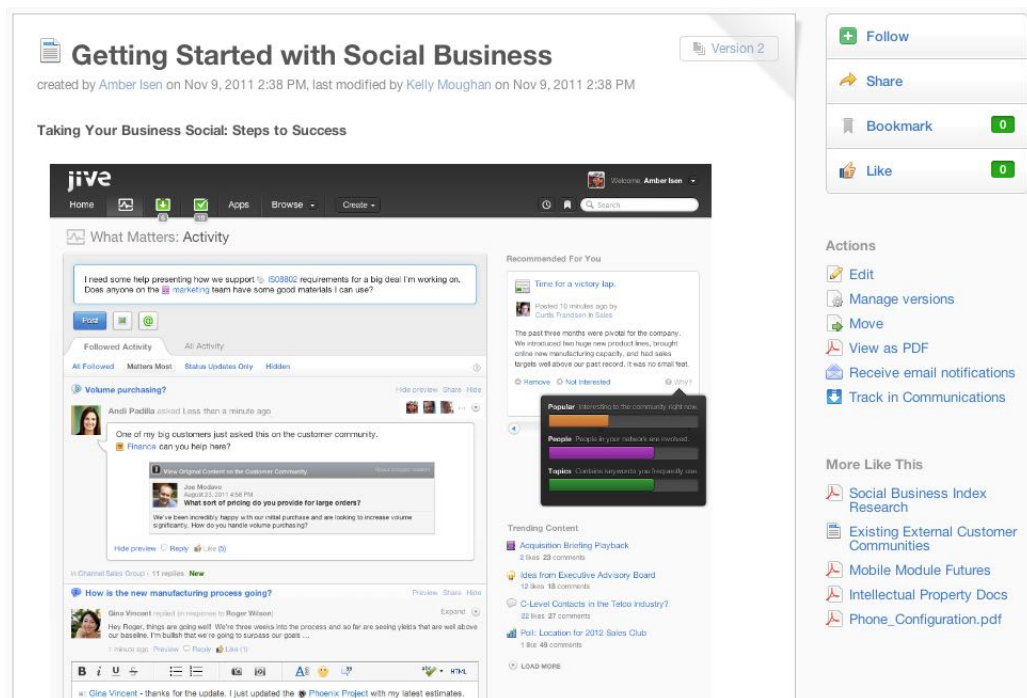
The essential idea of Connector 4 is to use the system to notify group members that there are other groups talking about the same topics. Clearly there are degrees of sameness, ranging from exactly the same, to things that are similar, and to things that are related. But across these degrees of sameness, there is an opportunity to leverage the collaborative system to prevent group ossification through the introduction of new ideas, new people, and new ways of looking at things.

The key capabilities of Connector 4 are:

- A method of showing links to other group spaces, and to specific conversation topics in other group spaces, that are aligned with the current topic. The correlation could be made on the basis of manually-entered descriptive keywords (metadata or tags), or on automated textual analysis to ascertain similarity between two conversations. While this capability could be an integrated part of the underlying group technology, it could equally come from a more general tool that could integrate with the group technology.
- A method of clearly showing that surfaced connections come from outside the current group space. In group land, this could be through the use of the heading line, a different background color for the box in which they show, or some other visual means. It's like what Google now does: paid advertising is highlighted in search results so as to differentiate one from the other.
- As an advanced capability, you could list the people in the current group who were also in the external group that was being referenced. This would show social connections that bridged both groups, and could help with evaluating the efficacy of the external information, particularly where the external group has a closed (but not secret) membership.

This discussion of Connector 4 would be incomplete without mentioning security. The ability to wrap a membership layer around a group space and control who can and cannot get into the group space—whether activated or not—is an essential difference between Connector 4 and Foundation 4 (see *page 76*—in Foundation 4, by intent, there is no concept of membership). Thus for a collaborative group with closed membership, the nature of the group and its conversations would imply that their results should be excluded from the surfacing algorithm. Some closed groups may want their discussions to be private and highly secure, and thus the capability to enforce exclusion should be a decision option for the group’s moderator or owner. For other groups where membership is open and the intent is learning and capability development, the surfacing algorithm should work.

Figure 2-14. Surfacing of Related Groups and Conversations



When looking at a particular document in a group space in Jive, a sidebar widget ("More Like This") points to related content. When looking at the group's home page in Jive, a "Related Groups" sidebar widget is displayed. Both use a logic algorithm to find similar content and groups using text cues from the current document or group. In other words the list of related content is automatically generated based on what is happening within the current group. So at the group level it shows related groups; at the content level it shows related content. See www.jivesoftware.com.

How to Use the Four Connectors Framework

The Four Connectors framework provides a way of looking at the essential technological requirements to support collaborative groups. While both teams and groups can collaborate, the style of collaboration is different. Groups are much more focused on learning and capability development. Two further points can be made before discussing organizational collaboration.

While not a specific connector in its own right, the ability to moderate access to a group space is core and central. Membership in a group is an explicit choice, and the technology must support the capability to limit membership. There are three options in the membership matrix. Many groups will have an open membership policy—such that anyone with access to the overall system can self-select to become a member. No approval is required. Other groups will have a closed membership policy, perhaps due to particular confidentiality or disclosure requirements related to the subject matter of the group. Although the existence of the group is not secret, while people can see the group exists, they have to request the right of membership from the group’s administrator. The third option in the membership matrix is a secret group, whose existence is not disclosed, does not show up in search results, and can only be entered through an invitation from the group’s administrator.

Different products will emphasize different aspects. That’s a normal part of vendor differentiation.

When looking at the different products available to support collaborative groups, remember that each product or service will emphasize different aspects, as well as offering nuances on these core connectors. That’s a normal and natural part of product differentiation by vendors. However, the Four Connectors outline the core requirements. Be forewarned though if a particular product or service lacks one of the four connectors, or a connector can’t be included through a third-party add-on.

One of the comments made for teams and the Seven Pillars applies equally to groups and the Four Connectors: the broader the audience you are looking to support, the more generalized your list of requirements will become. If it’s just one group, or a couple, you will be able to select and tailor a technology to their specific requirements. If it’s hundreds of current and future groups at your organization, err on the more general side.

Finally, as with all frameworks in this chapter, the presence of great technology to support collaborative groups does not make governance, engagement, and user adoption irrelevant. For example, the presence of a moderator to stimulate and encourage participation in collaborative groups is highly correlated with success. A number of firms have found that the moderator makes or breaks the group, particularly in the early days (the first 6-18 months). The moderator becomes the face of the group. They reach out and prod people to share their perspective on a current issue. They help resolve communication challenges. They keep the group alive through online and offline activities.

Framework 3. Collaborative Organizations—the Four Foundations

One hallmark of a “collaborative organization” is the widespread existence and effectiveness of both collaborative teams and collaborative groups. Collaborative teams and groups both exhibit the four elements of collaboration—albeit with a different slant—and technology can be used to support the work of both.

Organizational Collaboration: Philosophy

If organizational collaboration already includes collaborative teams and groups, what patterns do these two forms not allow that could also be included in “organizational collaboration”? Is something further required for a collaborative organization? For instance, none of the following collaborative patterns happen inside a team or group:

- When a marketing manager shares the initial thinking for an upcoming initiative and seeks feedback and input from “everyone.”
- The holding of an unscripted question and answer time after a town hall meeting.
- Asking for ideas and hoping other people will respond.
- Telling others what you are doing, to see if anyone else shares a common interest.

An answer emerges when we conceptualize teams and groups as explicit forms of collaboration, and organizational collaboration as an implicit form. Under this view, the extra role for organizational collaboration is to provide a mechanism to enable the creation of awareness of opportunities that could transition from implicit to explicit. For example, the sharing of ideas, the creation of connections between people, or the discovery of existing material on a topic. As this creation of awareness or signaling of opportunities takes place, people start to form ideas about how they could work with others. The “I’ll-act-collaboratively-although-I-don’t-yet-know-why” approach creates an environment in which

collaboration potential can be recognized and put to productive use in a team or group setting.

In summary, organizational collaboration supplies an ingredient that’s missing from teams and groups: the ability for individuals, teams, and groups to

take a wide view on collaboration potential across the organization. The framework to support organizational collaboration is called the Four Foundations, but first, meet Julian.

The extra role for organizational collaboration is to provide a mechanism to enable the creation of awareness of opportunities that could transition from implicit to explicit.

Meet Julian from Product Development

Julian works as a design engineer in product development. During his work day he talks to people, writes emails, and authors and contributes to documents—both traditional files using a word processor, as well as pages in the product development wiki. He attends meetings, contributes his thoughts, and debates ideas with colleagues and co-workers. In other words, Julian “does stuff” in the normal course of his work day, and most of his activity is aligned with particular product development projects. As a consequence of his normal day-to-day work, he weaves and leaves a digital trail. It’s in the capturing and leveraging of that digital trail that organizational collaboration comes into play. The trail creates a corpus of data that is either beneficial by itself or acts as a pointer to Julian for interaction.

One of Julian’s current projects is the design of a new widget, “Widget 15.” Whenever he writes an email to colleagues about “Widget 15,” that phrase is included. Whenever he posts to the project blog about the status of his work, “Widget 15” is mentioned explicitly in the text, or can be implied because it’s on the “Widget 15 Blog.” He attends a lot of face-to-face and virtual meetings about “Widget 15,” all of which are scheduled using the calendar in the Widget 15 team’s collaborative workspace. At a team level, he relies on the technologies identified in the Seven Pillars to accomplish his work in collaboration with others, but there is a bigger opportunity to gain.

Four foundational underpinnings provide the technology support required for organizational collaboration:

- When someone looks up Julian in the directory or profile system, they should see that “Widget 15” is something he’s good at (*Foundation 1, Identify Expertise Shown in Collaborative Systems*).
- When someone searches for “Widget 15,” all of Julian’s contributions should be included (*Foundation 2, Correlate Knowledge Stored in Collaborative Systems*).
- People should have a way of opting in to learn about current happenings about “Widget 15,” regardless of where they take place (*Foundation 3, Signal Activity on Collaborative Topics*).
- Widget fabrication is of particular interest to Julian, and he wants to know about all activity regarding widget fabrication, even outside of the widget fabrication group (*Foundation 4, Form Ad-Hoc Groups to Explore Collaboration Potential*).

Now let’s take each of the four foundations in turn, and explore the key requirements.

Foundation 1. Identify Expertise Shown in Collaborative Systems

The focus of Foundation 1 is to figure out what the people in your organization are good at. It looks at two issues. First, for any given person, what expertise do they hold? Second, for any given topic, which people hold the expertise? Being good at something is often a precursor to being invited to take part in a project, to assume a particular responsibility, or to help out with an issue. Having a clear picture of expertise across the organization is useful in the following scenarios:

- When recruiting a project team, because the project leader is able to discover people in the organization who have expertise in a particular field or area.
- When facing a thorny challenge during the execution of a project, because someone on the project team can reach out to other people with needed expertise.
- When searching for a person to help with a customer support call.

Figuring out expertise, however, requires a deeper understanding of where it comes from and how it is recognized.⁹ At the most basic level, expertise is asserted by an individual. “I’m good at Widget fabrication processes,” is an assertion that Julian might make about his expertise. But without evidence to back it up, his current colleagues—not to mention people inside his organization who don’t know him yet—have no way of evaluating whether it’s true or not. Asserted, or declared expertise, requires self-knowledge for accuracy, and making the assertion and keeping the assertions up-to-date is an activity that is separated from real work. This is one of the main reasons why traditional expertise profiling systems have failed in organizations.

The major benefit of deduced expertise over declared expertise is that evidence is available to back up the expertise labels, because in order to achieve expertise, you have to prove it.

There is a second level to expertise that mitigates some of these weaknesses: expertise that is deduced by a technology system based on the day-to-day activities of an individual. What the person reads can indicate an interest in a topic—and therefore point in the direction of expertise. What a person writes in a document or on a wiki goes further, since they are contributing expertise to a particular topic. The same applies for their email messages and contributions to discussion threads in team and group conversations. The major benefit of deduced expertise over declared expertise is that evidence is available to back up the expertise labels, because in order to achieve expertise, you have to live it. If we return to Julian, if the system notices that he frequently contributes to discussions and current thinking about Widget fabrication processes, that label will be automatically associated with him.

The third-and-final level is discerned expertise, which means that someone else has recognized expertise in another person and has stated it in a way that other people can benefit from. At this third level, expertise has been previously “consumed” by another individual—they have received benefit from it, and their recommendation to others seeking similar expertise is to talk with the same person. Thinking about Julian again, if Sue had read one of Julian’s blog posts about Widget fabrication processes, and had then spoken with him

Discerned expertise means that someone recognizes expertise in another person, and has stated it in a way that other people can benefit from.

about a process issue she was experiencing that he was able to clear up, Sue would freely tell others that Julian was the person to speak to about “Widget fabrication processes.”

In order for expertise identification to work, the system has to show up-to-date expertise labels, and be built on a basis that people can trust what the system states. Using technology to achieve this comes with four core requirements:

1. The ability for people to gift expertise to another person, that is, a descriptive label that states what the expertise is. It’s a summary of what they see the other person being good at.
2. A system-level analysis engine to reason out the main themes that people contribute expertise and knowledge on, through the items they write, read, and contribute towards. This is system interpretation of expertise—or deduced expertise. It’s complementary to the gifting of expertise (requirement 1).
3. An aggregation or summarization interface, through which people can search for or navigate through expertise topics, and discover appropriate people. Once a person has been found, the interface should link to their profile for wider insight into the person and their work. For example, the profile should link to relevant blog posts, past and current team membership, and group involvement.
4. The ability to see where the expertise descriptor has come from—to track back and see who has gifted the expertise to the individual, or the actions the individual has taken to make the system gift that expertise. Provenance of expertise is important for establishing credibility and trusting the assertion.

There are a number of technical ways to achieve the requirements of expertise identification. One approach is to count the number of people who read a particular blog post on a certain topic. The underlying assumption is that greater value is correlated with the number of readers. Extending this basic implicit count would be more explicit measures, such as the number of times a blog post was commented on, or referenced in other blogs, or forwarded by email to other people to read, or rated on a scale of 1-5. It’s unlikely there is a single measure, but the system should be able to capture and make sense of these signals at an aggregate level.

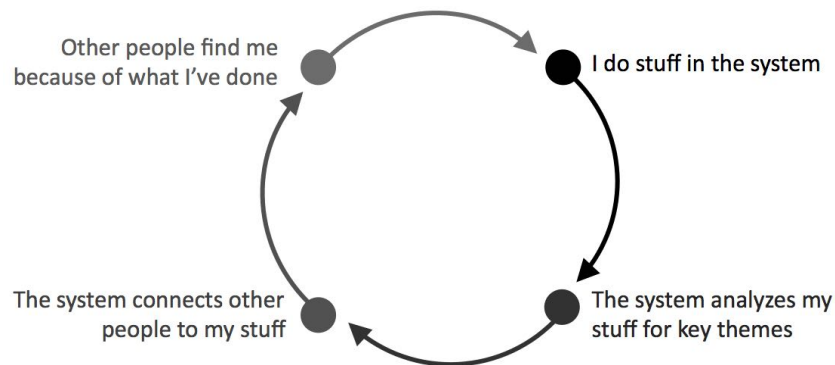
If all collaboration activity in an organization is carried out in a single tool—for example Socialtext, SharePoint, or Jive—then the identification and aggregation of expertise should be a system-level capability. That is, if all collaborative activity is done in Socialtext, expertise identification and aggregation should be another capability offered within Socialtext.

When people use multiple systems to collaborate and work with others, then a higher-level entity must extract expertise information and aggregate it back against a person. It's an N+1 approach—one additional system over-and-above the number of collaboration-enabling systems you have already. For example, a search engine that offers entity extraction capabilities can play a role in delivering the requirements of

Foundation 1 in an N+1 configuration. Such a search engine automatically creates indices that look for particular topics and point back to the person who had a role in creating the document or artifact—using the metadata associated with the artifact. This approach means that profiles do not have to be manually maintained, but are generated on demand based on the most current search data, and on what people actually do.

When people use multiple systems to collaborate and work with others, then a higher-level entity must extract expertise information and aggregate it back against a person.

Figure 2-15. Identifying Expertise and Creating Connections



When expertise is enacted in collaborative systems, there needs to be a capability to identify that expertise so as to create connections with the people in need of that expertise.

The reason for doing this analysis is to create the context for establishing new connections between people. For example, this means that Frank, a new employee, can quickly see that Julian is the go-to person on matters related to Widget 15. Actually making the connection can be done in a number of ways, from picking up the phone and calling the person, to seeing via a presence status indicator that they're online and available for a discussion, to sending them an introductory email. A directory with up-to-date contact details makes this easier for everyone, but discovering who to call is the focus of Foundation 1.

Foundation 2. Correlate Knowledge Stored in Collaborative Systems

Foundation 2 focuses on knowledge that has already been expressed. It is about looking at the corpus of data in your firm—the data contained in documents, blog posts, wiki pages and the like—looking at the metadata about those items (whether "metadata-proper" or people assigned tags) and correlating them to bring them together. For a particular topic, what do we already know? What are the existing written sources that offer insight into a particular topic—and thus hold the potential of leading us to a person with whom we could collaborate?

The result of looking at correlated knowledge is a collection of items that contain and express knowledge—across multiple individual systems.

Knowledge correlation answers the question "*what do we already know?*" While the result of looking at identified and aggregated expertise is a person or group of people to connect with, the result of looking at correlated knowledge is a collection of items that contain and express knowledge.

There are many ways for knowledge to be expressed, but each system has traditionally offered its own specific correlation capability:

- *In a document management system.* A document written by Sally in Marketing about the marketing plan for Widget 15 will traditionally be correlated with other documents in the document management system, using metadata labels such as "marketing plan" and "Widget 15." Browsing the "marketing plan" metadata label shows a list of all documents in the document management system that have that metadata label.
- *In a blogging system.* A blog post by Julian about the current engineering state of Widget 15 will traditionally be correlated with other blog posts on the Widget 15 blog. Depending on the specific technology platform, though, it may also be correlated with blog posts about Widget 15 posted in other blogs.
- *In a system for collaborative groups.* Discussions in a collaborative group interested in fabrication processes for widgets in general, will be correlated within the group so all discussions on one aspect of fabrication can be viewed together. Julian is a member of this collaborative group, and takes part in the discussions.

The need within organizational collaboration, however, is to look across these different silos and bring this material together in a unified representation that allows exploration. Tag clouds—a set of like terms clustered together in a clickable map—provide a reference point as one way of correlating knowledge across multiple systems. A second reference point is faceted search, where common metadata terms from multiple individual artifacts

in multiple systems are shown in a multi-item clickable list that automatically reduces as more items are selected.

The benefit of classification above a single system is that it maps to the real world; people collaborate by using multiple systems. Take any wiki provider—Socialtext, Atlassian, or any of the others. If all collaborative activity takes place inside the wiki, then wiki pages can be tagged and aggregated, and used to enable Foundation 1 (*Identify Expertise Shown in Collaborative Systems*). But as soon as you step outside of the wiki, and start working with other people in other systems, then those interactions and contributions are ... ignored ... invisible ... irrelevant. Email ... is ignored ... invisible ... irrelevant ... unless it is copied into the wiki. Documents on the file server are ... ignored ... invisible ... irrelevant. So my contention is that a higher-level system—an N+1 approach as with Foundation 1—that can sit across multiple natural repositories of collaborative activity and reason out expertise, knowledge, and other points of classification, is going to give a much fuller picture of knowledge that could be useful in current and future collaborative activities.

Vendors have developed some incredible tools to assist lawyers with legal discovery. We could probably re-direct some of the same technology to support organizational collaboration.

Vendors have developed some incredible tools to assist lawyers with legal discovery. That same technology could probably be redirected to support organizational collaboration, and particularly the opportunities presented by Foundation 2. For example, consider IBM's Classification Module.¹⁰ Key capabilities of Classification Module include:

- Automatic classification of unstructured digital content, such as documents and email messages, so people don't have to do it themselves.
- Re-training of the classification engine by people, with the classification algorithms updated in real-time.
- Support for multiple classification methods, such as keyword rules, proximity matching, and pattern extraction.
- Natural language support for 18 languages, to support the needs of global organizations with employees developing content in different languages.

This amazing technology is focused on supporting archiving and records management, which are historical looking activities that, while important, benefit only a minority of people. I'm not suggesting these activities should not be done, just that there could be an opportunity here for supporting day-to-day collaboration mandates for everyone in the organization. So let's take a leap of imagination, and think about how these capabilities could be used to support knowledge correlation:

- The system would examine the content in a document or artifact, and automatically create classification labels. While people could assign their own classification labels, the overall system would not rely solely on human input.
- The system would provide a mechanism for grouping similar content, based on the classification labels. Clicking into a particular classification label would show all content that had that classification, as well as related content that had some level of similarity.
- In support of Foundation 1, the system could extract details about people from the content, in order to highlight which people are creating content in specific classification areas.
- If there are group spaces in which discussions are being held about the classification labels in the content, these would be listed in order to support the creation of links between people with similar interests.
- If analytics capabilities were included in the system, these could be used to show the popularity of specific content items based on multiple factors—such as page reads, commenting patterns, forwarding by email, and inter-page linkages.

Other vendors provide similar classification technology as well, such as:

- **Recommind Decisiv Categorization**, in which content is automatically organized, tagged and managed using a variety of classification techniques. The classification tags are fed back into search algorithms to support enhanced findability of relevant content and expertise. See www.recommind.com.
- **Concept Searching Concept Classifier for SharePoint**, which automatically classifies new documents and content being stored (or created) in SharePoint against SharePoint 2010's metadata capability. With integration to Microsoft's search products for SharePoint, users can browse the taxonomy to find relevant content and people. See www.conceptsearching.com.

For organizations that have already implemented technology to support collaborative teams and collaborative groups, buying a new system to do teams and groups in a different way is probably an unnecessary waste of time and effort.

For organizations that have already implemented technology to support collaborative teams and collaborative groups, buying a new system to do teams and groups in a different way is probably an unnecessary waste of time and effort. The real improvement opportunity may lie in bringing together what you already have through technology that offers Foundation 2 capabilities.

Foundation 3. Signal Activity on Collaborative Topics

Foundation 3 aims to create the opportunity for other people to discover when someone else is working on a topic of mutual interest. Such a discovery creates the opportunity to reach out for a discussion or to compare notes. This was a key driver behind the adoption of IBM Connections at Bayer MaterialScience, one part of the larger Bayer group. Bayer MaterialScience, with 15,000 employees across 30 locations, realized that different teams were often working on the same subject without realizing it.¹¹ Its work with IBM Connections, and Foundation 3 more generally, is aimed at avoiding non-intentional overlap of similar work.

Activity signals—a statement about what’s going on or has been happening—can create connections between people for collaboration. The types of signals that are useful include:

- What is happening right now across our organization?
- What has a particular person been working on during the past week?
- What has been discussed about a certain topic recently?
- What is going on with regards to a specific project?

Activity signaling isn’t a new idea—the collaboration technology hasn’t created the need to enable people to discover what’s going on. Larger organizations and the distribution of employees across time and space have done that.

The biggest difference between current technology for signaling activity and older approaches is the time delay between activity and notification:

- A monthly printed newsletter has at least one month’s time delay. It is up to 4 weeks before I hear what you’ve been doing—and even more if you have to get it printed outside the firm. By then, it’s too late anyway for me to do anything about what you were working on. I can’t offer you resources to assist, or seek clarification that would be helpful to my current work. I just look at your beautiful newsletter and appreciate the professional layout. Nice font. Good job. Move on.
- A weekly email message has at least one week’s time delay. If you send it out on a Tuesday, it reports the activities and happenings of a week ago. While the time delay is significantly less than the printed newsletter, and an email message doesn’t suffer from extra time delay due to printing requirements, it’s still up to a week behind what was actually happening. Is there still an opportunity to collaborate?

Activity signaling isn’t a new idea—the technology hasn’t created the need to allow people to discover what’s going on.

- A blog post has a much shorter time delay, usually ranging from hours to days. If my blog reading software polls for updates regularly, I could hear about what you've been doing within hours. If I don't check my blog reading software very often, the delay could be one or two days.
- A micro-blog post has no inherent time delay—assuming that I am paying attention (see below). I can know immediately what you're working on, but I have many more individual signals to sift.

Compare this overall change with activity signaling to what's happened with photography. When you needed an outside photographer for every photo, few people had their photo taken. It was an activity for the rich and famous, not everyone. That's like the glossy newsletter that gets printed once a month. With the introduction of film photography and more affordable cameras, more people had the means to take a photo. But there was still a financial cost to participation, and unless you had a Polaroid camera with inbuilt printing capabilities, there was a time delay of days or weeks before the film was used up and sent for processing. Now with digital cameras, the variable cost of taking a photo is nil, and you can see immediately what the photo looks like. The consequence is that people take—and share—more photos. Those photos and opportunities for capturing memories were always there ready to be gathered, but earlier generations of photography equipment made it a costly exercise. Very few people took as many photos with a film camera as they do now with a digital camera.

For Julian, activity signaling provides a quick way to let other people see what he has been working on and create an opportunity for their involvement. For the people involved in his immediate team activities, they already have a way of finding out what Julian has been working on. For everyone else in his organization, particularly those who don't yet know Julian or are not currently working on a project with him, activity signaling provides a way of staying up-to-date with Julian's activities, or a quick way of reviewing his recent activity.

There is significant vendor and product activity on Foundation 3, especially for open activity signaling that's highly discoverable for collaboration. Twitter is a Foundation 3 service for the world at large. Inside organizations, IBM Connections, Socialtext Signals, Salesforce Chatter, and Yammer are all activity signaling mechanisms. See Figure 2-16.

There are two parts of the activity signaling equation—the broadcast side of creating or sending the update, and the listening side of paying attention. The problem is that it's easier to broadcast than it is to listen. This isn't a new problem though; information has threatened to overwhelm us ever since Gutenberg invented the printing press!

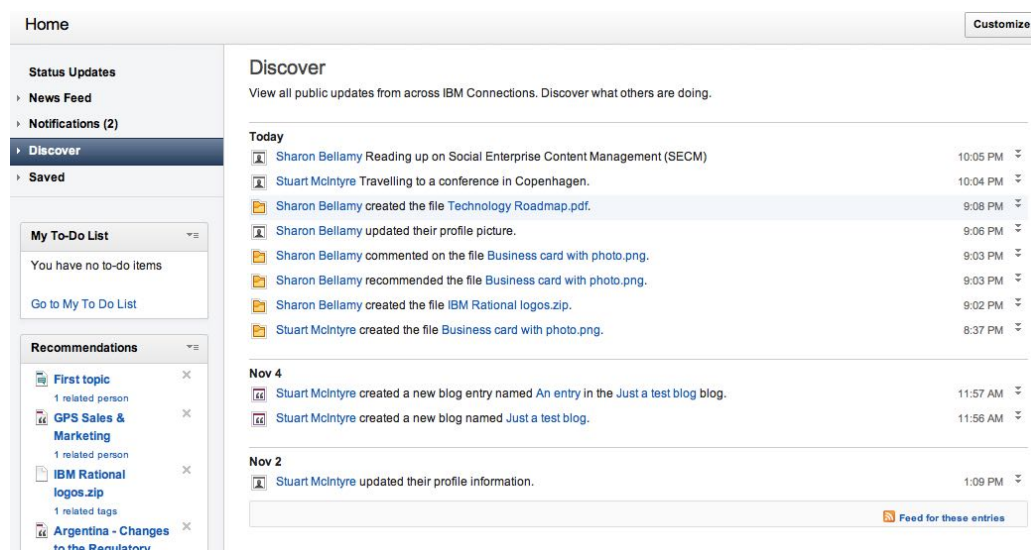
Attention and response closes the loop on activity signaling, regardless of the specific approach. When someone responds with a question about something you have signaled, that's interesting. When someone mentions what you have said, perhaps linking to a blog post, that creates a desire to find out more about the other person. When someone re-distributes what you said, either on a micro-blogging service or via email, it gives a quick nudge regarding your contribution inside the organization.

With newer tools for activity signaling, where we greatly increase the number of signals, we need a corresponding increase in our ability to filter, sort, ignore, and handle the increase in signals. There is still work to be done by Foundation 3 vendors, since the attention filters available now are very coarsely-grained. That is to say:

- By opting to subscribe to the updates a particular person creates, you can see everything that person is saying.
- By creating an ongoing search scan for a particular word or phrase, you can see every use of that word or phrase across the system.
- By creating an ongoing search scan for a particular hashtag—an intentional method of indicating that a particular update is part of a wider collection—you can see every use of the hashtag.
- Regretably, the concepts of “not” and “excluding” are missing from today’s systems. You can’t follow a person and filter out everything they say about going fishing, attending a rugby match, or their work on Project Gemini. You can’t follow a hashtag, except when it mentions a particular other phrase.

Fine-grained control is currently lacking, but should improve in the coming years.

Figure 2-16. Activity Signaling in IBM Connections



Using IBM Connections, employees have a way of signaling what they are working on. They can also keep track of what other people are doing, and what’s happening in particular topic areas based on activity in IBM Connections.

Foundation 4. Form Ad-Hoc Groups to Explore Collaboration Potential

The ability to form ad-hoc groups to explore collaboration potential is the fourth and final element of the organizational collaboration framework. It recognizes that employees will have interests in particular topics, and provides an environment in which people can discover others with the same interest. Foundation 4 is not about replacing collaborative groups (or communities of interest or practice), but about a way of allowing anyone with an interest in a particular topic to see everything else that's happening in the area. The critical difference is that while collaborative groups can be moderated so as to exert control over who is in the group, ad-hoc groups have no such concept. The decision to track what's being said among the ad-hoc collection of individuals is an individual-level choice.

Employees have interests in particular topics, and Foundation 4 provides an environment in which people can discover others with the same interest.

The ability to form ad-hoc groups provides a complementary approach to bringing people together in formal collaborative groups (see the *Four Connectors* framework). People in a collaborative group already know they have a shared interest, and by joining the group, have signaled their intention to participate for joint learning and capability development. But not everyone in an organization with a particular interest will join the specific group, and in large organizations there will be a fracturing of the interest into several sub-groups. To minimize the tendency to create silos that are unnecessary and cause blindness to collaboration potential, ad-hoc groups provide a purview of current activity.

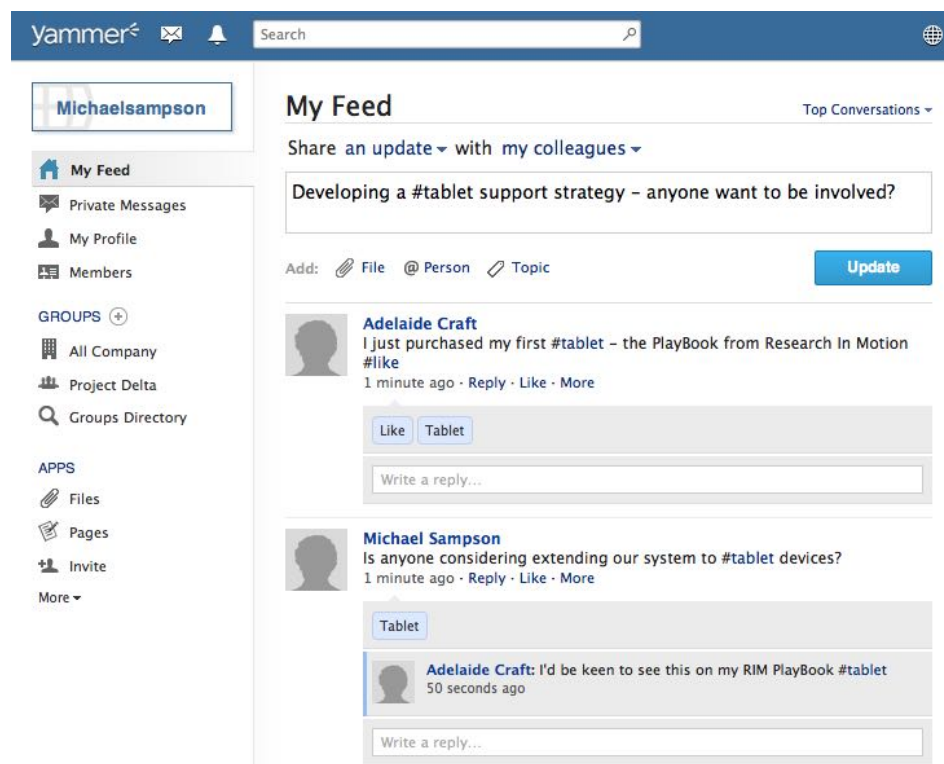
Key attributes of a Foundation 4 technology are:

- The ability for an individual to add an interest descriptor to an activity signal (*Foundation 3*) so as to raise its visibility to others in the organization who share the same interest. For example, this could be achieved by adding a hashtag to an activity update in a micro-blogging service such as Yammer (see Figure 2-17).
- The bubbling up of related discussions and content artifacts from collaborative groups with open membership. These could be included as a result of an individual in the group using a particular interest descriptor. Equally, they could be included as a result of analytic interrogation from a system seeking to make sense of current discussions. Activity in collaborative groups with closed membership is not automatically included.
- The inability to moderate membership in the ad-hoc group, beyond controlling who has access to the system. Anyone with system access can participate in the ad-hoc group. "Membership" is a personal choice.

- The inability to moderate content that shows in the ad-hoc group. People can choose to ignore irrelevant content (a human response), the person continually creating inappropriate content can be talked to by their manager or the collaboration team (an organizational approach), but the system is intentionally unable to exclude it.

The focus with Foundation 4 is on both quickly-forming, quickly-disbanding groups that want to participate in and track a common interest for a short period of time, as well as longer running interest-based groups that want a way of staying up with what others are doing, but without the explicit learning commitment of forming and maintaining a collaborative group. Participation in an ad-hoc group may lead to the formation of a specific collaborative group for deeper learning, but it doesn't have to. There remains the need to see who else is talking about a particular topic. Even if 100% of employees with a particular shared interest formed a collaborative group and constrained all of their interactions to that group space, over the subsequent months new employees would join the organization who had that interest but knew nothing about the current group.

Figure 2-17. Forming Ad-Hoc Groups in Yammer



Topics in Yammer—such as “Tablet” above—can be used to create ad-hoc groups to explore collaboration potential. By using common topic tags, people can discover over time who else has an interest in the same topic. If required, topical discussions can be shifted into a group.

How to Use the Four Foundations Framework

The Four Foundations provides a framework for investigating capabilities to support collaboration across an organization. Both collaborative teams and collaborative groups are hallmarks of a collaborative organization, but four technical capabilities beyond those needed for isolated teams and groups are required. The philosophical focus of the Four Foundations is on creating a means of highlighting new opportunities for collaboration.

On the next page we talk about the interrelationships between the three frameworks (teams, groups, and organizations), and how to bring together the different capabilities. But first let's conclude our discussion with a brief comment on two broad architectural approaches to the organizational collaboration requirements.

Architecturally, due to the technology's pan-organizational responsibility for highlighting collaboration potential, there are two approaches. The first is to purchase an integrated collaboration technology platform that provides capabilities for teams, groups, and the wider organization. One big product supposedly does everything. This strategy works if the "one big product" has technical capabilities that are good enough across the three dimensions, or if due to the existence of below-par capabilities in certain areas, there are third-party add-ons that can adequately compensate for the out-of-the-box weaknesses. It is also dependent on the majority of collaborative activity happening directly in the system, or if other independent systems exist for teams and groups, that the "one big product" can integrate that activity in its Four Foundations analysis.

The second approach is N+1. It is based on the expectation that the technology used by teams and groups will change over time, and that multiple complementary technologies may overlap during upgrades and migrations. Additionally, teams and groups wanting to be at the forefront of new technological developments may bring in new technologies. As a consequence of this technological divergence, it may make more sense to buy a product whose sole purpose is to interrogate, aggregate, and signal collaborative activity across the organization. As an N+1 technology—one more product in addition to the multiple technologies used by teams and groups—it should play a longer running role.

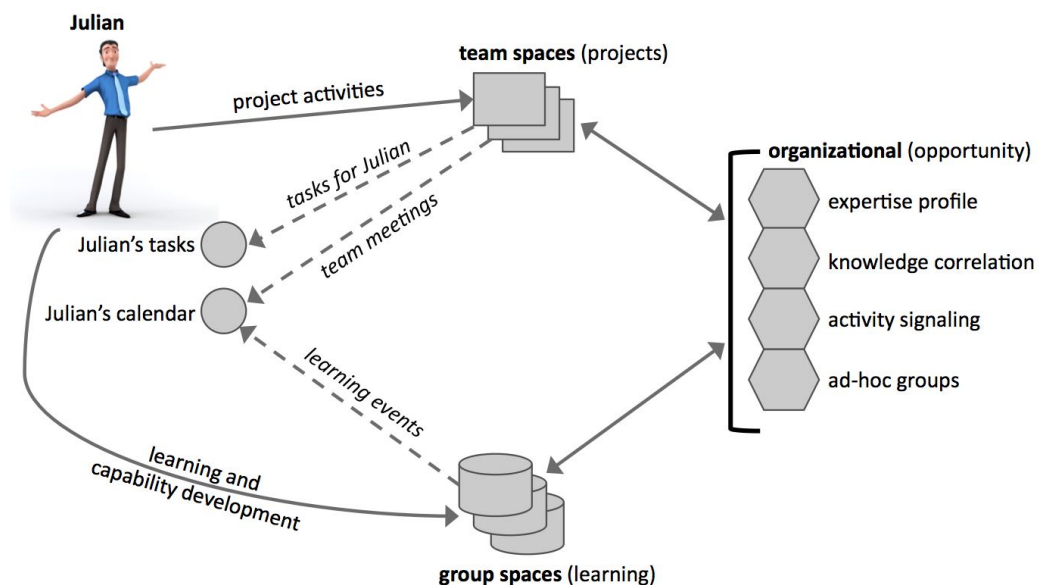
The N+1 approach expects that the technology used by teams and groups will change over time, and that multiple complementary technologies may overlap during upgrades and migrations.

In closing, collaborative teams perform the work (skill is expressed or enacted), collaborative groups develop their ability to perform the work (skill is enhanced), while collaborative organizations seek out skills that could be used in teams and groups (skills are explored).

Integrating the Three Frameworks

We have investigated three frameworks to support different forms of collaboration inside the organization: collaborative teams (Seven Pillars), collaborative groups (Four Connectors), and collaborative organizations (Four Foundations). These three frameworks provide a means of classifying different collaboration products and services, and evaluating which part of the collaborative equation they address. Figure 2-18 shows the interaction between the three frameworks.

Figure 2-18. Integrating the Three Collaboration Frameworks



Team and group spaces are used by individuals in their collaborative activities—for team projects, and for collaborative learning and capability development. Activity in these spaces are aggregated and synthesized by the organizational collaboration tier. Specific content that has task and calendar implications flows back to the individual's task list and calendar.

One particular point to note is the two-way interaction between both the team and group spaces and the organizational collaboration tier. Individual team and group spaces provide the underlying content for the organizational collaboration tier, but the aggregated summarization across multiple team and group spaces is fed back to appropriate individual team and group spaces to encourage wider collaboration. Specifically, content from Pillar 1 (collaborative teams) and Connectors 1-3 (collaborative groups) are analyzed at the organizational tier, and appropriate subsets from the wider pool of activity are fed back to the team and group levels via Pillar 7 (collaboration auto-discovery) and Connector 4 (surfacing of related groups and conversations).

Framework 4. Collaboration Scenarios

The three frameworks we have looked at take general ideas about collaboration in teams, groups, and organizations as the starting place. This framework—Collaboration Scenarios—starts from a different place. It provides both an alternative approach for evaluating the collaboration technology required to support particular collaboration processes, as well as a complementary approach for checking how well the capabilities in specific collaboration products and services support high-frequency collaboration scenarios.

Emphasis and Assumptions

The core idea of Collaboration Scenarios is to create a lens through which to look at the common activities that take place when people are collaborating—in your

organization. It is firmly entrenched in the concept of looking at what work is done in your organization today, and then evaluating new technology and its impact on the scenario. Collaboration Scenarios is based on two assumptions:

1. The introduction of new collaboration technology does not force a change in the work of the organization. For example, teams that respond to proposals will still need to respond to proposals after Yammer has been installed—the overall intent remains unchanged. The introduction of Yammer doesn't remove the need to write proposal responses, but it may have some side benefits.
2. The “way” teams work together—the routines they follow and the technology they use—become invisible to them over time. In the pursuit of efficiency, this is an excellent development. In the pursuit of effectiveness, it is less so. When new routines and technologies are available to increase the team's effectiveness, continuing the old way means the team is effective only at being inefficient.

There are many Collaboration Scenarios that form the basis of collaborative work, and the idea is to select the ones from the list on page 81 that represent the work being done at your organization. The approach puts the emphasis on what collaboration means in your organization today, rather than on “cool features” in new collaboration technology. It keeps the consistency of intent in focus, even while examining technology-enabled opportunities for change.

Common Collaboration Scenarios

Among the many Collaboration Scenarios, common ones include:

- *Document Co-Authoring.* When two or more people work on a document together—planning, drafting, writing, editing, and the final polishing.

Collaboration Scenarios
keeps consistency of intent in
focus, even while examining
technology-enabled
opportunities for change.

- *Making Decisions.* When multiple people are involved in forming decision options, evaluating the options, and making a decision.
- *Holding Discussions.* When teams or groups discuss ideas, challenges, problems, and opportunities, with the view to exploring the boundaries of what's known.
- *Managing a Project.* When teams work on a project together—an initiative with a particular outcome, set membership, and definite end signal.
- *Managing Meetings.* When people meet to discuss ideas, make decisions, explore possibilities, and otherwise communicate “in the now.” The scenario includes the pre-meeting planning activities, as well as the post-meeting follow-up.
- *Finding Expertise.* When people need to locate others who have expertise or special knowledge in a particular topic or field.
- *Sharing Learning and Best Practices.* When multiple people are involved in carrying out similar work, and innovations in the work approach made by one person could benefit other people doing the same work.
- *Individual Coherence.* A special Collaboration Scenario that considers the impact of introducing new collaboration technology on an individual—how they track and coordinate everything they are involved in and have to do.

Three Step Process

There are three steps in using the Collaboration Scenarios approach.

1. *What Work is Done Today?* Define the Collaboration Scenarios that represent the common work activities of your organization. You should have a sense of this based on your prior observations, but if not, start talking to people.
2. *How is Work Done Today?* Develop an understanding of the routines and technologies that are used today in carrying out these Collaboration Scenarios. For example, shadow a couple of teams and watch how they manage their projects. Or talk to a team manager about how they manage meetings.
3. *How Could Work Be Done Better?* Look for new technology that could be applied to the scenario, and evaluate the differences that could be made to the way the scenario is carried out.

Let's look briefly at four Collaboration Scenarios.

Collaboration Scenario 1. Document Co-Authoring

Documents state a position, make an offer, or outline an argument at a particular point in time. Some documents in organizations are created by a single individual, but it's much more common for documents to contain input from more than one person. The most common way for working on a document together is by email and attachment—the document (or spreadsheet, or presentation) is drafted by one person and then sent around for review and input by others. The lead author receives an ongoing stream of email messages with new versions of the document—replete with in-document comments and direct edits to the text—and must decide how to integrate these into the overall master document. Document co-authoring in this way is a pain-filled and error-prone process:

Document co-authoring by email and attachment is a pain-filled and error-prone process.

- Key reviewers may forget to send their edits back in a timely fashion, holding up the process for everyone. The author needs to keep chasing them.
- Reviewers may make the same comment as everyone else, but because the input is invisible to everyone but the lead author, there is duplication of effort.
- The lead author has a nightmare of a task to compare-and-contrast multiple document versions, and then merge input into the master document.
- Under tight deadlines, developing a document in this way introduces significant risks—including the possibility of including an old version of one part of the document rather than a more recent copy. The author might miss it in their inbox.

If document co-authoring is a common activity at your organization, and an email-enabled approach is the dominant strategy, there are many collaboration products that can be applied to eliminate the pain and reduce the risk of errors. In looking at these new products, you can sort the differences into two overall categories:

1. *Shared Storage, Single Author at Time.* In overcoming the problems associated with emailing the document around for comments and input and having to integrate multiple copies into a master document, various products provide a means of shared storage. In this model, the document is stored in a place that everyone can get to, but the approach is still limited to allowing a single person to work on the document at any given time. Products in this category include file servers (with a shared drive), an enterprise wiki such as Atlassian Confluence, Microsoft SharePoint (with check-in/check-out), and many others. Switching from email to shared storage within the document co-authoring scenario can result in process efficiency savings of up to 50% (see the discussion on page 107).

2. *Shared Storage, Multiple Simultaneous Authors.* Continuing with the shared storage from category 1, other products provide the capability to support multiple simultaneous authors. This means that more than one person can open the document at a given time and work inside it. Products include Microsoft SharePoint 2010 with Office Web Apps (which allows the use of Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint), PleaseReview (which converts the document to a collaborative web page), and Google Docs. Multiple simultaneous authoring can result in savings of up to 60% compared to email (see page 107 for more).

Figure 2-19 highlights broad commonality as well as the nuances of specific products. Approaches that show the best promise can be evaluated further.

Figure 2-19. Document Co-Authoring Alternatives

Alternative Approach	Products	Description, Remaining Issues
Shared Storage, Single Author at a Time	File server (shared drives)	External people can't access the file server. There is no visible alert in the file list about who is editing the document.
	Atlassian Confluence (or other enterprise wiki)	Requires moving away from Word and "track changes." Will need to spend extra time on presentation once the document is written.
	Microsoft SharePoint (with check-in/check-out)	Uses a team site or document workspace. Alerts can be sent whenever the document is changed.
Shared Storage, Multiple Simultaneous Authors	Microsoft SharePoint 2010 with Office Web Apps	Some nuances about the use of the Word client versus the Excel client for multi-person input.
	PleaseReview	It's a different way of getting input because it uses a web browser interface instead of Word, etc.
	Google Docs	Documents are stored in Google's data centers, not in-house. Offers in-document conversations.

New technologies that improve the document co-authoring scenario can be grouped by their major impact—the provision of shared storage, and whether they permit multiple simultaneous authors. Particular nuances of each product can be highlighted, and those that show the most promise can be explored further.

Collaboration Scenario 2. Managing Meetings

Meetings provide an opportunity for people to interact in real time, to focus on a topic at hand, to air different perspectives, and to form common agreement about a way forward. Having a “meeting” of the minds and intent is a core part of collaboration—coordination of future work efforts toward a shared and common outcome. Unfortunately, many meetings are a waste of time because they are poorly led, badly structured, and in some cases, unnecessary.

Many meetings are a waste of time because they are poorly led, badly structured, and in some cases, unnecessary.

In evaluating the state of meetings in your organization, some of the following common issues may rise to the surface:

- People come unprepared to the meeting. They’re already harried and breathless when they come in the door, and claim to have had no time to read the materials in advance of getting together. The first half of the meeting turns into an ad-hoc presentation of the materials, rather than a discussion about implications.
- Some meetings are just for airing status updates, because there is no other way of informing everyone about what’s going on. The team doesn’t have a work tracking dashboard that summarizes current state on multiple projects, so they have to get together for two hours every week to remind their colleagues about what they are working on.
- People don’t know why they’ve come to the meeting, because although they’ve seen the agenda, it is unclear what contribution they are supposed to make. But they’ve come anyway, in case they “miss out on something.”
- Meetings drag on for too long, and a few people dominate the discussion by re-hashing more loudly what they’ve already said earlier in the meeting. Other people zone out and do email, play with their iPhones, or surf the web. It’s unclear what people are supposed to do next when leaving the meeting.

While we could start to attempt to resolve these issues by putting in new technology, it would be waste of time and effort. Most of these represent failure in meeting practice. They are human and organizational cultural issues, not technology ones. That said, and based on the expectation that the human and cultural issues are recognized and active work to mitigate them has begun, new technology can lend some weight to managing meetings differently. For example:

- People who come unprepared to meetings because they have not read the materials in advance may do so because the materials are only distributed 10 minutes before the meeting. The human practice has to change, so that materials

are made available at least 48 or 72 hours beforehand. Technology could help in three ways: by reminding the person tasked to distribute the materials they have a hard deadline coming up, and if they fail to do so, the meeting is automatically rescheduled. Technology could also help by the provision of a shared repository for meeting materials, to get away from email distribution. Finally, for people who go from meeting to meeting and are never at their desk, an iPad or similar tablet could allow them to catch up on reading while on the move.

- Meetings held simply for status updates can be eliminated by having an appropriate shared work tracking tool. The human practice—an expectation that everyone will use it and keep their work status appropriately updated—is essential to making it work. Besides, maybe the meeting shouldn't be eliminated altogether. There is real value in discussing roadblocks and mitigations, so the two-hour in-person weekly meeting to share work status updates transforms into a 30-minute audio conference focused on improvement.
- People who attend meetings in case they “miss out on something” can be discouraged from doing so through a human practice and a technology change. The human practice is a return to taking real minutes during the meeting—something we seem to have forgotten in recent years. The technology change is that these minutes are posted to the team's shared repository, and there is an open invitation after the meeting to further discuss any matter in the repository. If someone wasn't there, they can still state their perspective. And if someone should have been there, that can be fixed for future meetings.
- Meetings that drag on for too long because some people dominate the discussion while others zone out can also be mitigated by practice and technology. The practices include approaches such as better meeting facilitation (by an external person if required), the calling of shorter meetings, the removal of chairs from the meeting room so everyone has to stand up, the banning of laptops and smartphones except for the person taking minutes, and so on. Technology can also play a role: if the discussion is actively captured using dialogue mapping, people who keep harping on about the same topic can be prevented from doing so.¹²

Clearly there are a number of ways of “fixing” meetings in your organization, and while technology can play a supporting role in doing so, the human practice considerations are fundamental. Installing any form of new technology without a correlated revision of the human practices around meetings is misguided.

Collaboration Scenario 3. Sharing Learning and Best Practices

When a team puts a lot of effort into understanding a complex topic and developing an answer or framework for understanding it, sharing that learning creates leverage. Turning “on-the-bleeding-edge” learning into common understanding supports the spreading of good ideas, the development of best practice, competitive advantage in the market, along with a whole realm of efficiency and effectiveness benefits. Unfortunately, many organizations have an under-developed capability for sharing learning and best practices. Often it’s an email to particular staff members with an attached document outlining the idea.

Turning “on-the-bleeding-edge” learning into common understanding supports the spreading of good ideas, the development of best practice, and competitive advantage.

Sharing learning and best practices in this way has a number of negative consequences:

- Discussion about the learning or new practice is limited to those in the email thread. If you didn’t get the email and attachment, you can’t see what is being talked about. If one of the recipients fails to “reply-to-all,” some people are excluded from the subsequent comments and input.
- New employees joining the organization, or new staff members joining the team, have no way of getting a sense of the state of play. Prior learning and best practice approaches are hidden in peoples’ inboxes, and unless someone goes through their email archive and forwards relevant discussions, the new staff member has to start from scratch.
- There is no common understanding of learning and best practice. Since everyone joined in at different points, were copied in on only certain discussions, and have kept only particular ideas, there is an extreme divergence of understanding about the overall body of knowledge. There isn’t a “way we do things around here,” only “the way I do things.”
- Updating, extending, correcting, and clarifying learning and best practice are difficult. Every individual has to attach updates to previous discussions, because there is no shared way of doing so. If someone misses a critical update, their own performance inside the organization suffers.

There are many different collaboration products—ranging from simple to complex—that offer a new way of sharing learning and best practices. Irrespective of the product, the first core capability is a shared repository of learning and best practice, while the second is a discussion mechanism for evaluating and synthesizing opportunities for improvement against the current approach. Lowe’s, a major home improvement chain in the United

States, found that having such a system available provided a return of \$1 million on just a single idea.¹³

See Figure 2-20 for three approaches that could be applied to this scenario. There are many others; this is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Figure 2-20. Sharing Learning and Best Practice Alternatives

Alternative Approach	Products	Description, Remaining Issues
Shared repository with a discussion mechanism	Google Docs	A simple collection of online documents sharing our learning. Discussions can be included in the document, either with in-document conversations or via text in the document.
	Microsoft SharePoint (site with a document library and discussion list)	Create a site for best practices, which can be written as Word documents. More difficult to tie the discussion about improvements to the document however.
	IBM Connections Community (or Jive, or NewsGator Social Sites for SharePoint)	A community focused on best practices for a specific area. Interested people can participate. Discussions can be made through comments. Good findability through search and profiles.

New technologies that provide a shared repository and discussion mechanism can be used to improve the sharing of learning and best practices collaboration scenario. The particular approach of each product can be described, and those that show promise investigated more.

Finally, it is not always the case that new technology is required to improve an organization's capability in sharing learning and best practices. One of my recent projects involved looking at this scenario for a client, and clearly I knew there was a wide range of technology that could be used to support it. Ultimately, however, my recommendation was that no extra technology was required, and that the sharing of learning and best practices would simply happen by people talking more. Why? The client was a small government agency of less than 200 people, 98% of whom worked in a single office location. Sharing learning and best practices could be accomplished orally. There was no need for extra technology to bring people together.

Collaboration Scenario 4. Individual Coherence

As individuals, we collaborate with others across teams, groups, and the organization. As individuals, we bring our own skills and capabilities to bear on shared projects and learning opportunities. In the best collaborations, these both play with and play off the skills and capabilities of others. However, collaborative activity has implications for the individual too, and thus the focus of the Individual Coherence collaboration scenario is to examine those implications when introducing new collaboration technology.

Collaborative activity has implications for the individual.

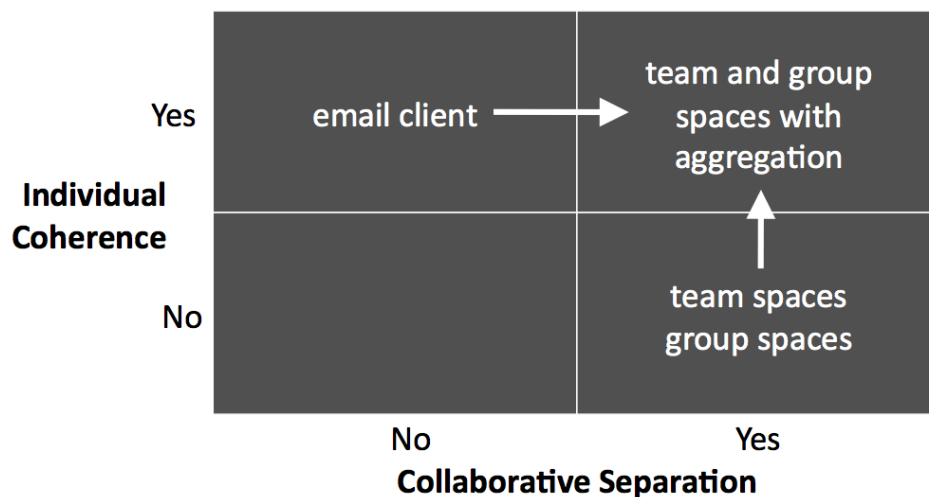
The essential question is to ask how relevant activity in collaborative team and group spaces becomes noticed by the individual that must, should, or could do something in response. The pragmatic separation of collaborative activity into particular sub-spaces gives both teams and groups the ability to focus on their particular project work or learning activity, but it equally isolates that activity from everything else that is happening. Inside the Project Alpha team space, Adelaide and her fellow team members don't see the current status of Project Beta nor Project Delta. But outside of the Project Alpha team space, in her capacity as an individual involved in many things at the same time, Adelaide needs a way of bringing everything back together. For example, consider the following questions:

- *Notification of Current Discussions.* How does the individual gain an awareness of current discussions they could contribute toward across team and group spaces? For team spaces, which discussions have changed since they last visited the discussion area? Does the individual need to check on each of the discussions, or is there a method for alerting them to recent changes? Ditto for discussions in group spaces.
- *Coherence of Meetings.* Do meetings scheduled in team spaces automatically flow into the individual's calendar? Are there any limitations on which calendars are supported, and given the calendaring products used at your organization, is that a problem? Are meetings from team spaces taken into consideration during a free-busy search? For events in group spaces, what happens? Is there any integration between the event opportunity in the group space and the individual's calendar?
- *Coherence of Task Assignments.* When an individual is assigned a task in a team space, is there a way for each individual to get an overall view of their current task assignments? Will the collaboration technology being used for collaborative teams automatically aggregate all task assignments? If tasks are assigned in other systems, how does each individual gain an integrated view of what they're supposed to do?
- *Limitations on Device Access.* Corporate IT departments used to have the ability to mandate that employees would use only particular mobile devices—such as the

Research In Motion BlackBerry or a Microsoft Windows Mobile device—but those days are slipping away. Like it or not, individuals are exerting much greater control over the devices they use for business, resulting in an explosion of iPhones, iPads, and Android-based devices. What support does your collaboration technology offer for mobile device access, and what is not provided? Is access by browser or app?

While it struggles with many collaborative challenges, email provides an excellent standard for individual coherence. Everything of relevance to an individual flowed to a single place—the inbox—and only when the individual dealt with the matter signaled in each message did it go away. We risk losing the simplicity of this aspect of email as collaborative activity is shifted into separate team and group spaces. Many collaborative tools re-integrate with email by sending email alerts of new happenings—either as they happen, or in a summarized form at the end of each day or week.

Figure 2-21. Examining Individual Coherence



Current email clients provide individual coherence—email messages, calendar events, and task allocations flow to a single place—but lack the separation of these into team and group aligned spaces. Team and group spaces provide the separation of activities into collaborative spaces, but often lack the aggregation capabilities required for individual coherence.

The alternative to providing individual coherence at a systemic level is to rely on the individual to do it themselves. They have to remember that meetings have been scheduled in different team spaces, and at the appropriate time, open the team space and look up the meeting details. They have to remember they have task assignments in different team spaces, and keep checking the different spaces to see what's new for them. They have to remember how to use the browser on their mobile device to check on relevant discussions. Unfortunately, this demands perfect human behavior by perfect people—and there are too few of such people to rely on this as a strategy. Systemic coherence is a must.

How to Use the Collaboration Scenarios Framework

Collaboration Scenarios provides a fourth framework for investigating specific collaboration products and services. However, it mandates a higher focus on the overall objective of the collaboration, instead of being seduced by features and functions. It's a way of softening the focus on features and functions, and evaluating where new technology actually makes a difference to the working practices of your employees. Yes, you can change the technology, but is the resulting difference big enough to matter?

Here's when to use the Collaboration Scenarios approach:

- When the nature of collaboration within your organization fits tightly within one or two collaboration scenarios, and thus getting the best technology available is important for future efficiency. The scenarios approach keeps the focus of product features and functions on specific capability areas, and gives permission to ignore the remaining bells-and-whistles that don't contribute to improving the scenarios.
- When you are considering purchasing a general-purpose collaboration "platform" that does many different things, instead of a specific collaboration product or service that concentrates on doing one or two things well. Select the collaboration scenarios that are of importance in your organization—see an initial list on pages 80-81—and investigate how well the collaboration "platform" supports these scenarios. If there are areas of critical weakness, you may need to re-evaluate your platform inclinations or investigate third-party add-ons.
- When you want to stimulate discussion in your organization about how work gets done today, and where the improvement opportunities reside in the future. Selecting collaboration scenarios that reflect the common working activities of your people, and then examining current and new technologies that support those scenarios, provides a starting point for discussing improvement.
- When you want to compare-and-contrast multiple products or services to assess the magnitude of change that each will bring to specific scenarios. The approach gives a way of seeing commonality and highlighting differences across products.

The scenarios approach keeps the focus of product features and functions on specific capability areas, and gives permission to ignore the remaining bells-and-whistles that don't contribute to improving the scenarios.

In closing, the Collaboration Scenarios approach emphasizes continuity of purpose in the face of changing methods, a message which can help reluctant-to-change employees to at least consider different ways of working.

Decision Factors with Collaboration Technology

The way you evaluate the technology is important, but it will only take you so far in making a choice. It will help you differentiate between different technologies and their ability to support the work of your firm, but that's all. Much more has to be taken into consideration. In this section, we look at five decision factors, and an approach to apportion weighting between them.

Factor 1. Viability of the Vendor

It is easier for a vendor to create a new collaboration product or service than it is for them to develop a viable business model. The technology is easy; the business model difficult. If you have bought into a product, embraced it widely at your firm, and the vendor goes out of business, you have a massive problem on your hands. While it's impossible to know what's going to happen in the future to a vendor, investigate the following aspects:

Considering product capabilities will only take you so far in the decision process. There's a lot more that has to be taken into consideration.

1. Look at their history for releasing new versions of the product—both major “point nought” releases, as well as intermediate versions. Have they released more than one version? Is there a rhythm to the development and release cycle? Are the incremental and major features helpful? If the answer to all three questions is “yes,” that's a good sign. If some are “no,” be forewarned.
2. Review the names of firms they claim as customers, and then try to discover how some of those firms are using the product. Some vendors host and record webinars with customers. Other customers present case studies at an industry conference about their use of the product. How real is their use?
3. See if the vendor is actively involved in industry conferences, on the trade floor or as a sponsor. Where and how often are they spending their marketing budget?
4. For public companies, look at their annual accounts and financial position. For venture-funded firms, see who is funding them and how frequently new venture money is flowing in. For privately-held firms it's more difficult to know.

Evaluating viability is important because you want to have the “migration to a new vendor” decision under your control. It's really bad to turn up at the office one day and discover your vendor has gone out of business or been acquired, and that you can't get to your systems and business data. It's happened before, and those involved quickly learn how to spell “STRESS” in capital letters!

Factor 2. Financial Cost of the Product Over Time

The initial, ongoing, and linked costs involved in buying the product represent a second decision factor. How much is it going to cost your organization now and into the future to buy the new product? Using a spreadsheet, map out the following:

- The initial price to license the collaboration server software. If you need to license multiple copies for redundancy and reliability, add this in too.
- The initial price to purchase licenses for each user in your company. If your organization is big enough to attract volume pricing discounts, make sure you use the best available price. If your senior management team is planning to grow the size of your organization over the next few years, plan to pay each year for new licenses to cover your new employees.
- The annual maintenance cost you have to pay the software vendor for the server software and user licenses. This is usually in the range of 15% to 25% of your initial licensing cost.
- The initial price to purchase new server hardware to run the collaboration software effectively at your organization. Most vendors offer calculation tools to assist you sizing server hardware; don't skimp on this and buy something underpowered, but at the same time, don't go overboard either. Depending on the operating system requirements for your collaboration server, you may have server operating system licenses to purchase too.
- If you want to get more fancy and you have accurate data available, include other costs like electricity, IT staff labor, and training costs. However, if these are likely to be similar regardless of the product you choose, modeling the cost of these additional factors doesn't help with making the decision.
- If your decision to purchase a particular collaboration software tool demands that you also purchase other software—a particular office productivity suite version, a particular security product, or a particular add-on tool to add capabilities the underlying product doesn't offer—factor those in too.

Use a spreadsheet to figure out how much it is going to cost your organization to buy the product.

With these costs detailed in a spreadsheet, and ideally for at least two different products, you can compare and contrast the decision at a financial level. You don't have to choose the least expensive one, but it's best to make that decision in light of the facts—or as close to the facts as you can get. There is a discipline and a way of thinking that goes into creating a spreadsheet to model the different financial costs. If this is new ground for you, seek the help of a friendly accountant from your financial department.

Factor 3. Capabilities of the Product

The capabilities of the product represent an important decision factor. If a particular product doesn't offer features that are essential for your business users, then you will be wasting your time investigating it further. Here's how to find out what the product does.¹⁴

Base 1. What the Product Offers Today (Document Review)

Open the vendor's web site, click through to the product section, and locate the product you are investigating. Read the various web pages on features and functions, download and read the product briefs, and look at any screenshots or demonstration videos the vendor offers on their site.

When I am reviewing a product or service, I always like to create my own notes about key features and functions, and any reactions I have to screenshots or product videos. If the product will be used to support collaborative teams, I pull out the Seven Pillars framework and make some quick notes about what is and isn't supported. If it will be used to support organizational collaboration or a particular collaboration scenario, I look at it through that lens. Having your own briefing notes is tremendously useful when you have to share what you have learnt with others at your organization.

Base 2. What the Product May Offer Tomorrow (Vendor Roadmap Review)

Vendors are always thinking about features and functions to add to the next and subsequent versions of their products. These range from improvements to current capabilities (a better way of enabling interaction in the web browser), support for new platforms (a Mac client, or an app for the iPad), and new core functionality to reflect current trends in the market (tagging, voting, and "like" functionality, for example).

What can you find out about where the vendor is planning on taking their product over the next few releases? Some information will be publicly available from conference presentations or strategy pages on their web site—devour whatever you can find. Other information will require the signing of a non-disclosure agreement, although smaller firms dealing with the large vendors will have little chance of getting sensitive roadmap details.

Base 3. How the Product Actually Behaves (Lab Study)

A final way of finding out what the product does is to download the free trial from the vendor, install it on a test server, set up a few client machines, and try it out. Take your notes from your document review (at Base 1), and see whether the product actually does what the vendor claims it does. For example, if the vendor says it offers integrated calendaring and task management, two aspects of the Seven Pillars framework for teams, create a test project with a few test users and try it out. Does it work how you thought it would? If not, and those capabilities are important to your users, be forewarned. If you have the capability to test latency—especially for cloud-based services—do that as well.

Factor 4. Business Partner Channel and Support Mechanisms

While you will be licensing the product from the vendor, you don't usually turn to them directly for installation and ongoing administration support. While the bigger vendors usually have their own consulting and professional service divisions—it's a highly profitable line of business—look for the existence of a strong indirect support channel. If such a channel exists, it's a good sign of vendor viability, product feasibility, and product maturity. It takes time and effort for vendors to develop an indirect channel with sufficient product competence at the level required to support customers.

If there is an indirect channel, look at the following attributes:

- Where are the business partners located around the world, in relation to the geographies in which your organization operates? Are there business partners with a global footprint that you will be able to work with in a unified way across all major geographies, or will your organization have to establish relationships with individual business partners in many geographies?
 - How many business partners are there in your key geographies? If you start a business relationship with one partner and it goes bad, do you have options to switch to another partner? If there are only one or two business partners available to you, take that as a warning sign. You will bear higher risk in working with those partners than if there are many partners available.
 - What's involved in becoming a business partner? Good signs include the presence of learning and competence requirements, the necessity of training a minimum number of people, and a way of demonstrating competence over time as the product changes.
 - Finally, what range of services are offered by business partners? Are they all about pre-sales, or do they have post-sales technical support available too? Beyond the technology, can they help with business engagement and user adoption work? If not, you will have to do it or find another firm to assist with the non-technology disciplines essential to success.

It takes time for vendors to develop an indirect channel with sufficient competence to support customers.

If there is no indirect channel and support options available, take that as a warning sign. Without it, you will have to build competence in selected IT staff members in your own organization to keep the new product or service operating effectively, and have succession planning in place to ensure continuity of competence if key staff members move on. This takes time, and will require ongoing learning for it to be effective. If you don't have the appetite for this risk now and into the future, again be forewarned.

Factor 5. Alignment with Other IT Strategies

How does the vendor and product you are evaluating align with your other IT strategies? Few decisions come with greenfield freedom. In considering your decision about a particular collaboration technology, look for the presence of alignment—or stark dis-alignment—with areas such as:

- Your strategy for desktop operating systems. If your organization takes a hard-line of Windows-only, then most collaboration technology products will be okay. The challenge arises in a heterogeneous environment where people have some say over whether they use Windows, Mac, or Linux on the desktop. Does the product you are evaluating offer support for multiple flavors of desktop operating systems, and does this differ wildly? If it does, can you live with that?
- Your strategy for mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets. If staff are being equipped with these devices for carrying out business tasks, will they be able to use the particular devices with your new collaboration technology? Will this be confined to web browser access, or are online/offline apps available?
- Your server operating system, directory services, security platform, and identity management strategy. Will the collaboration technology under evaluation work seamlessly with what you currently have, or will you have to make additional investments in these areas?
- Your office productivity suite strategy. If you use Microsoft Office, when do you upgrade to the most recent edition? Is your organization quick to update, or does it take a couple of years before you are willing to roll out the new version? Some products demand the availability of the latest edition of Office on the desktop.
- Your strategies for compliance, records management, and search. Will the new technology work with what you have, or will it introduce new requirements? For European firms evaluating cloud-based services, knowing where your data is physically stored is important due to current privacy laws.

While these strategies change over time, and you will never have perfect insight into what the future holds in each of these areas, having some sense of alignment or dis-alignment in advance of pushing ahead with a particular product is just plain common sense.

Finally, a word of caution about integration with existing infrastructure: remember there are two sides to this coin. When the decision is which collaboration technology to purchase, the one that integrates with your current infrastructure is a blessing. It's easy and linked decisions are at a minimum. But three years later when new versions of all the products have come out, it becomes a curse—because to get one you have to buy, install, and upgrade them all. If the decision is tightly-linked, you will be forced to do things in the future that you would otherwise have not chosen if the decisions were more partitioned.

Create a Decision Matrix

Use a decision matrix to guide your decision making about which vendor and product to go with. In every organization—with few exceptions—people will have different ideas and ideals about the vendor and product of choice. In the spirit of collaboration, you just have to deal with that, and create as collaborative an approach as you can. A collaboration director at a US firm that had just made the decision to transition from one product to another described their decision approach: “*We had two separate working groups consider the options, and both separately recommended a move.*” For difficult questions—and choosing a product can become a difficult question since people’s past education and future career opportunities are at stake—that’s a good approach.

A decision matrix provides a quantitative tool to support a collaborative decision approach. It brings together the ideas of each individual and forces the team to create a unified statement about what a good decision looks like.

Here’s the steps involved:

1. *Decide on Your Decision Factors.* As the team tasked to make the final decision, decide on the specific factors you will use to inform your decision. Multi-party decision-making is a common activity in most organizations, so find out from other decision makers how they have approached similar matters. I have outlined five key decision factors in this chapter; use those or your own set. But don’t have too few or too many factors—between five and eight is about right.
2. *Allocate the Weighting to Each Factor.* Decide on your total budget for decision points, and allocate these across the decision factors you have settled on. Figure 2-22 uses 20 as the total decision points, and these have been allocated across five decision factors. The weighting may have to be negotiated—in fact, it’s desirable to do so because it brings different perspectives to the foreground early in the process.¹⁵ Some people will believe that vendor viability is more important than product capabilities, and vice versa. Each decision factor should have enough points to give weight to the decision, and to enable the critical differences across vendors and products to stand out.

Negotiating the weighting brings different perspectives to the foreground early in the process.
3. *Complete Your Vendor and Product Research.* Gather evidence about each vendor and product from a mix of briefings, document reviews, and hands-on testing in a lab environment. Talk with other organizations that have gone through a similar evaluation exercise, and see how your position compares to theirs. Did they arrive at comparative conclusions? If there is huge variation, dig deeper.

4. *Ascertain Weighting Against Each Decision Factor.* Decide on a weighting for each vendor and product against your list of decision factors, and plug them into the appropriate cell in the table. Total each column to get the team's sense for each product. Maybe you choose the product that gets the least points—and that's fine (to a degree). But at least everyone knows that the second-best choice was made in light of quantitative analysis.

Figure 2-22. A Weighted Decision Matrix

Decision Factor	Weighting	Option 1	Option 2
Viability of the Vendor	5	3	5
Financial Cost of the Product Over Time	3	2	2
Capabilities of the Product	5	5	2
Business Partner Channel & Support Mechanisms	4	3	4
Alignment with Other IT Strategies	3	3	1
Overall Weighting	20	16	14

Creating a weighted decision matrix that allocates a set number of points across five decision categories provides a tool to stimulate discussion and guide decision-making. It enables the translation of hard to compare concepts and ideas into a quantitative form where two or more different products are more easily compared.

Finally, get real input for your decision-making, not a pretense. A few years ago, a firm in Europe was evaluating collaboration tools for staff. The firm had a pilot implementation of SharePoint, and various people had trialled Yammer. To drive a more strategic view of which tools to choose in the future, the firm commissioned an external consulting firm to undertake an independent review of their collaboration requirements, and to recommend which tools to use. Once the consulting firm completed their interviews and workshops, they wrote the final report and recommended SharePoint. The project steering committee was aghast at the quick linkage between the requirements and SharePoint. My contact at the firm sent the final report to me, and asked for my input. I scanned the report, looked up the consulting firm's web site, and wrote back:

... the problem is that you chose a Microsoft Gold Partner to do the review, one with significant SharePoint experience and no relationships or expertise in other collaboration tools. It was a prejudiced recommendation from the very beginning. Of course they were going to recommend SharePoint; they were never going to recommend anything else.

I don't know what the firm did in the end, because I haven't heard from them since.

Decision Strategy: Mitigate or Migrate?

Evaluating, buying, installing, and training on new collaboration technology is a costly endeavor—taking time, brain space, effort, and money. There are situations where you have no choice but to migrate, and re-starting the journey with new technology. If the vendor has gone out of business, the product has been withdrawn from the market, innovation has ceased,¹⁶ or it's difficult to find skilled staff, it's pretty clear that it's time to look elsewhere. But there are other situations where the migration decision is not so clear cut, and where the technology is not at fault. How do you know the difference? Here are four signals to look for that lend credence to the mitigation side of the decision.

Signal 1. Other Firms Are Making the Product Work

If other firms are making the product work, that's a clear signal that migration is not the only option. See if you can find out what the other firms are doing to make it work—by talking to people through your own network of contacts, or by asking the vendor involved for an introduction, or by attending a conference where they are presenting a case study. What you are looking for is an understanding of the disciplines they have embraced to enable success, and whether you have the appetite to do the same!

What you are looking for is an understanding of the disciplines they have embraced to enable success, and whether you have the appetite to do the same!

On the other hand, if firms like yours are giving up on the product and shifting to a different technology, that's a signal that the end may be in sight. You still need to figure out why they are shifting—it could be a result of global corporate headquarters making a rationalization decision for the firm, or as a result of a particular vendor partnership.

Signal 2. You Intend to Recreate the Current Way in the New Technology

If your grand vision for the new technology is limited to recreating the current way of working—same screen designs, same application logic, same teaming capabilities—in the new product, then a migration may be overkill. There's always the valid argument about delivering to current expectations while also positioning for the future, but if you are going to put your people through a major change and give them nothing new in the short- to medium-term, an immediate migration is probably not required. Mitigate what you've got.

On the other hand, if there is a clear demand from business users for new ways of working, and these are unsupported by your current vendor now and are unlikely to be supported in the short- to medium-term, a migration may be required.

Signal 3. You Know What Went Wrong with the Current Technology

Let's assume that your current collaboration technology has failed. It's not working for your organization. Your people hate it and avoid it like the plague. If you know what went wrong and the reasons are all non-technology factors, mitigation may be possible. If the IT department chose the product without engagement with business users and merely threw it out there for people to use with no intentional work around adoption, that can be mitigated without having to change the technology. Go back to your lead business users, apologize for being rude and inconsiderate in your approach, and start to build a relationship that will highlight key needs and requirements.

Alternatively, if the failure factors are purely technology-related, a migration may be required. For example, if the server keeps crashing, the client software doesn't integrate with your preferred office productivity suite, and the features staff need for mobile and offline working are not available, mitigation is pretty difficult.

Signal 4. Third-Party Products Are Available to Cover the Gaps

No product is perfect, regardless of what the vendor claims. It is very likely, therefore, that all the capabilities you require will not be available in your current product. However, if add-on products are available from third-party vendors that cover the functionality gaps, the necessity to migrate immediately can be reduced. Buying the add-on product becomes a way of mitigating the technical weaknesses in your current product, and avoids a much larger effort to migrate to a new product (which will also have its weaknesses).

But if third-party add-ons are unavailable for essential functionality, you may have to migrate to new technology.

A Final Comment

One of the client projects I was involved in required comparing two separate collaboration platforms—the one the client was currently using, and one that many people at the client organization wanted to use. It was a very political decision process, and to their credit the firm had attempted to defuse the situation through careful analysis and a comparison that embraced product capabilities, financial realities, and strategic alignment. At this firm, the dominant feeling for the incumbent was a subdued “we really have no choice but to stick with what we've got,” as opposed to active evangelism by many people for the new platform. It was clear that particular decision influencers would never rest until they had evicted the incumbent vendor, and while they had failed to win the decision in the mid-to-late 2000s, the decision was reopened three years later and the decision came out against the incumbent. The lesson? Know how long it will be until the decision will be reopened—and decide whether it's worth going at it again.

Summary

We have examined significant topics in this chapter, and what we have done is lay a foundation for the remainder of this book. We will be relying on this baseline as we proceed with the roadmap approach.

We have looked at:

- Four frameworks for guiding our evaluation of collaboration technology—for collaborative teams, collaborative groups, collaborative organizations, and a more general collaboration scenarios framework.
- Decision making about new collaboration technology, with a particular emphasis on the non-technology decision factors. These include vendor viability, the availability of a strong business partner support channel, and alignment with other IT strategies.
- Determining when migration to a new collaboration technology is needed, or whether you can mitigate what you already have. While changing makes some tasks easier, it comes with a stiff price tag once engagement and adoption are factored into the mix.

Our next focus is the second stage of the roadmap—outlining the vision. We will consider six core ways collaboration approaches and technology can add value to our organizations, and set out an approach to deciding where to start.

¹ John Dix, "Collaboration Success Edges Closer," Network World, June 21, 2010. See www.networkworld.com/columnists/2010/062110-editorial.html.

² To explore SharePoint 2007 from the perspective of the Seven Pillars, see my February 2008 report, "The Seven Pillars of IT-Enabled Team Productivity: The Microsoft SharePoint 2007 Analysis," at www.michaelsampson.net/2008/02/sp7p.html.

³ The complete Seven Pillars framework is available for no-charge from my web site at www.michaelsampson.net/get7.html. Note that it was published under the "Shared Spaces Research & Consulting" banner, which was the name of my analyst firm in 2005.

⁴ In evaluating a specific product—Microsoft SharePoint, IBM Quickr, Socialtext, or anything else—here's the grading scheme I use. If the product does not meet all three essential requirements, it gets a failing grade ("F") for the pillar. If it meets the three essential requirements and neither of the optional requirements, it gets a "C" grade. If the three essential requirements and only one of the optional requirements are met, it gets a "B" grade. If it meets all three essential requirements and both of the optional requirements, it gets an "A" grade.

Figure 2-23. Grading Scheme for the Seven Pillars

Pillar Requirements	F	C	B	A
Requirement 1 (Essential)	Fail any one of the essential requirements	Pass	Pass	Pass
Requirement 2 (Essential)		Pass	Pass	Pass
Requirement 3 (Essential)		Pass	Pass	Pass
Requirement 4 (Optional)		Fail	Pass only one of these requirements	Pass
Requirement 5 (Optional)		Fail		Pass

⁵ There is an IT security implication of this requirement. For collaboration technologies that are deployed in-house (behind the firewall), the IT security policy may be to disallow access from outside the firewall. Thus it may not be possible to gain access from *any and every* computer, but if the collaboration technology is going to be treated as a real place to work, access from some external computers that meet a defined list of requirements is essential. For example, that the latest edition of Internet Explorer is installed, or that the anti-virus signatures are up-to-date, or that there is two-factor authentication using a cryptography token. Without the possibility of external access, the collaboration technology will be seen as a toy.

⁶ Saplo, a technology start-up in Sweden, has developed a number of products that could offer auto-discovery capabilities in collaboration products. For example, Saplo Match uses semantic text analytics to create relationships between texts. See saplo.com.

⁷ For more on Socialtext 360, see www.socialtext.com/features/socialtext-360.php.

⁸ For details on NewsGator Social Sites, see www.newsgator.com/products/social-sites-for-sharepoint-2010.aspx

⁹ For a more detailed look at declared, deduced, and discerned expertise, see my August 2008 article in Messaging News, “*Identifying the Genuine Expert: Three Stages of Expertise Surfacing*,” at www.messagingnews.com/story/identifying-genuine-expert-three-stages-expertise-surfacing.

¹⁰ See www-01.ibm.com/software/data/content-management/classification/. The Classification Module was previously called the “InfoSphere Classification Module.”

¹¹ See “*Wie Bayer MaterialScience Web 2.0 lebt*” on the German edition of CIO, at www.cio.de/strategien/methoden/2265759/. The article is in German, so use Google Translate if you don’t happen to speak that language. My attempt to make sense of the article using English is on my blog, at currents.michaelsampson.net/2011/03/bms-update.html.

¹² See Jeff Conklin’s book, “*Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems*,” at www.amazon.com/Dialogue-Mapping-Building-Understanding-Problems/dp/0470017686

¹³ See my October 2011 blog post “*Lotus Connections Update from Lowe’s Companies — “Valuable”*,” at currents.michaelsampson.net/2011/10/lowes-lotus-connections.html. Clearly for a large firm with revenue of almost \$50 billion in 2010, \$1 million is a minuscule rounding error. But it signals an opportunity, and imagine what would happen if Lowe’s could repeat this episode 100 times a year.

¹⁴ Another way of gaining this insight is to buy one of the excellent reports from the Real Story Group (www.realstorygroup.com) that look at different products, and bring together a lot of this product information. The benefit is that it has been filtered to get rid of the vendor fluff. In the collaboration space, see their “Collaboration and Social Software” report.

¹⁵ If you need an approach to allocating votes across your decision criteria, use a flip chart and circle stickers. Assuming you have five decision factors and 20 decision points, give everyone on the team 20 stickers. Tell them to “spend” their stickers across the five decision factors you have written up on a flip chart at the front of the room—get them to come up and attach their stickers to the appropriate factor. Count the number of stickers per factor, divide it by the number of participants, and you have a quick proxy for the overall “team sense.”

If you want to do the voting anonymously so people don’t feel unduly influenced by the voting pattern of others, give everyone a sheet of paper with the five decision factors and tell them to “spend” their stickers in the same way. Note, however, that the stickers are unnecessary because you can check the spending on each sheet before tallying them across the team. The stickers enforce limitation in the open flip chart exercise where it is more difficult to track how many votes have been spent by each individual decision contributor.

¹⁶ One way of getting an early warning on pending vendor failure is to look at where the innovation is happening. If your vendor is standing still, consistently late-to-market with new capabilities, and has a business partner and ISV channel that’s increasingly rigid, it could be time to start evaluating your options—particularly if other vendors are hungry, moving quickly, and have passionate and engaged direct and indirect channels. If there is an extreme difference, and it has been like that for 6-12 months, your current vendor could be dead.

Chapter 3.

Outline the Vision

I'm not trying to hawk [technology] for the vendors. Just gobbling up lots of it is not the point. But I am for anything that makes it easier for people to talk across boundaries, to work across organizations, to simplify getting things done, to provide everyone with better information. These barrier-breaking technologies are platforms for all of this ... but not without introducing the sociologies for working in new ways.

Jessica Lipnack, NetAge

Now we have examined the technology in depth, we can move onto what's more important. Why are we interested in collaboration and collaboration technology in the first place? Where and how could we apply the disciplines and technologies of collaboration to improve our organizations? This is the focus of Chapter 3.

In this chapter, you will:

- Review the fundamental reason we are in business.
- Consider the difference between being business-led and technology-led, and argue that a healthy mix of both is required.
- Explore six core ways collaboration technology can add value to our businesses and organizations.
- Discuss how to set your vision for improved collaboration at work.

While we are going to look at this topic carefully, we don't want to be so sterile that we kill the patient. There is a life here that we want to encourage and enable—but we also need the ability to step back and consider carefully what benefits could be grasped.

Revisiting the Fundamentals

Earning a profit is a fundamental purpose of a business organization. If the organization consistently earns a profit, it can stay in business, hire good people, provide a return to investors, and make a positive difference in the community. In earning a profit, the basic rule is to spend less than you earn—a rule that many of our governments have not grasped in recent years! Whatever your current situation, there are three basic patterns for improving your profit position: earning more (increasing top-line revenue), spending less (improving efficiency to achieve the same work with fewer inputs), or doing both.

For government agencies and not-for-profit organizations, while the profit motive of a “business” is not there, the same pressure to balance income and cost is. For government agencies, there is not—or rather, there should not be—an open check book from the government. For a not-for-profit, it’s about wisely using income from funders and donors. Efficiency and effectiveness remain the cornerstones in both types of organizations, and perhaps the pressures are even more intense, due to having multiple funders with different motivations.

Therefore, with the core requirement to earn a profit in mind, the question to ask in this chapter is “what is the good business reason for collaboration approaches and collaboration technology at work?” In other words, where’s the value opportunities that can form the basis of a vision of improvement?

What is the good business reason for collaboration approaches and collaboration technology at work?

Three Challenges

In setting a vision for collaboration, three immediate challenges stand out. First, we are separated by distance, working hours, culture, and language. We regularly have to work with people around the world. Our customers are here, there, and everywhere. Our strategic partners are in different cities, countries, and continents. Our employees and colleagues are not in the same location, and move around frequently.¹ We work for organizations that span the globe, and have to collaborate with people who are many time zones away. Often it is not possible to talk to them. Even if our team members aren’t across the world, once we are more than 50 feet away from the people we work with, they might as well be. We work with people from other firms on our projects and initiatives—they’re not with us in person, and our interactions are complicated by differences of firm culture, organizational systems, and incentives for working together.

Working remotely from the people we work with is happening more and more. Thus the scenario of one big happy team working together around a meeting table and whiteboard is slipping away from us. This means we have no choice but to use technology to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate to get our work done.

The technology, however, introduces a second challenge, because it digitizes human communication and eliminates most of the communicative value. Words spoken around a meeting table, replete with facial expressions, personal presence, body language, and vocal intonation and emphasis, are replaced with written words in a quickly scribbled email message, or a static-filled, difficult-to-make out disembodied voice at other end of the phone. It is safe to say that the majority of the communicative value is lost through digitization, and we're the poorer for it.

Third, a big risk to overcome when introducing new collaboration technology is when it's used to recreate the current inefficient way of getting work done, instead of envisioning a better way of working. Due to established patterns of interaction between people, combined with established expectations in groups, the new technology is used to reinforce current processes and practices that are inefficient. Thus we get people manually creating lists of new jobs in Jive, instead of using tagging to create an automated and more personalized way of browsing open job opportunities, or SharePoint being used merely as "the new file server." In summary, there is great pressure to ask how we enact current processes using the new technology, instead of asking how the same or better outcome could be achieved through the new tool.

Being "Business-Led" Versus "Technology-Led"

There's a lot of talk about being "business-led" with collaboration technology projects, often in the vein of "we need to work out what the business needs from this." I agree with the emphasis, but advocate avoiding the extremes.

We could visualize being "business-led" and "technology-led" as two ends of a continuum, and I argue that being at either extreme offers significant problems. If the approach is exclusively "business-led," then there is no room for technology to play a role in influencing how the business could be run. Likewise, if the organization is exclusively "technology-led," then there is no room for taking a hard business view of why the technology is being considered. Aspects of both are required—where good business thinking about delighting customers, treating employees well, and earning a sufficient return for all stakeholders is informed by and contributes to good technology thinking.

Being "business-led" and "technology-led" are two ends of a continuum, and being at either extreme offers significant problems.

Please don't use the phrase "we should be business-led" to make the technology considerations irrelevant. They're not. And likewise, don't use the phrase "we should be business-led" to neuter the potential that technology offers to do business in different ways. We have to deal with both in a mature way in order to gain the benefits on offer.

Value Propositions of Collaboration Technology

Let's look at six core value propositions of collaboration technology—such as improving process efficiency, process effectiveness, and organizational effectiveness—as well as two supplementary propositions. These form the starting place for outlining the vision.

Core Value 1. Improve Process Efficiency

The first core value of collaboration technology is that it can be used to improve process efficiency—reducing the ratio of costs to outputs for collaborative processes.

By Reducing Travel Expenses

Reducing travel expenses is an oft-quoted and frequently-sought benefit of collaboration technology. The argument goes that instead of traveling to meet with team members to share ideas, perform work, and build relationships, particular types of technology can be used instead. For example, if the teams at your organization always meet face-to-face when they have to make a decision, it's likely that a mix of video-conferencing, screen-sharing, and a discussion forum could be applied to eliminate some of this travel. In other words, if the way your people do joint work today is via travel, collaboration technology offers a tremendous opportunity for making a significant dent in your travel expenses. For most organizations, however, reducing travel expenses has been a focus for many years.²

Perhaps there are times when we can avoid travel and its associated laundry list of stresses and still work just as effectively.

Another aspect is worth mentioning. While travel for business can be delightful—seeing new places, meeting counterparts in person, getting away from normal life—it has its stresses. It's a different routine, with a different time zone and local culture. When you get back home, it always takes a few days to re-adjust. While travel has always had its share of stresses, it has become much more stressful during the past decade—pricing for carry-on bags, security checks, and pat downs. Perhaps there are times when we can avoid travel and still work effectively.

By Working Together Regardless of Location

Collaboration technology enables people to work together regardless of location. Ideas and knowledge can be shared—through wiki pages, blog posts, and screen-sharing. Decisions can be analyzed—through discussion forums. Documents can be created and edited—with a team space, or real-time co-editing. With the greater mobility of employees during the work day, the proliferation of smartphones and tablets means that even highly-mobile employees can participate just as well from the café table as their office desk.

While we could say that this is the same as reducing travel expenses, I'd argue that it's a different idea. The first assumes that you currently have to travel to meet with co-workers.

This idea starts from a different position—that we could work with people regardless of location, and therefore who should we hire?³

By Reducing Process Activity Time

Process cycle time is a frequent measure of the health and vitality of a process. How long does it take to get the proposal response out the door? How long will it take to complete the project? What's the turnaround time on a document that requires input and agreement from multiple people? Process cycle time is the length it takes for the process to work from beginning to end, but it's not the same as actual working time in the process. The first is a measure of elapsed time ("process elapsed time"), and the second is a measure of how much actual work is done during the elapsed time ("process activity time"). Thus a process that was 100% efficient would have a 1:1 correlation between the two measures.

Take the creation of a proposal response by a team as an example. If the current process elapsed time was 20 days, analyzing the process might reveal that no one was doing any work on the proposal for 60% of the time. They were waiting for the next meeting to discuss the current state. The person assigned the task of integrating the comments from everyone else was working on another project. Everyone thought that someone else on the team was working on the document, due to a poorly written email message. Eliminating some or all of the 60% difference could be achieved by using a shared task list (so it's clear who is doing what, by when), holding regular meetings on-demand using web conferencing, and using mind maps during meetings to structure the conversation. If these different ways of working were embraced, the process elapsed time might be cut in half—a significant source of improvement for the firm in question.^{4 5}

Removing waiting time on gaining answers to questions is another way of reducing process elapsed time. Rather than directing a question to one person by email, the question is asked using a micro-blogging service to everyone in the group. Anyone who knows the answer can pitch in. At one of my workshops in Europe, an attendee said this had happened at her organization—questions used to get stuck in the team manager's email, but by using Yammer, the group could resolve issues a whole lot faster.⁶

By Reducing Variation

Collaboration technology can increase process efficiency through the reduction of variation, or to state it a different way, through increasing process consistency and standardization. Efficiency is increased because people aren't having to make it up all the time; there is a process to follow when accomplishing the task. Waste activities can be designed out of the process, and beneficial activities can be designed into the process. Greater consistency means that customers know what to expect, and team members aren't stressed out trying to think up ways to accomplish the task. For example, Continental Airlines embraced a SharePoint-powered process that enabled consistent coordination and collaboration between dozens of internal departments and individuals in order to meet new regulations in the Airline Passenger Bill of Rights of 2010.⁷

Core Value 2. Increase Process Effectiveness

Effectiveness asks, “How can we get a better outcome?”

The second core value is that collaboration technology can be used to increase the effectiveness of processes. Unlike an efficiency focus, where the intent is to reduce the net energy or cost required to create a particular outcome, an effectiveness focus is energy or cost neutral. Of course these matter in the overall scheme of things, but effectiveness asks “How can we get a better outcome?” Let’s look at four approaches to increasing process effectiveness.

By Improving Meeting Effectiveness

There are many team and group meetings when traveling to be together doesn’t make any sense. Even if there was no cost to attend—that is, the flights and accommodation were free—the net incremental benefit of being there is negative. But we then go from one extreme to the other—from meeting face-to-face as the gold standard, to meeting by phone or audio conference—which due to poor audio quality and a lack of shared seeing quickly becomes the dirt standard! Greater effectiveness can be achieved by adding back shared visualization capabilities, and by using higher quality audio connections.

For example, a distributed team that is brainstorming ideas, exploring connections between concepts, and designing new products benefits from seeing what other team members are talking about. If the team was in the same room, they would naturally use a common whiteboard or flip chart, but an “electronic whiteboard” only enables printing, not multi-location sharing. For that you need eBeam, which provides a small appendage for a whiteboard that captures pen-movements and shares the resulting images with distributed team members—for display on a computer screen or projector.^{8 9}

By Improving Activity Coordination

Collaboration technology provides a different way of organizing work and keeping people in alignment. Team members need to stay focused on the same efforts, and meetings provide one way of achieving this. One option is the 2-hour once-a-week meeting, to go over what’s happened in the past week and what’s coming up—and there is a time for such meetings. But if this is the only type of meeting you have, you are missing out on closer alignment between the people doing the work. A better option is a once-a-day 15 minute quick meeting, similar to the daily meetings of the Agile software development methodology. If you take the latter approach, the team stays in much closer alignment, because people can only ever get 8 hours off-target rather than a full 40 hours.

Think about it another way. Let’s say the people in our firm prefer to meet in person, with all of the associated costs and downtime. If we can show how they can hold a series of shorter but more frequent meetings, then they can stay in better contact, be more aligned in what they’re doing, and retain a shared focus for a higher proportion of the time. This leads to improvements in team effectiveness, and as a result of fewer plane and cab rides,

better expense management too. In fact, replacing face-to-face meetings with shorter and more frequent online meetings is one of the quickest ways to see an improvement as a result of collaboration technology.

By Improving Decision Agility

Collaboration technology can be used to improve decision agility, by moving away from hidden decision making via email and meetings. It enables the assembly of data points and decision factors, and the open ranking and review of items by the people involved in the decision. Effectiveness is improved because the right decision can be made in light of a wider purview of the decision options.

Consider this example. You are one of many people responsible for determining how to allocate funds to upcoming initiatives within your firm. Traditionally, this has been managed in an ad hoc way, with each of the different people having their own queues of requests. The downside of this approach has been widely felt; namely, that similar initiatives get approved by different people, because there is no way for each person to compare and contrast different requests. The consequences include duplication of effort, wasted financial resources, and an inability to see the bigger picture. There was an attempt to have a monthly meeting of everyone involved, but it delayed decision making. Enter a new system, one that allows multiple people to enter requests, the ability for all decision makers to see all open requests, and specific tools for group sorting, organizing, and prioritizing of requests. Such an approach removes the downsides of the previous approach, and frees up face-to-face meetings to focus on the strategic concerns facing the decision makers.

Collaboration technology can be used to free up face-to-face meetings to focus on strategic concerns instead of tactical matters.

By Improving Product Design

Finally, process effectiveness can be increased through virtual product development. By shifting away from using physical materials to create product mock-ups and embracing product design software that supports collaboration between engineering design groups, better products can be created. For car designers, the tools enable the integration of crash data, aerodynamic modeling, fluid dynamics, and structural testing—without having to first build the car and test the different elements. Thus testing and design costs are reduced (efficiency), the design of the vehicle can be changed faster (effectiveness), and product variability can be increased to raise the attractiveness of the vehicle to niche markets (effectiveness). The Boeing 777 was the first airplane to be completely designed and preassembled using computer technologies, and this was back in 1995.¹⁰ Note, however, that everyone in the project was co-located.

Core Value 3. Increase Organizational Effectiveness

Collaboration technology can be used to increase organizational effectiveness—the ability of the organization as a whole to work on the right things.

By Reducing Duplication of Effort and Deepening Learning

Global organizations have salespeople in locations all around the world, but if the organization is structured along product lines, its customers will be approached by multiple salespeople. The customers get multiple messages, and the salespeople don't know about each other. It's a mess for the customer, and a source of lost opportunity for the organization—especially if some of the product lines compete with each other.

If they could have worked together, and there would have been benefits in working together, it's good to have the option in advance of the work being done.

Collaboration technology provides an opportunity for bringing together the disparate salespeople and giving them the ability to jointly approach the customer.

In a similar way, collaboration technology that highlights shared interests across multiple divisions and departments can lead to reduced duplication and deeper learning. Consider a publishing firm that is moving into the digital age, and creating media rich apps for the iPad. If three divisions go about the transition separately,

the same learning is repeated three times as people in each division learn the basics. If they'd had some way of discovering that others were working on the same idea, the respective people could have coordinated their work and more rapidly broached advanced ideas. Sometimes multiple groups need to go through the same effort. But if they could have worked together, and there would have been benefits in working together, it's good to have the option in advance of the work being done. As a final comment, having multiple people in-the-know about publishing iPad apps—or any specific domain for that matter—creates greater resiliency in the organization by spreading the learning. If one person moves upward or outward, the whole capability is not in jeopardy.

By Becoming “One Firm” to Leverage Scale and Expertise

The idea of “one firm” is being increasingly used to convey the collaborative vision of enabling everyone to work together seamlessly. It's an intentional approach to mitigate the divisive effects of working across time zones and geography. In professional services organizations, the “one firm” mantra means the best consultants for a particular client project can be placed on the team, regardless of whether or not they reside in a nearby office. In manufacturing firms, it's about turning the disadvantages of remote overseas offices to shared advantage, by integrating the staff into communication flows, including them in product planning sessions, and seeking their input on customer service initiatives.

In outlining why his law firm was implementing a raft of new collaboration technology from Cisco, the CIO said:

A key focus for us is to ensure that all our people—regardless of which office they are located in—are seamlessly integrated and working as ‘One Firm’ to deliver a superior client experience. With Cisco business video and data centre virtualisation technology, we’re making it easier for them to connect, collaborate and share information across the whole of the firm for the benefit of our clients,” said Peter Westerveld, Minter Ellison’s CIO.

As a key adviser to leading multinationals and Fortune 500 companies and government organisations, success for Minter Ellison depends on the firm’s ability to tap into the wealth of experience and expertise of its lawyers around the world and across multiple time-zones to deliver results.¹¹

When the “one firm” strategy works, significant effectiveness benefits are gained.

By Enhancing Organizational Memory

When collaboration technology is used as part of day-to-day work, organizational memory is enhanced. Since daily work gives evidence of contribution and expertise, it’s easier to create connections between people. In email, contributions and expertise are hidden. While there are technologies that can take email and make it more widely available—for example, by publishing it to a SharePoint site or an open archive—for all intents and purposes email is a closed shop. You have to be in the message thread to know of its existence. Compare this to a discussion forum in an IBM Connections community or a Yammer discussion thread—which are much more open and discoverable by people later on. Both of these latter approaches are more generally available to other people in the firm now and into the future—for searching on specific topics, particular phrases, or people.

By Allowing Flexibility in Organizational Design

Earlier we talked about the way that processes are designed based on assumptions about available technology. To increase efficiency with the current technology, we analyze the process and get rid of the wasted activities. When we switch to effectiveness, though, we look more broadly at the purpose of the process, and then re-ask whether the technology we currently use to enact the process is optimal. The same principle—technology constrains design—applies to organizations too.

Collaboration technology that simplifies communication across time zones and geographical distance can be used to integrate people at remote or home offices into day-to-day project work. They no longer have to be at a particular place to be part of the organization. Mobile devices enable this flexibility too, by providing the capacity for staff to stay connected when out-and-about—with conversation flows, access to key applications, and notification of availability for real-time discussions.

Core Value 4. Encourage Innovation

The fourth core value of collaboration technology is that it can be used to encourage innovation. Effectiveness and efficiency often have to be traded off against one another, because both can't be maximized simultaneously. Take the case of innovation. By its nature, innovation requires the creation of something new or better. One strategy for creating the conditions for innovation is to bring together people with different cultural backgrounds, perspectives, work experiences, and values—with the hope that out of this crazy, mixed-up environment new and fresh thinking will emerge. Such innovation can be encouraged in a number of ways.

By Staffing Teams for Innovation

Staffing a team for innovation means bringing together people with different perspectives, past experiences, and views on the world. It's a calculated strategy that gives greater credence to long-term breakthroughs rather than short-term efficiency, because teams staffed with "differents" are not efficient! They'll take time to work out if they can even talk to each other. They'll take longer to come to conclusions, because they have to find a common ground from which they can work together. They'll take more time to come up with good ideas. So while they may come up with some great ideas, it's probable that they'll take a while to do it.

On the other hand, a group or team that's worked together before has developed habitual ways of working. It's much more likely that they'll get new projects and new jobs done faster than a novice team (one that hasn't worked together before), because they have already negotiated and agreed on how they work, interact and communicate. But it's unlikely that they'll come up with breakthrough ideas. The team members know each other too well. They know what to expect. They have history. They have tried things before that have both worked and failed. So they are likely to push ahead with great gusto, using the approaches they already know to work. Being innovative for such a group is a challenge.

In summary, if you want to drive innovation, you'll need to break up established teams. Bring new people in. Change the rules of engagement. Mix things up. It's in the re-creation of chaos that the potential for innovation increases. But it will take longer.

If you want to drive innovation, you'll need to break up established teams. Bring new people in. Change the rules of engagement. Mix things up.

By Holding a "Jam" to Explore New Ideas

Borrowing a concept from musical groups, some firms hold an innovation "jam," a short-term event that asks for rapid input on discussion topics and ideas, and features involvement from employees, executives, and even outside customers, business partners,

industry analysts, and experts. The intent is to rapidly gather input and perspective from a wide variety of people on issues facing the organization—so as to stimulate thinking, raise possibilities, and see “outside-the-box.” Innovation jams can be held face-to-face, but are more easily operated in an online mode using collaborative web sites, discussion forums, and idea ranking tools, all brought together by a strong moderator.

By Seeking Product and Service Ideas from Customers

Customers get to experience your firm’s products and services and often have ideas on how these could be improved—ranging from the nit-picking “*you do this wrong all the time*” up to the ground-breaking idea for a new product or service that fits well with your core competencies. Collaboration technology provides a way to ask your customers for their ideas, to engage them in exploring the idea, and to evaluate the applicability of and interest in the idea across a broader range of people. Numerous organizations take seriously the strategy of looking to current customers for innovation possibilities. Here’s two examples:

- Starbucks invites customers to submit their ideas at mystarbucksidea.com. Ideas are classified into three categories: product ideas, experience ideas, and involvement ideas. Tens of thousands of ideas have been submitted and ranked by people all around the world, providing Starbucks with a rich innovation spigot.
- Proctor & Gamble works with outside inventors and innovators to develop new products, as part of its strategy to derive 50% of innovations from outside P&G’s own global world-class research and development organization. Past-CEO A.G. Lafley introduced the change in strategy after studying how to improve company performance. See pgconnectdevelop.com.¹²

Collaboration technology provides a way to ask your customers for their ideas, to engage them in exploring the idea, and to evaluate the applicability of and interest in the idea across a broader range of people.

If these were small firms in isolated markets it would be easy to dismiss the idea as something only for the weird and wacky. But as both Starbucks and Proctor & Gamble—and others like them who regularly use this strategy—are global firms with a global footprint, the opportunity of ideation with customers should be taken seriously.

By Inviting Feedback from Experts

A final approach for encouraging innovation is to invite feedback and seek involvement from other geographically-distributed internal experts. Larger firms have experts in other offices who can review and comment on work-in-progress, and suggest new perspectives and avenues of inquiry the team may not have considered. Collaboration technology can help identify these experts, and facilitate their interactions with the project team.

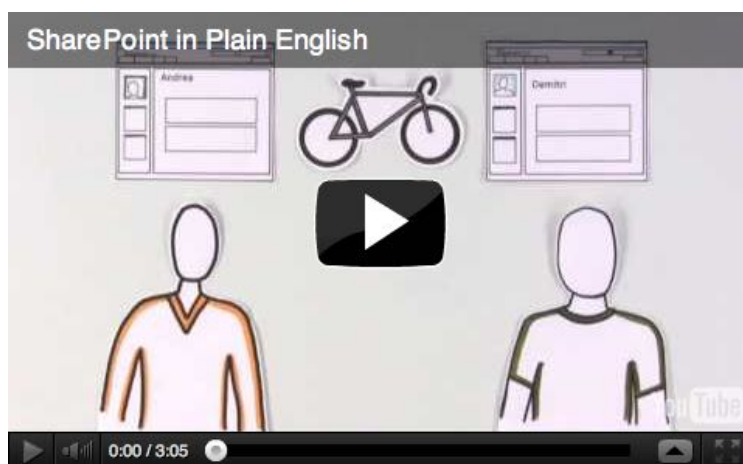
Core Value 5. Improve Communication

Communication is one of four core elements of collaboration (see *Appendix 1*). It's the way we negotiate. It's the way we make agreements about who is doing what. It's the way we build relationships with others. Improving communication in outcome-oriented collaborative situations is a worthwhile investment, providing increased clarity and alignment. If communication is poor, wrong, or riddled with redundant information, it decreases the willingness of team members to stay involved—and that ultimately hurts collaboration and the organization.

By Improving Shared Understanding About Project Status and Current Work

Collaboration technology can improve communication by increasing shared understanding about project status and current work. When artifacts about a collaborative project are spread across multiple tools, it's confusing to know who is working on what. Using email and file shares creates a diffusion of material, and it's likely that no two people will have the same picture about what's going on. By centralizing all project documents, discussions, and future planning thinking in a SharePoint team site or IBM Connections community, and then giving everyone access to the same place, you get a much lower diffusion of data, and therefore, a better basis for people working off the same material.

Figure 3-1. Explaining SharePoint for Project Work



Common Craft produces excellent videos that explain difficult concepts in an easy-to-understand way. Its “SharePoint in Plain English” video, which you can’t click to watch in this book but should watch nonetheless, does an excellent job of demystifying SharePoint.¹³ There is a similar video on YouTube that discusses the same concept for IBM Connections.¹⁴

Both videos demonstrate the same idea: bringing material together makes it easier for team members to know what’s going on. Additional benefits to the collaborative team

include making it easier to bring in a new project manager, and to add or remove team members throughout the project.

Ad-hoc tasks can also benefit from collaboration technology, with flow-on effects of improved clarity and reduced confusion. For example, booking travel and accommodation for an upcoming conference trip results in multiple booking confirmations and itinerary proposals. If these are distributed by email, it's highly likely someone is going to have the wrong version. By using a wiki page instead, clarity can be increased.

By Replacing Frustration About Data Currency with Argument on Implications

"The spreadsheet I received says 20% growth, year-on-year," Bob says as the meeting kicks off.

"But the one I got says 17% growth," Gareth says, before Bob can say much more.

"Mine says 25%," Judith adds, with a grimace.

And so the argument begins, and what should have been an hour of brainstorming and discussion about the implications and consequences of "the number," rapidly degenerates into an hour wasted on tracking back through innumerable emails, attachments, and versions until everyone has a common understanding about year-on-year growth rates. Bob, Gareth, and Judith have wasted an hour in poor communication, instead of devoting their argumentative skills to debating what to do about "the number."

With email and attachments, the risk is high that there will be a divergence of information, and thus unnecessary effort will be put into reconciling the data. With a shared collaborative workspace, where the latest version is posted, with email or instant messaging or Twitter-like alerts whenever the number changes, it's more likely people will put more of their argumentative effort into implications and consequences.

With email and attachments, the risk is high that there will be a divergence of information, and thus unnecessary effort will be put into reconciling the data.

By Reducing the Cost of Communication

A final example of improving communication is in the reduction of communication costs. Information that needs to be communicated within teams and groups can be shared quickly and at minimal direct cost. For example:

- Sharing the latest edition of a draft document doesn't require printing, packaging, and rapid distribution by FedEx to a geographically diverse collection of employees. The document can be posted in digital form to the group's

collaboration site, for immediate access by all group members. For groups working on images together, the same idea applies.

- Meeting to discuss a current decision doesn't require everyone to get on a plane and travel to a single location. Using a web conferencing service allows people to meet from wherever they are, to look at common data points on the screen, and to discuss the pros and cons of various options. Even highly-mobile executives and employees equipped only with an iPad can take full part in the meeting, thanks to iPad apps for popular web conferencing services like WebEx and GoToMeeting.
- Gaining input from external experts does not necessarily require sitting at the same table—or ship for that matter. There is a tremendous example of how BP saved at least \$150,000 one day in the mid-1990s as a result of having video communication capabilities on a ship in the North Sea.¹⁵ When something went wrong with some hardware on the ship, the drilling engineers were able to resolve the problem using a video link to Aberdeen, instead of having to take the ship back to port.

There are both efficiency and effectiveness benefits here. With respect to the latter, since direct communication is possible from the message giver to the message receiver, there is no filtering effect on the message. What is said is given in full fidelity and high quality.

By Reducing Time-to-Contact

Collaboration technology can shorten time-to-contact. If you are waiting to speak with another team member about an outstanding issue and they are tied up on the phone or in a meeting, using presence awareness can get you immediate notification when they are next available. You don't have to keep dialing them in the hope that they'll be there—the system will advise you as soon as they're available, wherever they are.

On “Less Email, Fewer Phone Calls, Fewer Meetings”

In discussing value from collaboration technology, the emphasis can appear to be about “less email, fewer phone calls, and fewer meetings.” There is a degree of truth in this, but it's not the whole story. It's important to explicitly state that we are not trying to remove every last vestige of human communication.

We need to meet face-to-face, to work together in person, to build trust, to laugh, to do coffee. But some of these messages, calls, and meetings are held due to miscommunication and forgetfulness. We want to provide a way for people to know what's going on and to contribute effectively, without having to mollycoddle them.

We are not trying to remove every last vestige of human communication.

Core Value 6. Deepen Customer Intimacy

The final core value of collaboration technology is the deepening of customer intimacy, which has flow-on effects for improving competitive advantage. Customer intimacy can be deepened systemically at the organizational level, and relationally at the individual level.

Customer Intimacy at the Organizational Level

Your organization is working to win a new customer project, and it's a significant piece of work. Part of your stated value proposition is that your organization is progressive, forward-thinking, and builds effective communication channels with its customers. Oh, by the way, can we trade email addresses please? Talk about an oxymoron.

Alternatively—when a new customer project is being considered, your sales team creates a shared web-based collaborative space for working with the customer's representatives before they sign up as a customer. When they are thinking through the statement of work, discussing how and where the customer could benefit from your input and expertise, and sharing a multitude of background documents and presentations to help inform decision making, it's all stored in the shared space. As documents are worked on by multiple people, it's facilitated through co-authoring capabilities in the space, rather than by email attachment. The people on your sales team use it. The people on the customer's side use it. No-one has to go back-and-forth by email to figure out the current state or ask for the latest edition of a key document.

You state your organization is progressive, forward-thinking, and builds effective communication channels with its customers. Oh, by the way, can we trade email addresses please? Talk about an oxymoron.

When you win the work, the shared space is made accessible to the services team—giving them immediate access to the complete history of interaction between the sales team and the customer. They can see all of the discussions. They can read through the foundational thinking. They have access to the same baseline documents. For your organization, the hand-over from sales to services is streamlined and smooth. For the customer, they see a potential supplier living the vision, and that adds to your attractiveness.

Customer Intimacy at the Individual Level

Customer intimacy can also be deepened between individuals. Communication that starts with phone calls, web meetings, and even the reading of each other's blog, Twitter, and Facebook updates creates a depth of shared history that makes it feel like you "know" each other when you meet in person for the first time. A relationship that has been established in advance of meeting in person, more quickly creates a sense of being comfortable with each other, and as a consequence communication and interaction flow more easily.

Two Supplementary Value Propositions

There are various supplementary value propositions with collaboration technology. These aren't drivers of the "big vision"—that's the role of the six core value propositions—but they can add weight to the larger picture. Here's two worth considering.

By Reducing Environmental Impact Through Reduced Carbon Emissions

Organizations can reduce their environmental impact and associated carbon emissions by switching from travel to technology. Video conferencing, web conferencing, and audio conferencing all allow people to meet together without travel. The impacts can be impressive.

Les Williamson, an executive at Cisco, shared their experience:¹⁶

At Cisco, for instance, we are increasingly adopting collaboration and Web 2.0 technologies to help improve the way we do business. Our suite of video based, real time communications tools has both helped us reduce the impact of our business on the environment, and increased the speed of effective and productive decision making. Cisco TelePresence, an immersive video based real time communications system using high definition television screens and superb audio, has now been deployed in more than 260 locations across the Cisco global network. We use these systems in most of our major Australian and New Zealand offices now, and globally, they have helped Cisco reduce the impact of our carbon emissions significantly—we have taken off the road the equivalent of more than 10,000 cars.

Organizations can reduce their environmental impact and associated carbon emissions by switching from travel to technology.

Ten thousand fewer cars is significant—and not just from an environmental perspective!

By Reducing Email Storage Requirements

A second supplementary value proposition is technology-centric: that by shifting people to new collaboration technology, email storage requirements will decrease. Numerous surveys of email managers at major organizations have highlighted the troublesome implications of growing email traffic.¹⁷ It's a big problem, and reducing the storage requirements for email can result in significant financial savings over time. With an estimated 90% of email storage being consumed by duplicated copies of attachments, there's a big opportunity for cost reduction if these can be offloaded to more effective collaboration technology.

However, this and other technology-centric value propositions should not be what drives the use of collaboration technology. It's a second-order benefit, not the primary vision.

Alternatively, Ask A Different Fundamental Question

In this section we have taken a detailed look at the various value propositions on offer through effective use of collaboration technology. But perhaps these don't resonate with you, seem too hard to understand, or don't appear to apply within your organization. If so, ask a different question: What's the cost of not providing efficient and effective ways for people to work together?

What's the cost of not providing efficient and effective ways for people to work together?



What's Your Vision?

We have talked about many possibilities in this chapter. Now it's time for you to reflect on what you have learnt and decide on your vision for collaboration approaches and technology at work. The intent of this chapter wasn't to be mysterious or advocate a "special knowledge." On the contrary, the core question is simple: how is collaborative work done today, and what opportunities are there for improving the way it's done in the future? There are four steps in building your vision.

Figure 3-2. The Four Steps to Vision



Setting your vision for improved collaboration at work requires understanding the baseline and possibilities—how is work done today, and how could it be improved in the future?

Step 1. What are the Core Collaboration Scenarios?

What are the core collaboration scenarios in your firm today? When people work together, what are they doing? Perhaps:

- There is a high volume of project work at your firm, with multiple people working together, sharing ideas, and allocating tasks in the pursuit of a common goal.
- There are many documents created by teams of people—responses to requests-for-proposals (RFPs), legal contracts, financial projections for business planning, and slide decks for pitching products and services to a new client.
- There are decisions to be made on a regular basis requiring input from many people. Activities include collating the underlying data, comparing and contrasting options, and exploring the decision ramifications for current products.

Understanding how people work together today provides a baseline for exploring improvement opportunities.

Step 2. Where are the Opportunities for Improvement?

With a clear understanding of how people work together today, start exploring opportunities for improvement. What you are looking for are situations where a change in work practice—how the work is approached by the team or group—could lead to significant improvements. Talk to executives. Shadow a business group for a couple of weeks to see how they work. Interview staff and team leaders about the collaboration challenges and frustrations they experience. Mix what you learn with your understanding of different ways of collaborating—both linked with using different technology, or as a consequence of changing the approach to collaborating.

The improvement could be representative of any of the six core value opportunities we have explored in this chapter. For example:

- If people are in the habit of flying around the country for team meetings—and many of these meetings don't actually require face-to-face get-togethers—you have a process efficiency opportunity by replacing travel with remote meetings.
- If two or more groups are working on the same initiative, and the duplication is not intentional, you have an opportunity to increase organizational effectiveness by bringing the groups together, and facilitating deeper learning.
- If poor decision-making is impacting your firm's ability to compete in the marketplace, you have an innovation opportunity by improving decision effectiveness through bringing in outside experts to assist with current projects.

Mix what you learn with your understanding of different ways of collaborating—both in approach, and through using different technology.

While you will need to explore improvement opportunities with others at your firm, you probably already have a good idea of where the opportunities lie. Use that to guide your thinking and discussions. And while you probably have a good sense immediately of the opportunity, it will take you 3-6 months to gather evidence to support your hypothesis, and more importantly, to put it in such a way that staff can get behind the idea.

One final thought. If you are stuck and need inspiration about possible improvement opportunities, look at what your competitors and non-competing similar firms are doing. Go to a conference they are speaking at, and see where they are putting their emphasis. Search for a case study on national or international firms like yours, and what they are doing with collaboration. By all means take inspiration from what other firms are doing, but don't feel compelled to copy their moves—unless it will work for your firm.

Step 3. What's the Size and Scope of the Various Opportunities?

Having looked at the core collaboration scenarios at your firm, and catalogued the various opportunities for improvement, turn your attention to understanding the size and scope of the various opportunities. The size of an opportunity is correlated to how frequently it happens in your firm, and the scope looks at the number of people and groups it impacts. The biggest opportunities are likely to happen frequently and impact many people. Opportunities that happen only infrequently, and are carried out by isolated individuals, are unlikely to bear significant value opportunities. It might still be worth exploring these smaller opportunities, but don't build your program around them.

Step 4. Where's the Best Place to Start?

The fourth and final step to vision is to decide where to begin—what's the first and major initiative? Size and scope has been established in Step 3, but there are other dimensions to factor into your decision making. Two important additional dimensions are:

- The availability of evidence that suggests an appetite and willingness to embrace new collaboration technology and approaches. This appetite should be there if opportunities have been explored with an open mind, and people engaged appropriately during the second step of exploring vision.
- The support of senior leaders and the presence of lead users to actively champion the new way of working. Senior leaders need to realize—and accept—that efficiency over the short-term will be compromised as people learn a new way of working, but over time should be replaced by improved long-term effectiveness.

Finally, let's not rule out unintended consequences. Perhaps the value you are seeking isn't what you get—but you get something a whole lot more instead. There may come a day when the new approach and tools are firmly in place. People are using it. And then something major happens. You need to find someone to answer a question because there's a new request-for-information (RFI) out with an impossible deadline. But because of the new way of working, you have the ability to tap the right people, get the work done, and win the new business. That's value!

Summary

In this chapter we examined six core ways that collaboration technology can be used to deliver value, such as increasing process efficiency, improving organizational effectiveness, and encouraging innovation. We also noted two supplementary value opportunities. One or more core value opportunities should be used to form the basis of a vision for collaboration at your organization. In the next chapter, we turn our attention to the role of technology in collaboration success, noting that technology plays a minor role in the overall equation.

¹ The percentage of employees working with team members in different locations is growing year-on-year. In an article in the Harvard Business Review in 2004, the authors pegged the number at 48%. Six years later the Economist Intelligence Unit put the number at 62%.

- Majchrzak, A., et al., “*Can Absence Make a Team Grow Stronger*,” Harvard Business Review, May 2004. See hbr.org/product/can-absence-make-a-team-grow-stronger/an/R0405J-PDF-ENG.

- The Economist Intelligence Unit number is quoted in a Cisco white paper, available at www.cisco.com/web/about/ac79/docs/pov/Economics_Collaboration_POV_FINAL_041009.pdf.

² An August 2009 research report from the Aberdeen Group found that reducing travel time and costs were medium priorities for organizations today, but that best-in-class organizations had moved beyond the travel argument to other concerns. Specifically, the new concerns were improving communication with distributed employees, external partners, and customers. Search for *Enterprise Video Collaboration: The ROI of Video in Sales, Product Development, and Project Management* at www.aberdeen.com.

³ I worked for 5 years for an industry analyst firm in the United States—Ferris Research—and did all of the research and writing from New Zealand. I never met David Ferris, the principal analyst, in all the time I work for the firm—we did everything via email, fax (!), and phone.

⁴ PleaseReview, a vendor of co-authoring software, says that their clients are reducing elapsed time on document reviews by an average of 65%. See www.pleasetech.com/business_case.aspx. Likewise, whenever I discuss and model the document co-authoring scenario in a collaboration workshop, we invariably get a saving of at least 50% in process time across the target collaborative team. This is a result of eliminating the need to merge comments into the master document, make comments that other people have already stated, and giving quicker access to each team member to review and comment on the document.

⁵ In 2003, Plumtree—a leading vendor of portal software at the time—published a white paper about some of their clients, one of which was Pratt & Whitney. As a consequence of shifting the creation of sales proposals into the Plumtree portal, Pratt & Whitney was able to cut the time required to create proposals in half—from 90 to 45 days. The technology underpinnings at the time were workflow, version control, and online access which eliminated the need for mailing different versions of the document around the globe. Search for “*Plumtree Software No Empty Portals! White Paper*” and you’ll find a copy via Google. If not, let me know and I’ll send you a copy of the one I have squirreled away in my archives.

⁶ For another example, see Roberto Rocho’s article on Canada.com from August 2008, “*Want to be my friend at work?*” at www.canada.com/montrealgazette/news/business/story.html?id=5734c351-265e-4091-a7bd-5717efaf147d.

⁷ For the full story, see Errin O’Connor’s blog post, “*Continental Airlines Turns to SharePoint to Avoid Flight Delays*,” at epcgroup.blogspot.com/2010/10/continental-airlines-turns-to.html.

⁸ I’m a great fan on the eBeam technology for enabling natural whiteboard interaction and sharing in distributed meetings. See my blog post at currents.michaelsampson.net/2011/06/ebeam.html for more on the design and use of the eBeam technology.

⁹ You probably noticed that I didn't say to use high-definition video conferencing to improve meeting effectiveness for established teams and groups—nor TelePresence for that matter. I accept that video conferencing potentially allows you to read the facial expressions and body language of your remote collaborators, and in the initial stages of a collaborative endeavor perhaps it is useful, especially where you haven't ever met your new team colleagues in person before. I say "potentially" though, because unless you are committed to putting in very large display screens, the people at the other end of the meeting show up very small. You're lucky if you can make out who is talking, let alone make an accurate assessment of their facial expression! Likewise, getting the camera to focus on the right person at the right time, and to pick up their spoken contribution in sufficient volume is a magic art that few people have mastered. By the time the camera is focused on the right person, the spontaneous comment has been stated, and the discussion has moved on.

Actually, I thought Microsoft was heading in the right direction for collaborative teams with its Roundtable meeting room video device, featuring automatic speaker selection and display and integration of the video feed into a Live Meeting session. In other words, as each person talks, the camera in the Roundtable device would bring them into focus and display their face for their remote colleagues. A fun way to see the Roundtable in action during a meeting is in the Microsoft spoof of *The Devil Wears Prada*, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFTzIkSOSHk. Microsoft licensed the Roundtable technology to Polycom in 2009. Look up the Polycom CX5000, at www.polycom.com/products/voice/conferencing_solutions/microsoft_optimized_conferencing/cx5000.html.

Finally, at hundreds of thousands of dollars setup cost per TelePresence room—and you need a minimum of two to make it work—it's not cost-effective to use TelePresence for project team collaboration. Executives will claim executive privilege to use the rooms for their meetings with overseas executives, new clients, and potential investors, but I don't see TelePresence as a potential solution for team collaboration.

¹⁰ See the June 1995 press release from Boeing, at www.boeing.com/news/releases/1995/news.release.950614-a.html.

¹¹ See the July 2011 press release from Cisco about Minter Ellison, at newsroom.cisco.com/press-release-content?type=webcontent&articleId=442436.

¹² See "P&Gs New Innovation Model", at hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/5258.html.

¹³ Watch the 3-minute "SharePoint in Plain English" video, accessible from the Common Craft web site at www.commoncraft.com/custom-video-sharepoint-plain-english.

¹⁴ See "The Man Who Should Have Used Lotus Connections" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kw2j0Y0qKoo.

¹⁵ See my blog post at currents.michaelsampson.net/2011/06/bp1990s.html for more about the BP experience in the mid-1990s. The blog post includes links for further reading.

¹⁶ See "The Collaborative Web in Action," at www.ceoforum.com.au/article-detail.cfm?cid=9164&t=/Les-Williamson--Cisco-Australia-and-New-Zealand/The-collaborative-web-in-action/.

¹⁷ For example, see the most recent Osterman Research report, "Messaging Server Market Trends, 2010-2013," at http://www.ostermanresearch.com/execsum/or_msgsrv2010execsum.pdf.

Chapter 4.

Accept Technology is a Small Factor in Success

“Collaboration for many today means a technology solution or tool — either a web-based meeting, a wiki tool, or a handheld device of some kind. But at the most basic level, people collaborate, not computers or the web. We live in an age of rapidly evolving and powerful technologies, many of which are designed as communications solutions and group work tools. But the simple common sense conclusion remains: A team attempting to make decisions and move a project forward via an expensive web-based collaboration tool, lacking basic human process skills, will simply fail in a more modern and costly fashion.”¹

Linda Dunkel

When people need to work together across time and space, something has to bring them together. They can't see or hear what their co-workers are doing using their natural human endowments of sight and sound. This “bringing together” is the role of collaboration technology, and clearly, the technology is important for this. But as we have said in the initial chapters of this book, while collaboration technology provides the opportunity for working together, it's only an opportunity. Much more is required for success, and understanding what's included in the “more” is the focus of this chapter.

In this chapter, you will:

- Discover what happens when great technology is not matched with the appropriate human and business factors.
- Look at seven frameworks which help explain the role of technology in collaboration success.
- Find out what to do if you disagree with the main idea in this chapter.

You've Got the Best: Is it Enough?

Let's do a thought experiment. Imagine, if you will, that your IT department has chosen the very best collaboration technology available for your organization. Your IT architects have followed the principles in chapter 2 perfectly. Everyone agrees—including all the collaboration industry analysts at the major analyst firms—that you have the best of everything, on every dimension: the best user interface on mobile devices and the desktop, the best integration with the user's existing tools, the best collection of features in an unified platform, the best individual coherence, and the best total cost of ownership the world has ever seen. Added to this nirvana is an IT Operations group who are world-class at managing and supporting the product. In fact, the vendor your firm purchased the technology from actively seeks out the wisdom and expertise of your IT Operations team. Wow—what an achievement!

Everyone agrees—including all the collaboration industry analysts at the major analyst firms—that you have the best of everything, on every dimension.

But there's a problem. Four of them actually:

1. Employees actively resist using the new “perfect” system. They have other ways of achieving their day-to-day tasks, and for all the technical perfection of the new system, they hardly use it.
2. Employees subvert the collaboration intent to reinforce fiefdoms. Team spaces are set with access permissions to prevent people from other business units from gaining access, and when someone does request special access, the director sends them a scathing rejection.
3. Some employees have taken on board the idea of “garbage in, garbage out,” and have been working actively to fill the new system with garbage. The most common comment drips with blatant sarcasm, *“What deep and wonderful thinking on your part. Blah, blah, blah.”*
4. Senior managers openly criticize people who use the system, decrying it as a total waste of time. Anyone caught talking about the new system receives an immediate reprimand, and a few people have been fired for touting the advantages of cross-unit collaboration.

Both the perfection of the technical platform and realities of the human response are stated in the extreme, but they're done so to make a point. Without collaborative patterns of interaction between people, and a valuing of collaboration within the business strategy, great technology is irrelevant. If the business and human factors are not taken into account, it doesn't matter what technology you have available.

Collaboration Frameworks

Business and human factors dominate the success equation for collaboration. Let's look at seven frameworks that contextualize these along with the technology. See pages 138-139 for a synthesis and aggregation of the seven frameworks.

Framework 1. Impediments to Implementation

In a research study of almost 800 organizations in May 2009, AIIM studied collaboration and Enterprise 2.0 technologies at work.² Figure 10 in the report listed the biggest impediments to wider implementation of Enterprise 2.0 technologies (see Figure 4-1).

Figure 4-1. Impediments to Implementation—from AIIM



AIIM's 2009 study of new collaboration technology (called "Enterprise 2.0") included a question about impediments to implementation. "Lack of understanding" and "Corporate culture" ranked in first and second place, followed by "Not a high enough priority."

What's fascinating is the relative weighting between the technology and non-technology factors. There are two technology factors—and they come in last and third-to-last. Ahead of the technology factors are significant business and human factors, including conceptual understanding, culture, priority, cost, and business case.

If this was the ranking from your CEO, where would you focus your attention?

Framework 2. SharePoint for Business

In 2007 I published a research report called *SharePoint for Business*.³ I did this because I was concerned that the vast majority of information available on using and implementing SharePoint was written from a technical point-of-view for a technical audience. There was nothing at the time addressing how to approach SharePoint from a business perspective. With the intention of filling that gap, I undertook a research project and the resulting report outlined a six step approach to taking on SharePoint from a business perspective (see Figure 4-2).

Here's the six steps:

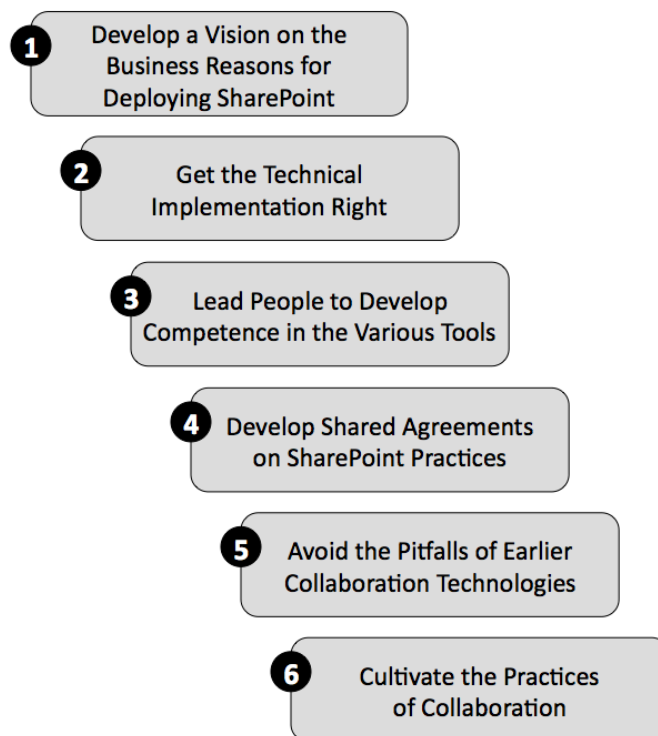
1. *What's the business reason for SharePoint?* You have to be clear about why you are going down the SharePoint path, so that you can evaluate whether you are meeting your goals or not.
2. *Get the technical implementation right.* SharePoint is a complex product to install, and has various interdependencies. There are a couple of ways to approach the implementation—via internal and well-trained staff, or working with external experts such as Microsoft Consulting or a local Microsoft Business Partner.
3. *Lead people to develop competence in the various tools.* As a consequence of many years of experience with other technologies, people have a great affinity with them. In laying out a vision for using newer technologies, they need time to understand what these new technologies can and can't do.
4. *Get teams and groups to develop shared agreements on how to work together.* Technologies like SharePoint are team and group tools, and how one person uses SharePoint has deep implications for how others have to use SharePoint. Thus intact teams and groups need to discuss a shared approach to using the technology in their work, to optimize it for everyone.
5. *Avoid the pitfalls of earlier collaboration tools.* SharePoint is not the first collaboration technology to hit the market—firms have had other systems available for 10-15 years. The nature of collaboration technology lends itself to the repeating of various bad habits—such as leaving old team spaces around indefinitely—thus know clearly why previous offerings led to chaos and suboptimal outcomes.
6. *Cultivate the practices of collaboration.* Although numbered as “6,” this is the “always” step, and focuses attention on the big idea that collaboration is about people, as we have already noted in this chapter. There are various human practices of collaboration that need to be modeled and encouraged, in order for the technology patterns to work.

You will quickly notice two things when looking over this list. First, getting the technical implementation right is very important, but it's not the first step. And secondly, whereas the technical implementation is just one of the stages, there are five others that deal with making SharePoint work at a business level. Unfortunately, the opposite dynamic happens at most firms: the technical implementation dominates the discussion, the timeline, the budget, and the focus of everyone involved. This means that scant attention is paid to the other steps, and due to this upside-down approach, it bodes badly for the long-run success potential of SharePoint.

At most firms the technical implementation dominates the discussion, the timeline, the budget, and the focus of everyone involved.

The ultimate point I try to make through the *SharePoint for Business* research report is this: If you spend all your money on making the technical implementation perfect, you will compromise your ability to get a business return from SharePoint. And while the report was specifically about SharePoint, its principles apply more broadly.

Figure 4-2. *SharePoint for Business*



The SharePoint for Business framework advocated a business-led approach to SharePoint. While proper attention must be paid to the technology, five business factors are essential.

Framework 3. 90% People, 10% Technology

Tom Peter's book *The Pursuit of WOW!* is one of my all-time favorite business books.⁴ When I first read it in 1997 there were many things that stood out, and one of those was a comment about people versus technology. Here's the quote (page 16):

The challenge is only 5 percent bits and bytes (a spiffy e-mail system that spans continents, for example); it's 95 percent psychology and sociology—an organization that dotes on sharing information rather than hoarding it.

Later that same year Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps from NetAge published their book on virtual teams—*Virtual Teams: Reaching Across Space, Time, and Organizations With Technology*—and they put the comparative numbers at “90% people, 10% technology”.⁵ Here's their quote (page 32):

In the end, [Bob] Buckman [of Buckman Labs] believes that the system's success rests on people not tools. “It's 90 percent culture change and 10 percent technology,” he says. “You cannot drive this change through technology and technology budgets. It's people who bring about the change.”

I have met Jessica and Jeffrey a couple of times in the past few years, and I recently asked Jessica if there was a breakdown of what those terms meant—to take it from the high-level statement to the next level. She replied that there was no authoritative list as such, but endorsed the breakdown I put forward (with two additions).

Thus on the 10% technology side, you have:

- The nature of the product—the high level idea that the product is trying to enhance; and
- The features offered in the product—the specific capabilities the product enables, and the way in which they work.⁶

On the 90% people side you have:

- The business reason for doing it—the big idea that describes the improvement you are working towards.
- Team culture—the shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize a team.
- Organizational culture—the overall shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize the organization in which the team or group exists.
- National culture—those same cultural hallmarks applied at the national level.

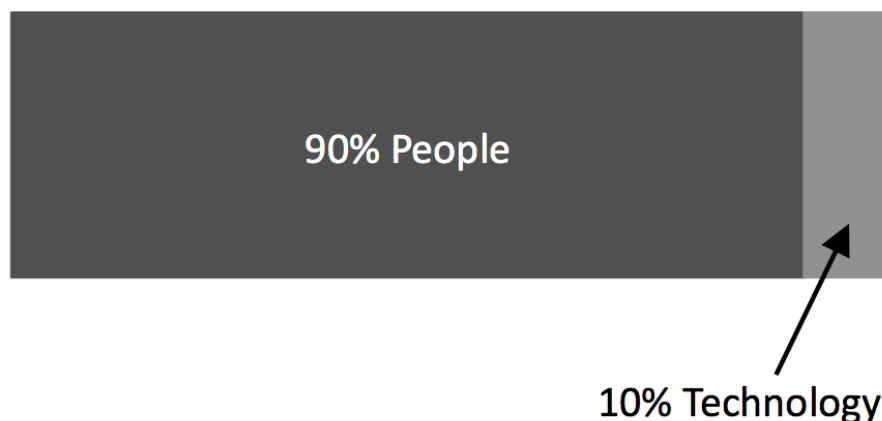
- Interpersonal trust—the degree to which team members trust each other to do the right thing.
- Interdependence—the degree to which team members can work together, where each relies on others to bring their expertise to bear for the common good.
- Incentives—the financial, social and moral benefits that individuals and the team gains from success.
- Social patterns—the way team members work together.

The point in all of this is that an exclusive focus on the technology aspects represents a serious misplacement of focus and energy. In line with this framework, you have to put intentional focus on understanding the human and people side of the equation, and work with the levers offered to bring about change and benefit for the organization.

You have to put intentional focus on understanding the human and people side of the equation, and work with the levers offered to bring about change and benefit for the organization.

After presenting this model in my workshops, I often say “Perhaps Jessica and Jeff understate the technology side—perhaps it’s 20% and the human factors side is only 80%,” but this only shows that even if the impact of the technology is doubled, the human factors are still four times as important.

Figure 4-3. 90% People, 10% Technology



Lipnack and Stamps found that success with virtual teams (teams brought together by collaboration technology) was mainly about people factors. The technology was but a small part of the success equation.

Framework 4. Avoiding Failure or Chasing Success

In a four paragraph blog post in August 2005, R. Todd Stephens captured the essential difference between failure and success with collaboration.⁷ Here's what Todd wrote:

Today, most organizations are implementing some form of collaborative applications. These applications include shared documents, shared content management, groupware, corporate blogs, etc. What factors impact the success and failure of these efforts? More importantly, are these factors correlated? While I have not performed an extensive research program, I can draw on a couple of years of experience.

Failure will be related to the infrastructure. More specifically, the capacity and performance of the application will dictate the failure. Assuming the system selected has the basic business functions required, failure will occur when the system destroys the trust by not excelling in the operations and infrastructure areas. However, successful applications built over a solid infrastructure do not guarantee success. In fact, a solid infrastructure is only important when the need is not fulfilled.

Success is much more related to the client support and the business community acceptance of the technology. Therefore success in collaboration is related to the training, engagement processes, branding, best practices, user manuals, communities of practice, communications, and providing customer service.

So where does the vast majority of funding in this area go toward? You guessed it, the software, hardware, vendor relationships, capacity, etc. More importantly if you try to find a best practice document, vendor user guide, or a research firm review of the implementation of collaborative applications, you will find a rather large vacuum. Our community is obviously more concerned with collaborative failure than collaborative success.

In summarizing Todd's argument then, we get two points of comparison: actions that help avoid failure with collaboration technology, and actions that help drive success with collaboration technology (see Figure 4-4). To avoid failure, focus your actions on:

- Building a good and solid infrastructure. Ensure you have good servers from reputable vendors, and that your IT Operations team keep them humming with minimal downtime.
- Offering applications that are quick to respond to user input. For example, mouse clicks are swiftly resolved, rather than leaving the user to wait for 10 seconds.

On the other side are the actions that you can take to drive success:

- Support from internal clients, and acceptance by the business groups within your organization of the new collaboration technology.

- The methods of training you offer.
 - How you engage with the business—the strategies you follow to understand the collaboration opportunity within their work.
 - The branding you create for the system.
 - The best practices you develop and promulgate throughout the firm.
 - User manuals that help people understand the nature of the applications.
 - The communities of practice that are seeded or that self-form to support and enhance the use of the technology.
 - The quality and nature of the service offered to customers.
- Delivering a solid infrastructure will only enable you to avoid failure. Success requires a very different set of disciplines.**

What are you investing the majority of your time and effort into? Are you merely doing the actions that will help to “avoid failure,” or are you actively “chasing success”?

Figure 4-4. Avoiding Failure or Chasing Success

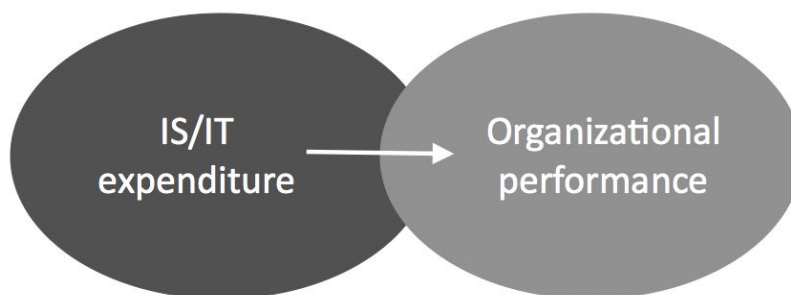
Avoiding Failure	Chasing Success
Solid infrastructure	Client support and business acceptance
Responsive applications	Training
	Engagement processes
	Branding
	Best practices
	User manuals
	Communities of practice
	Customer service

Delivering a solid infrastructure and responsive applications will only enable you to avoid failure with collaboration technology. Chasing success requires a very different set of disciplines, including client support and business acceptance, training, and engagement processes. Ultimately, both aspect are required—there’s no point chasing success if the infrastructure is weak and unreliable.

Framework 5. Academics on How IS/IT Creates Value

Academics who study information systems and technology (IS/IT) in organizations have been interested in the link between IS/IT and organizational performance for a long time. In the early days of academic research, a direct link between the two was proposed (see Figure 4-5). The academics argued that if you put IS/IT in, you would see an improvement in business performance—and some studies had data to support this direct link.

Figure 4-5. How IT Creates Value



Early academic studies argued for a direct link between IS/IT expenditure and organizational performance. In other words, “spend money on IS/IT” and “great things will happen.” Attendees at my collaboration workshops wish this model was valid.

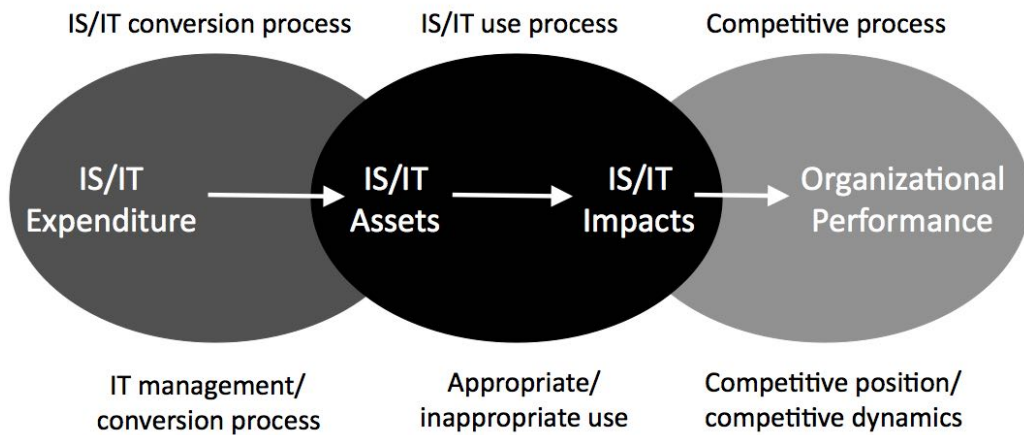
As more research has been undertaken and the academics have deepened their ability to isolate the variables, the models have become less simplistic and causative and more correlative. That is, few academics will now argue that IS/IT directly causes an increase in organizational performance, but rather that it’s how IS/IT is used that makes a difference.

For example, Professors John Ward and Elizabeth Daniel, in a book entitled *Benefits Management*, trace the link through four steps (see Figure 4-6):⁸

1. You spend money on IS/IT systems ...
2. Which creates IS/IT assets ...
3. Which have an impact on the way business is done ... and
4. Which ultimately leads to a statement of business performance.

It’s how IS/IT is used that makes the difference to organizational performance.

It’s the middle two areas—steps 2 and 3—that create the linkage between expenditure and performance. Note how Figure 4-6 uses the phrase “Appropriate/inappropriate use” under the IS/IT Assets and IS/IT Impacts oval. It’s what you use it for that matters, not the fact that you have spent money.

Figure 4-6. How IT Creates Value (Redux)

Expenditure on IS/IT does not cause organizational performance directly. Instead, it's what the expenditure delivers (IS/IT Assets) that matters to organizational performance, and what the resulting assets are used for (IS/IT Impacts). Organizations have to get the middle two steps right in order to see an increase in organizational performance.

Two other academics—Steve Kozlowski and Daniel Ilgen from Michigan State University—synthesized the academic literature on team effectiveness.⁹ Their paper presents 18 levers identified by research as having an impact on team effectiveness. Only two are technology factors: “Collaborative tools” is included as a lever under task and system design, and “Technology augmentation” is listed as a lever under performance regulation and adaptation. The other 16 levers are:

- Task and system design—group composition, role design.
- Performance regulation and adaptation—goal setting, feedback, and PROMeas (a method and system for team performance management).
- Training strategies—team-member training, cross training, simulation-based training, and adaptability-coordination crew resource management training.
- Team development—descriptive models, and normative models.
- Leadership in general—task and support behaviors, transformational and transactional leadership, and leader-member exchange.
- Team leadership—task functions, and developmental functions.

Clearly there is a lot more to success than the collaborative technology being used.

Framework 6. Barriers to Collaboration

What prevents people from collaborating? The quick answer is a lack of technology. But there are much deeper barriers to collaboration than technology, and what many organizations discover when they roll out collaboration technology is that the real barriers start to appear. Lack of technology was an excuse—an obfuscation.

There are much deeper barriers to collaboration than technology; lack of technology is an excuse—an obfuscation.

Four barriers to collaboration are:

1. *Lack of Purpose.* The people who could be collaborating do not see any value or benefit in doing so. They're happy with the current state—whether that's working alone, working in their departmental silo with formal handovers to other departments, or actively competing with other internal groups—and can't imagine how it could be different.
2. *Lack of Knowledge about the Opportunity.* People are unaware of particular opportunities to collaborate. They are busy working on what they've been told are important projects and tasks, but much bigger opportunities in the organization are left to languish due to inadequate resourcing. People lack awareness of the other opportunities.
3. *No Shared Process.* People who could collaborate don't have any work processes in common—for example, they have different processes for making decisions, discussing ideas, and giving feedback (see *Appendix 1*). Each individual has been trained in a different “right way” of interacting with others, and there is no common ground.
4. *Limited Role Awareness.* People don't see it as their role to collaborate with others. They have a job description to fulfill, and they will communicate with selected individuals when they need assistance in doing so. Wider collaboration is out-of-the-question.

Whatever you can do to mitigate these barriers will pay tremendous dividends.

Finally, note that the presence of technology can be a barrier. Consider the use of PowerPoint as a constraint on collaborative interaction. A PowerPoint presentation locks the presenter into a particular flow—the slides are laid out in linear fashion, and in most instances, the presenter wants to “get through the deck” before taking questions. With 90% of the meeting taken up with the PowerPoint deck, there is very little time or inclination left at the end for insightful interaction.¹⁰ Note the language too; we refer to the individual as a “presenter” rather than “facilitator.” In this case, the lack of technology isn't the barrier to collaboration—it's its presence that's problematic.

Framework 7. Lessons from Lessons Learned

Nick Milton is the author of *The Lessons Learned Handbook: Practical Approaches to Learning from Experience*.¹¹ He shared some of the initial research findings for the book on his blog, including a list of key success factors:¹²

It seems that effective lesson-learning contains many elements, each of which has a positive impact on the success of the system, and that a successful system needs to incorporate as many of the elements as possible. These elements are cultural as well as procedural. The most important things to get right seem to be:

- *Ensuring that lessons lead to action, and that these actions are followed through to application in future projects. It is probably the lack of follow through that causes the greatest frustration.*
- *Clear involvement by senior management, with clear expectations that the lessons learned system will be applied. Without senior management attention, time for lesson learning is not prioritised, or lesson learning is treated as a tick-box activity.*
- *Formalising, defining, embedding and consistently applying the system (and there are sub-issues here, for example accountabilities, and avoiding the “tick box” mentality).*
- *A supportive culture (and this will be driven largely through the behaviours of leadership, and by the importance they place on lesson learning).*

Ensure that lessons lead to action, and that these actions are followed through to application in future projects. The lack of follow causes great frustration.

A Lessons Learned process is a collaborative process—in an environment of shared practice, with trust among the members of the team or group, “lessons” from previous work are discussed and explored. The team or group is jointly seeking an understanding of what went well and what didn’t go well, so as to apply those learnings both to its own future practice, and the future practices of the organization.

There are many technologies that can be used in a Lessons Learned process—the most common being a “lessons learned database”—but if that’s all the process is, it will fail. The success indicators in Nick’s list above are non-technology factors. It’s vital to create the right set of cultural and procedural aspects for a Lessons Learned process, instead of thinking that you just have to create a database with the right fields for data capture.

Key Lessons from the Frameworks

We can integrate the themes from the seven frameworks to get an overall sense of what else is important beyond the technology.

Figure 4-7. Integrating the Frameworks

Success Factor	Impediments to Implementation	SharePoint for Business	90% People, 10% Technology
Technology			✓
Technical Complexity	✓		
Immaturity of technology	✓		
Technical implementation		✓	
Vision			✓
Business reason	✓	✓	✓
Business case	✓		
Governance			
Corporate culture	✓		✓
Relative Priority	✓		
Legal issues	✓		
Loss of management control	✓		
Avoid pitfalls of earlier tools		✓	
Practices of collaboration		✓	✓
Customer service			
Senior management involvement			
Engagement			
Staff willingness to participate	✓		
Business acceptance			
User Adoption			
Competence in using the tools		✓	
Shared agreements in team		✓	✓
Best practices			
User manuals			
Communities of practice			

Figure 4-7. Integrating the Frameworks (Continued)

Success Factor	Avoiding Failure, Chasing Success	Academics on Value	Barriers to Collaboration	Lessons Learned
Technology				
Technical Complexity				
Immaturity of technology				
Technical implementation	✓			
Vision				
Business reason		✓	✓	
Business case				
Governance		✓		
Corporate culture				✓
Relative Priority			✓	✓
Legal issues				
Loss of management control				
Avoid pitfalls of earlier tools				
Practices of collaboration			✓	
Customer service	✓			
Senior management				
Engagement	✓			✓
Staff willingness to participate	✓			
Business acceptance	✓		✓	
User Adoption	✓			✓
Competence in using the tools	✓			
Shared agreements in team				
Best practices	✓			
User manuals	✓			
Communities of practice	✓			

Still Not Convinced?

Perhaps you remain unconvinced about the link between technology and improved performance. You could point out that I chose the seven frameworks outlined in this chapter, and actually, I wrote two of them myself. Given that I selected all the frameworks to be included, and given that they support the main idea that I am trying to argue, perhaps I have a selection bias. Perhaps I am being unfair and misrepresenting the true nature of things.

If this describes your response, here's my request: go and talk to the business leaders in your firm, and see what they say. Ignore the points that I've made at a high-level, and go and get specific guidance from real people working on real projects and initiatives at your firm. If you do take this approach, then please share what you learn with me. See Chapter 9 for how to get in contact.

If you are unconvinced on the link between technology and performance, go and talk to the business leaders in your firm. Ask them what they see.

Summary

In this chapter we have considered the contribution of collaboration technology to collaboration success. The frameworks presented have argued a consistent position: technology does have a role to play, but its role is dwarfed by business and human factors. Focusing too much on the technology is wrong, and ignoring the business and human factors is wrong too.

We have already investigated a couple of the factors identified through the discussion in this chapter: the nature of the technology (Chapter 2), and the business reason for collaboration (Chapter 3). The remainder of this book addresses the other big issues—governance (Chapter 5), engagement (Chapter 6), and user adoption (Chapter 7).

¹ Linda Dunkel, *Collaboration: harnessing the power to engage people, solve problems, and manage change in business*, March 2007. See www.interactionassociates.com/ideas/collaboration-harnessing-power-engage-people-solve-problems-and-manage-change-business

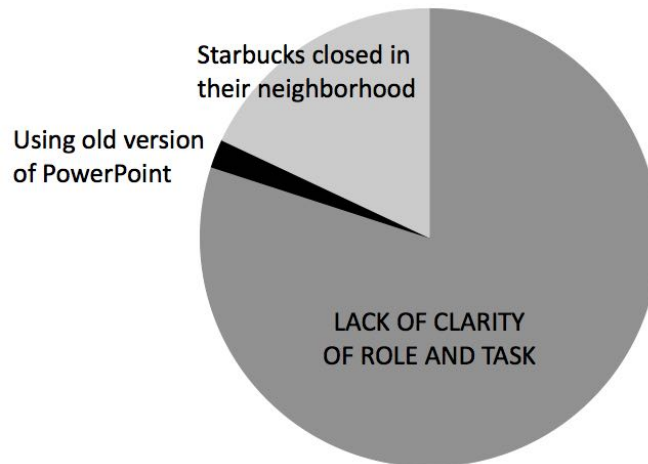
² AIIM, *Collaboration and Enterprise 2.0: Work-Meets-Play or the Future of Business?*, June 2009. See www.aiim.org/Research/Industry-Watch/Collaboration-Enterprise-20-2009.

³ See *SharePoint for Business: A Six Step Strategy for Achieving Collaboration Success and Improving Business with SharePoint*, at www.michaelsampson.net/2008/02/sfb.html.

⁴ Tom Peters, *The Pursuit of Wow! Every Person's Guide to Topsy-Turvy Times*, November 1994. See www.amazon.com/Pursuit-Every-Persons-Guide-Topsy-Turvy/dp/0679755551/.

⁵ Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, *Virtual Teams: Reaching Across Space, Time, and Organizations With Technology*, April 1997. See www.amazon.com/Virtual-Teams-Reaching-Organizations-Technology/dp/0471165530/.

⁶ Nicholas Bate consults on productivity and effectiveness. He posted the following graphic in March 2010, at blog.strategicedge.co.uk/2010/03/actually-the-data-suggests.html. It has always struck me for its profound simplicity. The title is *The Reasons the Team Isn't Performing to its Best*.



⁷ R. Todd Stephens, *Collaboration Success or Failure*, August 2005. See rtoddcom.w02.winhost.com/notebook/2005/collaboration-success-or-failure.aspx.

⁸ John Ward and Elizabeth Daniel, *Benefits Management: Delivering Value from IS and IT Investments*, January 2006. See www.amazon.com/Benefits-Management-Delivering-Investments-Information/dp/047009463X/.

⁹ Steve Kozlowski and Daniel Ilgen, “Enhancing the Effectiveness of Work Groups and Teams,” *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2006. See www.psychologicalscience.org/journals/pspi/pspi_7_3_article.pdf.

¹⁰ In 2000 I taught a final year undergraduate course in Information Systems at the local university. While I can make PowerPoint sing, I deliberately chose to use an overhead projector with printed and blank slides. I wanted the ability to engage with my students, to hear what they were saying and for me to have the freedom to say something different to what the next PowerPoint slide would demand me to say if that’s what the students needed. It’s hard to do that with PowerPoint; the medium constrains the message. But by using a more malleable form of conveying information and stimulating conversation—overhead slides—I was able to create a very different dynamic in the classroom.

The year before I had seen Edward de Bono take the same approach at a major technology conference, and he opened my eyes to the possibilities. With about 500 people in the room, he sat on the podium at the overhead projector and drew. It was a fascinating and memorable event.

¹¹ Nick Milton, *The Lessons Learned Handbook: Practical Approaches to Learning from Experience*, July 2010. See www.amazon.com/Lessons-Learned-Handbook-Approaches-Experience/dp/1843345870/.

¹² See *Lessons Learned Survey Results* from September 2009 on Nick’s blog, at www.nickmilton.com/2009/09/lessons-learned-survey-results.html.

Chapter 5.

Determine Your Governance Approach

“*Collaboration technology without a governance plan is like a day without sunshine. The IT department is sad, people are depressed, and you often have to change your plans and reset prior expectations, which leaves a lot of people dissatisfied.*”

Sue Hanley

This whole book is about governance, even though it doesn't have the word “governance” in its title. What we have talked about so far, and what we will talk about after this chapter, are all issues related to governing collaboration at work.

In this chapter, we look specifically at the structure, process and themes of governance for collaboration. The structure and process discussions apply broadly to the way a firm approaches information systems and technology, while the thematic discussion focuses on the collaboration aspects.

In this chapter, you will:

- Discover what governance means, and five reasons why it's important.
- Be encouraged to set up a structure for governing the link between collaboration technology and desired business outcomes at your firm.
- Learn about a generalized governance process for making decisions.
- Look at key governance themes related to using collaboration technology.

Defining Governance

Governance means the guidelines, rules, policies and procedures that are put in place to make something work. We live under governance situations all the time—bylaws about buildings on our properties, speed limits on our roads, emission limits for our factories, and more. Governance is critical to the success of any situation involving interactions between people and resources, and organizational collaboration technology projects are no exception.

Governance is the process by which technology capability is focused appropriately on business goals.

We have said a few times in this book that collaboration technology offers an opportunity. Governance embraces or rejects these offers, and thus defines what the technology—and its promised opportunity—becomes for the organization. We can define governance as:

The process by which technology capability is focused appropriately on business goals.

In a couple of pages we will look at the term “governance” in more detail, and in particular the difference between what is usually bandied around about governance for collaboration technology and what is really needed. But before doing this, let’s think through why governance is so important.

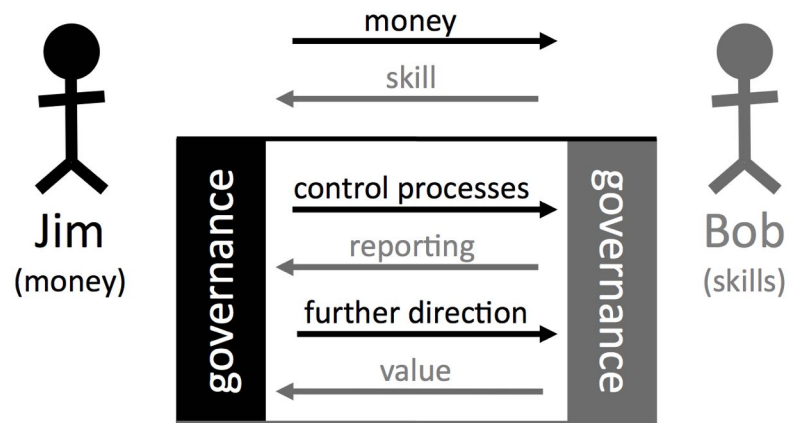
First Principles: Governing Transactions

Jim needs a job done, has the money to pay for it, but lacks the skill to do the work. Bob has the skill, and is keen to get the work. An agreement is reached whereby Jim will pay Bob for doing the work. During the time that Bob works for Jim, Jim shares his vision for what he wants done, and as Bob carries out the work, he reports back to Jim on how things are going. In response to Bob’s updates, Jim gives further direction as required. At the end of the work, Bob delivers something of value to Jim in return for the agreed payment. In a close working relationship of this kind, the “governance” of the relationship is carried out in the background (see Figure 5-1). Few, if any, formal agreements will be put in place—the whole deal may simply be sealed with a handshake.

Direct relationships of this nature are becoming scarce in our world. Transactions are carried out at arms length, supported by long and complex contracts. Disputes and disagreements between the two parties are settled in court, sometimes with multiple levels of appeal. There is disintermediation between the two through capital markets. There isn’t just a single Jim and a single Bob anymore, but multiple “Jims” and multiple “Bobs.” These transitions make the governance processes all the more difficult (see Figure 5-2). Who is in charge? Who owns the vision? Which Bobs have the responsibility to report to the Jims of the world? In an organizational setting, how do these processes come into

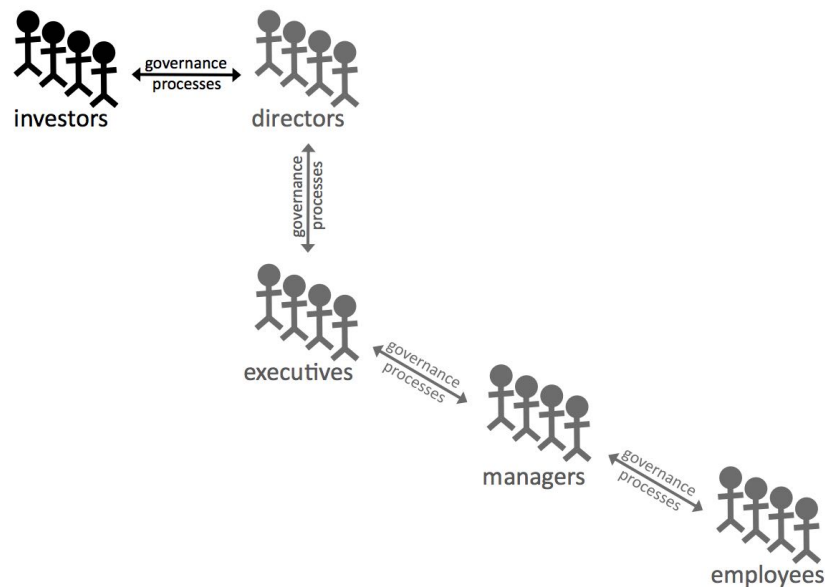
play to ensure that executives, managers, and employees—and thousands or hundreds of thousands of them—deliver the value demanded by investors?

Figure 5-1. Governance Processes Between Simple Entities



Direct transactions between two people are relatively easy to understand and govern. The governance processes recede into the background; little formalized governance is necessary.

Figure 5-2. Governance Processes at Scale



Indirect relationships involving many people across many layers of organizational structure are difficult to understand and govern. Who has the responsibility to set direction, approve projects, and initiate corrective action? Governance must be front-and-center.

Why Governance Before Engagement and User Adoption?

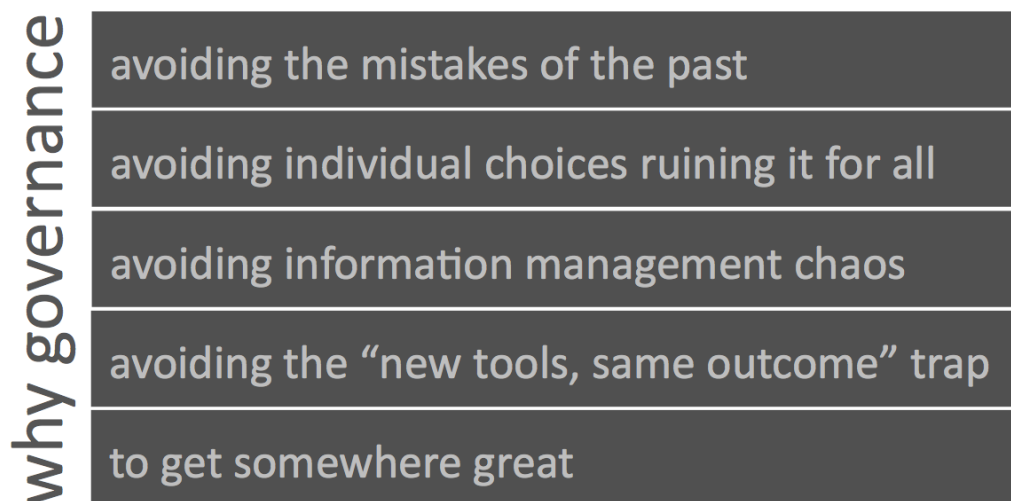
A good question to ask is why we are looking at governance before dealing with the engagement and user adoption stages of the collaboration roadmap? There are three answers to this question:

1. Developing an initial governance position before engaging with the business means that possibilities are not promised that will never be delivered.
2. Few organizations start from scratch with collaboration technology. All have pre-existing governance approaches that impact what happens with the collaboration initiative.
3. A sequential book like this laid out in linear fashion forces some limits on the writer. In practice, governance, engagement, and user adoption are interrelated processes, and each impacts the other.

Why Do We Need Governance?

Why bother with governance at all? It takes time, effort and real dollars to implement the ideas in this book generally and in this chapter specifically, so why should you do it? There are five major reasons—each worthy of careful consideration.

Figure 5-3. Five Reasons Why Governance is Needed



Governance helps organizations reach their goals by creating structures and processes that force the consideration of disciplines essential to success. It also helps with avoiding past mistakes, individual choices ruining the system for everyone else, and information chaos.

Governance Reason 1. Avoiding the Mistakes of Yesteryear

Let's play a quiz—guess the collaboration technology I'm thinking of. Here are five clues:

1. The product is hard to describe, because it can do so many different things. The opportunity is huge.
2. People can create their own mini-places to work within the overall product—to support collaborative teams and collaborative groups.
3. What you get back from the system depends on what you choose to use it for.
4. Skilled people to run the product are hard to find, and once you do find them, they're expensive.
5. People in the business have to change the way they work to get benefit from the product.

While this list can describe many collaboration technology products, I'm thinking specifically of both Lotus Notes and Microsoft SharePoint. And therein lies a huge problem, especially for organizations that failed with Lotus Notes and are rushing to SharePoint as the answer. Consider the experience of one large European firm. They had been using Lotus Notes for a long time, but had gotten to the point where they couldn't find anything, the system was a mess, and everyone hated it. So on the advice of a Microsoft Business Partner the firm switched to SharePoint. Two years later they couldn't find anything, the system was a mess, and everyone hated it.

Many people think that Lotus Notes was a massive failure. The actual source of that perception is more difficult to pin down: was it that Microsoft out-marketed IBM and created the perception of failure in peoples' minds? Was it a failure of the technology, in that particular technology approaches and database structures in Lotus Notes were not as fit-for-purpose as IBM contended? Was it a failure of governance, where organizations did not enact the right governance processes to align efforts with Lotus Notes to organizational priorities? What's fascinating 10 years into the SharePoint journey is that many organizations are now failing with SharePoint, and the same questions are being asked about it.

My contention is that failure in both instances is a failure of governance—the problem lies squarely with the organizations themselves.¹ In support of this contention is the fact that there are examples of firms that have done great things with Lotus Notes, just as there are firms that have done great things with SharePoint.

In summary, the first reason that governance is so desperately needed is to avoid the business usage errors and mistakes of the past.

Governance Reason 2. Avoiding Individual Choices Derailing Collaboration

Shared environments require shared agreements so they can work for everyone. That's true in the physical world—witness the shared code of ethics for using a train station, a church, a football stand, or a public road—and it's true in the software world too. Without shared agreements, it's only natural that individuals will attempt to optimize the environment for their own use, without regard to the common good.

Without shared agreements,
it's only natural that
individuals will attempt to
optimize the environment
for their own use.

As long as people only interact with themselves, give deliverables to themselves, and ignore everyone else in their organizations, they can do whatever they want with information systems and life will be great. But as soon as they start using information systems to communicate thoughts and ideas to others, to coordinate current action and future plans with other people, and to collaboratively execute the requirements of their jobs, the rules change. Shared agreements about how common IT systems will be used become essential to work effectiveness. At an organizational level, these shared agreements are part of the governance remit.

In the context of collaboration technology, optimizing the technology for one's own use means that decisions are made that make sense for the individual, but then they are either in conflict with the decisions made by other individuals, or are at odds with what's best for everyone. For example:

- Each project manager creates his or her own project template and methodology. People involved in multiple projects have to remember multiple ways of working, increasing work friction and training time. Some bigger projects are run using multiple team spaces, each with their own design.
- Anyone can start a new collaborative group for learning and capability development, but there are no checks in place to see whether a similar group already exists. As a result, there are numerous examples of groups that competing with each other for attention and involvement—all focused on the same topic.
- Collaboration IT administrators get cornered in the lunch room and are asked to introduce “a couple of small changes” on the production server to help one of the groups streamline their work.

Using collaboration technology requires an interrelated web of groups—the IT department, the knowledge management team, and various business groups—to work towards a common vision in a common way. Governance provides a structure and process to make this happen, and helps ensure that the technology doesn't get derailed by strong individuals optimizing their own turf.

Governance Reason 3. Avoiding Information Management Chaos

A large organization in the United States was ready to introduce a corporate deployment of SharePoint. After months of work—buying the server hardware, installing SharePoint, and load testing the environment—the IT department was finally ready to go. On release date, to its horror, it was discovered that the horse had bolted and there were already 15,000 SharePoint sites on unsupported servers across the business. Such a reality is not an isolated incident, and not limited to SharePoint either. Talk about information anarchy, compliance chaos, and unmitigated business risk—let alone plain usability problems.

There are many implications of information management chaos:

- People can't find the information they need to do their work, because it is spread across a diverse collection of disparate and unmanaged servers.
- People don't know which documents are authoritative when making business decisions, versus those which are only drafts or those that have been superseded.
- Team and group spaces proliferate without rhyme or reason, springing up in various places and at various times, with no one being able to predict or explain why. And then some disappear, again for no apparent reason.
- Teams start using the new system for business critical projects, only to discover that the server was sitting under someone's desk without any security or backup processes in place. Now the server has disappeared, and no one knows where it is.
- Documents that contain promises to customers are stored in various unmanaged team spaces, along with other types of data that are subject to compliance and archiving mandates. But because there is no overall plan, this data is not found, putting the firm at risk of legal action.
- When different teams across an organization have similar needs, multiple development efforts can be happening because each team does not know what others are doing. This leads to duplication of effort and wastage of expenditure, something which could have been avoided with central oversight.

Poor information management leads to information anarchy, compliance chaos, and unmitigated business risk—not to mention a multitude of usability problems.

A governance structure, process and approach can help firms avoid these and other examples of information management chaos.

Governance Reason 4. Avoiding the “New Tools, Same Outcome” Trap

There is a cost to pay when investing in new collaboration technology and approaches. For some products, the financial cost is significant. For all products, there are behavioral costs as well. Consider this cost profile for a server-based collaboration product installed behind the firewall:²

1. Upfront fees payable to the vendor for software and user licenses, along with ongoing annual maintenance fees. 2. Initial consulting fees payable to external consultants for the implementation and deployment of the software. Future customization and additional integration work will incur extra costs. 3. Ongoing salary and overhead for new employees hired to take responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the software. 4. The behavioral costs associated with requisite changes in work practices from every employee in the organization now required to use the new software.	There is a cost to pay when investing in new collaboration technology and approaches. For some products, the financial cost is significant. For all products, there are behavioral costs to pay.

Regardless of which product you choose, having a clear pathway to improvement is essential before agreeing to these costs. The targeted improvement could be:

- A reduction in document chaos, so people don't have the hassle of coordinating complex document revision cycles.
- A simpler way of managing virtual team projects, enabling improved capabilities for coordinating the efforts of multiple people, and ensuring forward progress towards the shared vision.
- An improvement in findability, so people get on with their work with better timeliness, rather than losing hours a week searching for the latest documents.
- A better way of discovering people in your firm with the right expertise, so the best people can be put onto new projects.
- An enhanced workflow process, enabling trackability.
- Greater visibility into work requests and status across the firm, enabling better decision-making.

The problem comes, however, when new collaboration technology is introduced without the required changes in approach. This results in wasted expenditure, and cultivates the idea that collaboration fails inside that culture.

The problem comes when new collaboration technology is introduced without the required changes in approach.

Consider the example of a product management team that worked on proposal documents. The lead author of a proposal would distribute it by email, and then have to integrate up to 10 edited copies. After installing new collaboration technology, the author changed to uploading the document into a team space, and an email notification was automatically triggered to the reviewers. Each downloaded a copy of the document, made their changes, and uploaded their copy as a new document. The technology changed, but the outcome was the same—a chaotic process for integrating the revisions from the 10 reviewers. Even though the new technology offered functionality for removing the pain of document chaos, it was not embraced and therefore no benefit was achieved.

Governance Reason 5. To Get Somewhere Great

The fifth-and-final reason for governance is the most important: to get somewhere great. Governance isn't just about avoiding the potholes on the road to success, although there are some major potholes to avoid. Much more critically governance is about enhancing the prospect of success by being on the right road to start with:

- Having the right technology available to support the work of the organization, not just something acquired through a knee-jerk reaction. We talked about this in Chapter 2.
- Developing a clear vision as to the value being pursued by the organization from its investment in collaboration technology and approaches, and also treating the achievement of one goal as the beginning of a new goal. We discussed setting the initial goal in Chapter 3, and will discuss the pursuit of greater value in Chapter 8.
- Paying appropriate attention to the engagement process, so real needs and opportunities are targeted with new technology and approaches, along with investing intentional energy in the user adoption challenge. These topics are the focus of Chapters 6 and 7.

Taken together, the “roadmap” in this book is about being on the right road to success, and avoiding the potholes that threaten the journey.

Macro-Governance: Governing the Use of the Technology

The process of governance for collaboration will greatly mitigate the four threats we have just discussed. However, in order for this to happen, the right type of governance is required. If the exclusive focus of “governance” is on the technology of the chosen product, and how the IT department can architect the infrastructure in the best way, then the focus is wrong. To return to our earlier discussion about avoiding failure versus chasing success, governance at the technology level is merely about avoiding failure. What’s needed to drive success is something much greater—and one way of describing it is to draw a distinction between micro-governance and macro-governance:

- *Micro-Governance—About the Technology.* Micro-governance is all about a technology-centric governance strategy. It focuses people’s time and effort on technical matters like “creating a killer backup strategy,” arguing over metadata standardization, or deciding what should trigger the creation of a new site. These issues are important, but only within the supporting framework of macro-governance.
- *Macro-Governance—About Using the Technology.* Macro-governance shifts the focus from “Technology Governance” to “Governance of the Technology.” It takes the governance discussions away from happening within the context of the technology, and places the discussion of how to use the technology within the context of the business.

Macro-governance is therefore about how to improve business performance (see Chapter 3 on vision), engaging the business to understand opportunities (see Chapter 6), and encouraging user adoption of new technology and approaches (see Chapter 7).

Figure 5-4. Micro-Governance Versus Macro-Governance



Micro-governance sits inside the box and says “*What a nice box; I like the walls.*”

Macro-governance stands outside and asks “*What do we use the box for?*”

Micro-governance aims at optimizing the technical settings of the chosen product—it’s an “inside the box” governance approach. Macro-governance aims at optimizing the use of the technology within the business—it’s a “what do we use the box for” governance approach.

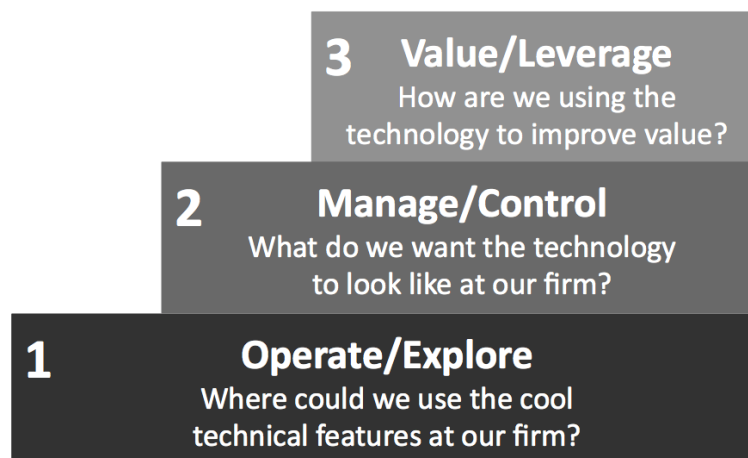
The Grand Unified Theory of Governance

We've used the term journey throughout this book, and that idea applies to what happens with governance too. Your governance approach should mature in lockstep with your maturing approach to the use of collaboration technology. When the technology is new to the organization and the technologists are still trying to stabilize the server software, governance has to be relevant to that exploration—it's too early to be putting in place a multi-group governance structure specifically for the technology. That stage will come, but the technology has to be tested and proven first. As the use of the technology matures, and a common vision for its effective use starts to emerge, the nature of governance changes. It takes the step up to the next level, and sets a new destination.

When the technology is new to the organization and the technologists are still trying to stabilize the server software, governance has to be relevant to that exploration.

Therefore the nature of governance depends on the context and maturity of the organization's approach to collaboration technology. Governance is the process of taking a step up from where the organization is today, and steering the approach for the technology to the next step. It's the oversight or overseeing role, recognizing where the technology is today and visualizing what needs to be done to shift it to the next level. For example, once the IT team stabilizes the technical environment so it can deliver a reliable service, the governance question moves to the second step: what do we want the technology to look like at our firm?

Figure 5-5. Three Levels on the Governance Journey



Governing collaboration at work involves assessing where the use of the technology is at today, and then developing the required disciplines to step up to the next level. Collaboration technology flounders when there is no plan to reach the next level.

Level 1. Operate/Explore

When the technology is new to the organization, the focus of governance is on creating the conditions for exploring what the technology can do, stabilizing the environment to deliver a reliable service, and operationalizing it to offer useful capabilities. That's the overall destination the IT team and internal product champion should keep in mind as they work with what they have acquired and seek to mitigate the risks posed at Level 1.

Depending on the complexity and breadth of capability offered by the specific technology, this stage could take 12-24 months. In the SharePoint world, it's very common for the IT team to explore SharePoint for this long before stepping up to the next level and making it more widely applicable to the business. Products that offer fewer capabilities, or are explicitly focused on supporting collaboration will require a shorter timeframe. The trick though, regardless of the time it takes, is not to stay at this point forever, but to see it as part of the wider governance journey.

Depending on the complexity and breadth of capability offered by the specific technology, this stage could take 12-24 months.

When the governance task at Level 1 has been achieved, and there is a clear sense of what's available from the technology, along with a vision of how it could be used within the organization, it's time to step up to Level 2.

Level 2. Manage/Control

Stepping up to Level 2 marks a major transition in the focus of governance. At Level 1, the specific technology is very relevant. The governance statement is basically "We use SharePoint," or "We use Connections," or "We use Jive." At Level 2, the conversation shifts from being about the technology as such to being about what is done with the technology. The governance statement is no longer "We use SharePoint/Connections/Jive," but "What are we doing with SharePoint/Connections/Jive?"

Another way of characterizing Level 2 is that the technology has been fully unboxed, and there is an shared understanding of what it is and what it could be used for. The IT team have "conquered" the technology—they can make it work reliably for the organization—and now the question transitions to "So what?" So what are we going to do with this? It's almost like becoming indifferent to the technology itself and focusing instead on what you're going to do with it.

I have attended and spoken at quite a few conferences around the world over recent years, and it's really interesting to hear how people from different organizations describe their approach to governance. The words they use and the emphasis they put on different elements gives much insight into where they are in their collaboration and governance journey. For example, at the Share conference in Sydney in November 2010, one speaker

gave their definition for governance—after displaying and then dismissing as irrelevant the advocated definition from their vendor. For them governance was:

... the practice of gatekeeping the deployment of technology or services into SharePoint. Ensuring that the risks, costs and management of the process lead to adoption and improved usefulness to DB.³

What stood out was that the organization—DB Breweries from New Zealand in this instance—was thinking clearly about what was needed to deliver business value, and had designed their governance process to create assurance that this would be achieved. And equally, the fact that DB looked at the definition of governance from Microsoft and had enough gumption to say “that’s not for us” signaled a deep maturity. They knew what they wanted, and that merely copying-and-pasting the vendor’s definition was not enough to get them there.

Level 3. Value/Leverage

There is a third level to the governance journey. At Level 3, the focus is on gaining business value from collaboration technology. It’s about leveraging what’s available more broadly across the organization. The governance task is to align the technology that’s available with business objectives, to ensure the right initiatives get funded, and that an appropriate technology infrastructure remains in place over the years to deliver mission-critical services.

Level 3 governance also means taking a broader perspective on the technology by looking beyond the capabilities of a specific product or service at the portfolio of capabilities that are available as a result of having multiple products and services available. The specific products are largely irrelevant by themselves. Finally, it means having established processes for evaluating new technologies and approaches to the pursuit of value within the organization, and making the decision to sunset current technologies and approaches in favor of new technologies and approaches when that’s needed.

Governance at Level 3 is about leveraging what’s available more broadly across the organization in the pursuit of value.

Summary—Defining Governance

In this opening section we have defined governance for collaboration technology—a process or journey that focuses on how collaboration technology can be used appropriately inside an organization to deliver business value. It’s a visioning and steering role, and it changes and matures alongside the use of the technology. In the remainder of this chapter, we look at a structure for governance (for Levels 2 and 3), a process for making governance decisions, and a series of themes for governance.

Figure 5-6. Examining the Three Levels on the Governance Journey

Element	Level 1, Operate	Level 2, Manage	Level 3, Value
Focus	Explore the value	Prove the value	Leverage the value
Time Frame	12-24 months	18-36 months	Years
Stance on the technology	The specific technology is very relevant—what are its features and functions?	What we do with the the specific technology is relevant, not the technology itself Do we call the product by name, or brand it?	The specific technology is irrelevant. Its capabilities have been assimilated into everyday thinking
Risks	Server falling over Underpowered hardware is used for the collaboration server; it's done on the cheap Database gets corrupted Non-approved proliferation of collaboration servers	Chaos Proliferation of team and group spaces Failing to close team and group spaces when the project finishes or the group disbands Inconsistency in vocabulary Template differentiation “Playing around” with new features	Non-aligned use of the technology Siloed approaches to collaboration that make working together more difficult IT, HR, or Internal Communications running wild with their own ideas Alternative technology being introduced to compete with current platforms/products
What's the Governance Task	Stabilize the environment to deliver a reliable service Operationalize the system to offer useful capabilities	Systematize and control particular aspects of the technology to deliver a service in a repeatable way that leads to success in our organization	Strategize on the broad use of the technology across the organization, and where we want its capabilities to add value Ensure alignment with the strategic intent
Who is Responsible?	IT Team Internal product champion	Governance team with business and IT representation IT Team	Governance team with business and IT representation Executives

Governance Structure: Ownership and Decision Rights

We have looked at a three-level approach to governance for collaboration at work, and outlined both the risks to mitigate and the tasks to achieve at each level. In levels 2 and 3, a structure for governance is needed, so as to define the decision rights for addressing the risks and ensuring the tasks are achieved. Such a structure is not needed at Level 1 because it's too early in the journey. Who—or what group—is permitted to decide what the collaboration technology will be used for in the organization is defined by the structure that's put in place?

Decision rights imply ownership. With ownership comes freedom to determine where and how it is used, budget to put those ideas into practice, along with the responsibility to ensure it is used well and serves the needs of the organization.

A Structure for Governance

Allowing an individual or any one group in the organization to dictate what happens with collaboration technology and approaches is the wrong strategy to follow. We should take note of the separation of powers and duties in governing countries, and follow a similar strategy in our organizations. We already have an exemplar from the world of intranets about governance: a three-tiered structure with different groups for steering, operations and development. With a slight modification of terms, we can apply this approach to governance for collaboration:

Allowing an individual or any one group in the organization to dictate what happens with collaboration technology and approaches is the wrong strategy to follow.

- The Strategy and Steering Group—responsible for strategy and policy.
- The Business Impact Group—responsible for helping business departments gain maximum value from collaboration technology and approaches.
- The Collaboration Technology Group—responsible for the technology, administration and development efforts.

Having these three groups work in concert means there are checks-and-balances to how collaboration technology is used in the organization, and prevents a small minority of people from getting too excited about new technology and thus taking the initiative off-course from business drivers. As we have already discussed in some detail in Chapter 4, the technology has an overall minor effect on the success of collaboration and information sharing in organizations—it's all the other things that have to be planned and examined that will lead to success or failure.

Group 1. Strategy and Steering Group

The Strategy and Steering Group is the ultimate owner of collaboration technology in the organization. Along with strong representation from various business departments, it should contain at least one representative from the IT department. A group of this nature, with cross-functional and business-heavy representation, means the technology is suitably focused on solving business needs and not left to the whims of technologists.

The Strategy and Steering Group is responsible for the questions at the heart of macro-governance—both at Level 2 and Level 3 of governance:

- Ensuring alignment of the collaboration technology with business objectives. Owning the vision, as we discussed in Chapter 3, is the major focus of this group.
- Allocating appropriate resources to the groups delegated with responsibility and authority for implementing the collaboration strategy, both at a business and technical level. This includes both the Business Impact Group, and the Collaboration Technology Group.
- Scanning for new collaboration technology and approaches to work that could add incremental value to the organization. If the technology needs to be changed due to vendor or product issues, the Strategy and Steering Group own the decision, along with evaluating and deciding on a replacement. If there are new collaboration approaches to how work can be done, the Strategy and Steering Group should be the lead advocates.
- At Level 2 of governance, when the focus is on determining what to do with the specific technology, decisions are made about the prioritization of investments in the technology. If the organization is at Level 3, prioritization decisions are focused on the relative priority of investing in collaboration technology or other business systems.

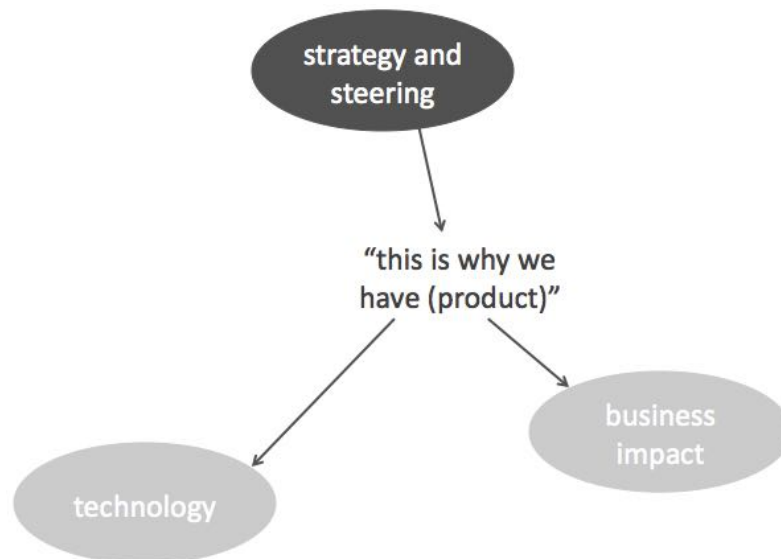
A group of this nature, with cross-functional and business-heavy representation, means the technology is suitably focused on solving business needs and not left to the whims of technologists.

In terms of the collaboration capabilities in the product of choice, there are some policy decisions the Strategy and Steering Group need to make. These create a set of common expectations about how the collaboration-enabling capabilities can be used effectively, and not lead to anarchy and chaos. We will talk more about these governance themes in the subsequent pages of this chapter, but a snapshot of these include:

- Who has the right to request a new team space for a collaborative project, or a group space for a collaborative learning and capability development initiative.
- What should happen to the content in a team space when a project is completed, or in a group space when the learning opportunity has finished.
- Whether team and group spaces will have a common look-and-feel, or the extent of variation in design that will be permitted.
- The roles and responsibilities of team space owners and users, and group space owners and users.
- How to encourage connections between people who have need for expertise and expertise to offer.

The Strategy and Steering Group needs to communicate with the other two groups in the governance structure: the Business Impact and Collaboration Technology groups respectively. The key message going from the Strategy and Steering Group to the other two groups is about the business reasons for having the particular product (Level 2) or the wider portfolio (Level 3). It is a collaborative structure, however, and we will explore in a moment the listening and feedback aspects of the Strategy and Steering Group.

Figure 5-7. The Role of the Strategy and Steering Group



The Strategy and Steering Group owns collaboration technology and approaches within the organization, and has decision rights for appropriate use, resourcing, and relative priority compared to other investment options.

Group 2. Business Impact Group

The Business Impact Group is the second group in the governance structure, and acts as an internal consultancy on effective collaboration within the organization. Its work is both enabled and limited through the vision established by the Strategy and Steering Group. It is enabled in the sense that the Strategy and Steering Group have said that certain things can happen, and it is limited in the sense that particular areas have been ruled off limits at the current time.

The Business Impact Group works with teams, groups, and business departments to gain the maximum benefit from collaboration technology and approaches, aligned with both the strategic directives of the Strategy and Steering Group, and the technology made available by the IT department.

The Business Impact Group acts as an internal consultancy on effective collaboration within the organization.

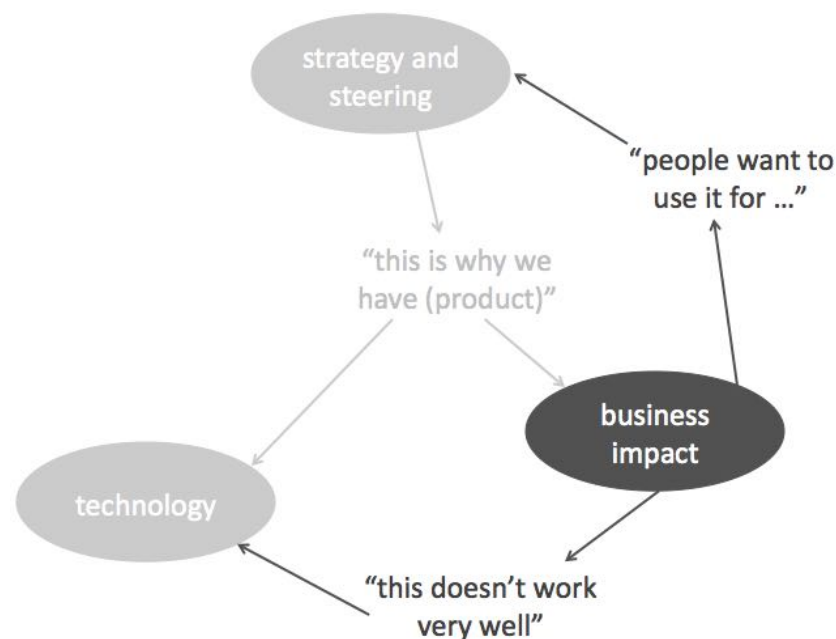
The Business Impact Group holds some key responsibilities:

- Educating business departments on the potential of collaboration. In terms of this book, the concepts from Chapters 3-4 and Appendix 1 on collaboration success can form the bedrock of these efforts. Talking about value, the role of human and business factors, and various aspects of collaboration to watch out for is the focus of this group.
- Exploring the opportunities for using new collaboration technology and approaches within the team, group, or department. Building the relationships with business people, and understanding both how work is done today and envisioning how it could be done in the future are all part of this responsibility. This is the engagement role that we will talk about in Chapter 6.
- Helping users to transition from current ways of working to new ways of working. The user adoption challenge requires intentional energy to bring about desired changes, and the whole range of strategies in Chapter 7 of this book are available to the Business Impact Group.
- Proposing additional areas of possible value to the Strategy and Steering Group thereby extending the current strategy into new areas. The Business Impact Group gets to understand work at a much deeper level than the Strategy and Steering Group, and as a consequence of this day-to-day learning and consultative role, are very well placed to see possibilities. The lines of communication to the Strategy and Steering Group need to be wide open.
- Advising the Collaboration Technology Group about underperformance at the technology level, and its subsequent impact on the business user. If a business

unit needs a more in-depth technology assessment, the Business Impact Group can call for support from the Collaboration Technology Group.

As with the Strategy and Steering Group, the role of the Business Impact Group will expand as the organization steps from Level 2 to Level 3 of governance. At Level 2, the focus is on a single product and how it can be integrated into business operations. At Level 3, the focus is on a portfolio of offerings that need to be integrated appropriately into the way people work.

Figure 5-8. The Role of the Business Impact Group



The Business Impact Group is an internal consultancy that works with teams, groups, and business departments to introduce new collaboration technology and approaches. Open lines of communication and feedback with the other two groups are essential.

Group 3. Collaboration Technology Group

The third-and-final group in the governance structure is the Collaboration Technology Group. It is responsible for delivering an IT infrastructure to enable the chosen collaboration technology to meet the strategic directives set by the Strategy and Steering Group. In essence, this group does all of the “geek” stuff—buying and configuring appropriate server and network hardware, ensuring adequate storage resources are available, testing the responsiveness of the system to business requirements, evaluating and sourcing third-party tools to enhance the experience, keeping the collaboration servers up-to-date with the latest software releases from the vendor, integrating the

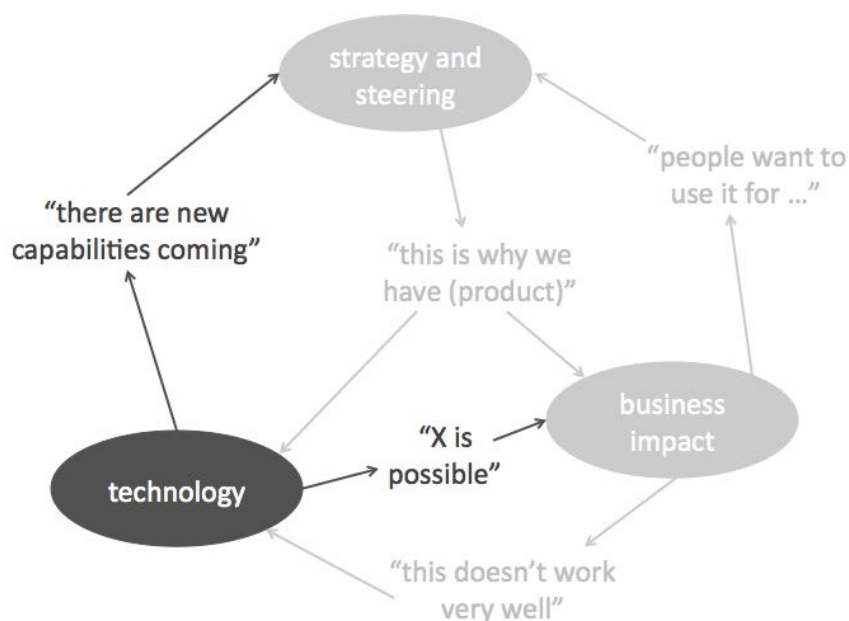
product with other business systems, and implementing backup and disaster recovery plans, among others.

It has two additional roles as well, in relation to the other two groups in the governance structure. Those are:

- With the Business Impact Group, providing feedback and direction on what is possible with the current technology, or what could be possible if new capabilities or third-party offerings were integrated. This helps the Business Impact Group in their engagement and adoption work around the business.
- With the Strategy and Steering Group, providing direction about new and updated capabilities that are coming in subsequent versions of the technology. These may create new value opportunities for the organization, and it's the role of the Collaboration Technology Group to provide sufficient insight so the Strategy and Steering Group can make an informed decision about upgrading or not.

As the organization shifts to Level 3 of the governance journey, the role of the Collaboration Technology Group will expand to supporting a portfolio of offerings.

Figure 5-9. The Role of the Collaboration Technology Group



The Collaboration Technology Group makes sure the technology is running efficiently in line with business needs. They help the other two groups understand future opportunities as well.

A Process for Making Governance Decisions

In the opening section for this chapter, I wrote:

Governance embraces or rejects [the opportunity offered by the technology], and thus defines what the technology—and its promised opportunity—becomes for the organization.

The decisions you make about the governance themes in the remainder of this chapter achieves this statement—they will define what the technology and its proffered opportunity become for the organization.

Does SharePoint merely become a replacement for the file server, or a new collaborative environment for bringing people together? Will Connections only support official collaborative groups, or will it make provision for anyone wanting to start a group? Will ThoughtFarmer be used to support collaboration on the intranet, or will it be used solely for publishing corporate news? Regardless of the specific collaboration technology, these decisions operationalize it for the organization.

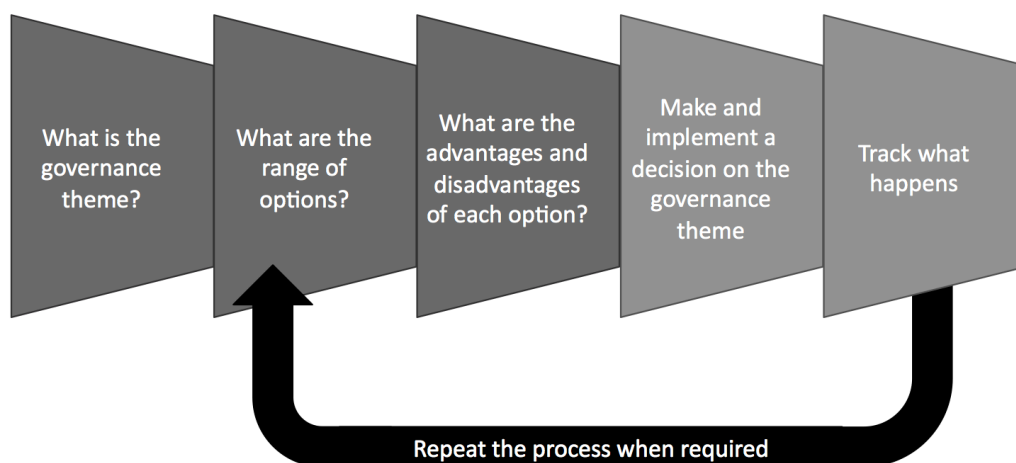
Will ThoughtFarmer be used to support collaboration on the intranet, or will it be used just for publishing corporate news?

Governance decisions are important, and some create implications for years to come. Thus having an agreed decision process in place to approach these themes is beneficial for the organization, because it creates a common expectation about how governance is going to work. In the spirit of collaborative decision-making, the decision process I recommend has six steps (see Figure 5-10):

1. *What is the governance theme?* State the theme to be examined, and note why it is important for the organization.
2. *What are the range of options?* Make a list of the possible answers to the particular governance theme, showing the differences between each answer. In other words, what could you do? Take an expansive approach to exploring the options.
3. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?* Analyze each option, looking for advantages and disadvantages. Are the advantages desirable in your organization? What steps could you take to mitigate the disadvantages?
4. *Make and implement a decision on the governance theme.* Within the appropriate governance group, make a decision on the particular governance theme, and implement it throughout the technology. This could mean publishing a policy, or it could mean designing a technology-supported process to enact the policy.

5. *Track what happens.* Every decision has advantages and disadvantages, and just as there will be those who welcome the change, so others will dislike it and complain. That's life in complex situations. But it provides a feedback and learning opportunity for the governance group, to identify unanticipated negative consequences. Keep a track of these.
6. *Repeat the process, when changing circumstances require this.* When necessary, repeat the decision process for the particular governance theme, taking into consideration changing circumstances as a result of vision and strategy changes, or feedback from people gathered at Step 5.

Figure 5-10. A Decision Process for Making Governance Decisions



An agreed decision process creates a common expectation about how governance is going to work. Considering options early in the process eliminates knee-jerk decision-making by a single individual acting alone. An agreed process also provides a method for reconsidering options as circumstances change.

This decision process is beneficial for three primary reasons:

- It moves each issue or concern away from emotionally charged rhetoric and knee-jerk decision-making by one person.
- It allows multiple perspectives to be considered before a decision is made.
- It provides a way of enabling reconsideration of governance decisions later in the collaboration journey.

Now let's look at these governance themes.

Governance Themes for Collaboration

We have discussed the importance of governance in making collaboration work. We have also proposed an organizational structure for governing collaboration, as well as a decision-making process. Now it's time to look at specific governance themes.

Three Exclusions to Our Discussion

Our discussion on governance themes in this chapter has three major exclusions:

1. *Governance Themes Covered Elsewhere in this Book.* Many of the chapters in this book deal with governance topics. For example, Chapter 3 (*Outline the Vision*) proposes six core value opportunities from collaboration technology at work. Deciding which of those to embrace is a governance issue, and a major point of focus for the Strategy and Steering Group. Those issues will not be covered again in this section. Likewise, Chapter 6 (*Make Every Effort to Engage the Business*) and Chapter 7 (*Apply Intentional Energy to Adoption*) deal with the governance issues of how to approach business engagement and user adoption—two issues for the Business Impact Group. Neither of these issues will be addressed in this chapter.
2. *An Organizational Structure for Governance.* While a previous section in this chapter has proposed an organizational structure for governance, there are alternative structures. It's possible to have a more technically-oriented governance structure, or one without cross-functional input. It could be designed from the beginning as a collaboration portfolio-wide structure, rather than focusing on a single technology initially. The decision process for listing and analyzing options can be applied to your chosen governance structure too, but it is not done in this section.
3. *Other General Governance Themes That Impact Collaboration Technology.* There are both business and technical governance themes that apply more broadly than collaboration technology, and it's likely that your organization has already examined the options and made suitable policy decisions. For example, acceptable use of the collaboration technology is a governance theme on the business side that should already have been dealt with for email, the intranet, and public internet access. On the technology side, examples of governance themes include testing of upgrades in a development environment before installing these into production, maintenance of custom developments or extensions (a big issue for some products, but non-existent for others), and the hardening required for mission-critical systems. If decisions have already been made on these more general themes, take what's already been decided and use that as your starting point with collaboration technology—unless there are clear reasons to do otherwise.

Enough of what we aren't talking about—let's get on with what we are.

Six Governance Themes

We are going to look at six Level 2 governance themes for collaboration technology. These all focus on what the organization wants the technology to become. The six themes are:

1. Who is permitted to create a new team or group space, and with what conditions?
2. What happens to team and group spaces that are no longer required?
3. Will the design of team and group spaces be standardized?
4. Will third-party products be supported in the environment?.
5. Can group spaces be created for non-business learning and capability development activities?
6. Will external access to the system be provided for external collaborators?

See Figure 5-11 (page 177) for a summary of these six themes.

Governance Theme 1. Team or Group Space Creation Rights

A large high-tech organization purchased the latest in collaboration technology, and made it available to its worldwide employee base. It was intended that employees would collaborate through project-aligned team spaces, but this didn't happen. The problem was related to the process involved in actually getting a team space—it took 3 months from request to provisioning. As a consequence, the new tool wasn't used because by the end of 3 months most projects were already finished. It just wasn't worth going through the protracted requisitioning hassle. The employees didn't use the tool for its intended purpose—which technologically it was perfectly able to do—because the governance theme of team space creation rights was wrong. Clearly there are consequences from making the wrong decision!

One of the first themes, therefore, is who has the right to request or create a new team or group space with your chosen collaboration technology. In line with our discussion in Chapter 2, team spaces create a specified place for a project team to work on a particular outcome together. Group spaces create a specified place for a self-organizing collection of people who share a common interest or practice to learn together.

Several factors relate to this theme:

- Who is allowed to create a team or group space? Will anyone be permitted to do so, or will the right be limited to nominated people? If only nominated people, are they specific people (Jane in IT and Bruce in HR), or people holding a particular role (team or project manager, or VP)?

- When can a new team or group space be requested or created? Can a team space be created whenever a new project is being proposed, or are there pre-conditions? For example, does the proposed project require a budget code before being allocated a team space? For groups, can anyone create a group space whenever they want to, or do they first need to search the directory for other similar groups, or have a list of ten people who plan on being involved in the subsequent six months?
- Will approval be required for the new team or group space, or will it be created immediately? If approval is required, who makes the decision, with what pre-conditions, and on what timeline? If the standard approver is not available to approve a team or group space, what's the escalation pathway?

Two things should be clear coming out of the above. First, there are wildly different decisions that can be made. At one end of the continuum you have a decision that allows any person, at any time, to request any team space, for any project, at any stage of readiness. Your employees will initially love this approach, because the system is perfectly responsive to their needs—but that love will rapidly turn to hate as the complexity of the system overwhelms its usefulness. At the other end of the continuum you have a formal process requiring an application filled out online, submitted to the Board of Directors for approval, and a full business case to justify the team space. Your employees will hate this process, and do everything they can to get around it. The technology is the same—but the governance approach and the consequential reaction by employees to the technology-as-delivered are very different. Of course there are a number of mid-road approaches too.

The second thing that should be clear is that this process will take time and thought. Laying out the options, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of each option, and making a decision across the range of options requires brainstorming, research, interviews, discussions, and a decision. If this seems like too much of a task to undertake, consider this: if you start with no governance decision for team and group space creation and allow anyone to create anything, you will rapidly achieve sprawl and confusion. Trying at that point to introduce a more restrictive governance decision will be more difficult than doing it in advance.

In a 26-page research report about team site creation rights in SharePoint—although the analysis and conclusions apply more broadly—data is presented on current practice for team site creation rights.⁴ The predominant approach among respondents was that anyone could request a new team site, either by filling out a form or sending an email to request the site. In most cases, approval was required before creation, with “the person responsible for SharePoint” playing the predominant approval role. On approval, the site was created manually by an IT administrator.

In closing, note that the decision about who can create a team space or group space will be different to that decision in an intranet publishing or document management situation. The decision will be more restrictive for intranet publishing and document management.

Governance Theme 2. Team or Group Space Closure Policy

One of the criticisms frequently leveled at Lotus Notes by organizations using it for collaboration was the overwhelming number of project databases that were now sitting idle. The respective project teams had done their work, and on completion of the project the database was left in place. It was not unusual to find a huge disparity between in-use databases (10%) and no-longer-used databases (90%). While this was used as justification for getting rid of Notes due to technology failure, the root cause was a non-existent governance decision on database closure. In a recent survey of organizations with SharePoint, 70% said they had no team site closure policy. At a SharePoint conference, one attendee said “We have 7TB of old data, and we have no idea what’s in there.” That’s risky.

What do you do with a team space when the project ends?

What do you do with a team space when the project ends and no further work will be done on it? Likewise for group spaces when the learning and capability development has come to an end, and no one is contributing to discussions anymore—what do you do with it? This is the governance theme of team or group space closure policy, and may be different for team spaces versus group spaces.

The options for team and group space closure include:

1. Leaving the space in place indefinitely, and leaving the permissions unchanged.
2. Same as option one, but the permissions are changed so anyone is able to read the complete set of documents and artifacts in the space, but not change any of them.
3. At the conclusion of the team project, the project leader must promote the key documents and artifacts from the team space into the document management system, or publish these to the intranet. Once this is done, a workflow process is put in place to archive the team space within 2 months. The same principle is put in place for group spaces.
4. Same as option three, but the key documents are moved automatically to the document management system based on certain taxonomy values that were used when the documents or discussions were being created.
5. All team and group spaces are archived off production servers 30 days after the team project has concluded, or after 30 days has elapsed with no activity in a group space. This happens regardless of whether key documents have been published to another system or not.
6. It depends on who owns the site! If they have enough political power, they can do whatever they want and are not subject to any governance decisions.

For each option, there are related implications. For example:

- If you leave sites around indefinitely, then the number of active sites compared to historic sites will rapidly decrease. You might have 1000 SharePoint sites at the end of 3 years, but only 50 of them are active. Who knows what's in the other 950? There are legal and regulatory risks posed by this approach, not to mention system usability issues.
- If you automatically archive sites off the production environment, there will have to be a process created to enable people to get back to them later. Often there are important documents or discussion threads that need to be reviewed again at a much later time.
- If it depends on who owns the site, then you have set the stage for a very politicized deployment. He who carries the biggest stick will win, but with that goes tremendous mistrust and bad feelings.

My general guidance on team and group space closure is this: team spaces should be closed and archived after the project has finished. Key business artifacts from the space—such as the final report—need to be moved into a longer-term repository. For group spaces, my guidance is to leave them in place for 12-24 months following the cessation of activity, and then archive them off the production environment if no one accesses them during this time.

My general guidance on team space closure is to close and archive team spaces after the project has finished.

The key findings from a survey from 2010 on the Site Closure Policy in a SharePoint environment were:⁵

- 70% of respondents have no Site Closure Policy. Team sites remain indefinitely.
- For the 30% of respondents with a policy, 44% delete the site, 39% move the site to another place (archive it), and 6% leave the site where it is.
- For those that delete the site, most move some of the contents of the site prior to deletion into a knowledge management or records management system. For those that move the site to another place, 60% retain all of the original documents.
- When the site is archived, the predominant approach is to change the access privileges to read only for the original team members. Other people are not given access to the team space and its contents once the project is finished.

Closing team and group spaces can seem like a small issue when starting to use a new collaboration system, but give it two or three years and the failure to close team or group spaces becomes an information management nightmare.

Governance Theme 3. Team and Group Space Standardization

At a recent Information Management conference, an IT manager acknowledged that they were running 325 team projects using SharePoint, and the design of every team site was different. At a firm using Jive, the design of each group space was different—the front page had a different layout, and pointed to different kinds of collaboration tools inside the group space. Even the left-hand navigation was different depending on where you were. Is this good or bad—should it be encouraged or not?

The third governance theme for collaboration is the standardization of the design of team and group spaces. In essence, while the technology can support a wide variation in design, is it a good idea to have wide variation in practice? As with the other governance themes, there are a variety of options:

While the technology can support a wide variation in design, is it a good idea to have wide variation in practice?

1. Any person involved in the team or group can change the design of the team or group space at any time for any reason. This includes the color scheme (“bright pink looks nice today”), specific areas of capability, and the classification labels.
2. The team or group space owner can change the design of their space at any time for any reason. They can make any changes to the form and structure due to their role as the owner.
3. Only particular developers within the IT department can change the design of team and group spaces based on discussion with the space owner.
4. A small number of standardized templates will be used for all team and group spaces, but the space owner can choose to add some additional design elements based on particular local requirements.
5. Same as number four, but all such changes must receive sign-off from a business manager before being implemented.
6. A small number of standardized templates will be used for all team and group spaces, and no customization will be permitted for any reason.

Pretty quickly you can see that the decision you make on team and group space standardization will have a huge impact on what the technology-as-delivered becomes in your firm. That is:

- If you err towards looser controls and allow people to change the design of their team and group spaces, you may enable teams and groups to optimize their space

for local requirements, but you run the risk that chaos will ensue. People involved in multiple projects will have to work with different layouts, which increases the complexity of the system and makes adoption more difficult.

- If you err towards tighter controls and limit the scope of changes people can make, the ability to tailor a team or group space for a specific team or group is greatly reduced, but the greater consistency and standardization means that people should be able to shift from space-to-space without trouble.
- Standardization of particular design elements—such as the calendar and task list in a team space—enables aggregation for individual coherence (see Pillars 4 and 6 in the 7 Pillars framework in Chapter 2, along with the discussion on Individual Coherence). If these are not standardized, the ability to aggregate these above the level of a team space is difficult, which reduces the overall value of the system.

Without standardization, people involved in multiple projects will have to work with different layouts, which increases the complexity of the system and makes adoption more difficult.

My general guidance on team and group space standardization is that it's a good idea. Specifically, develop a small number of team space designs for small, medium, and large collaborative projects.⁶ You may be able to get away with a single standard design for group spaces, but if you have some very large groups and need to segregate particular discussion and artifact areas, an additional design may be required.

This means when creating a new team space, the initial decision is whether to create the team space for a small, medium, or large collaborative project. That decision is usually in line with the number of people expected to contribute to the project. A larger project can also have multiple workstreams over a longer period of time, and thus be separated into the individual workstreams. As the project progresses, if more people, workstreams, or other complexity are added after initially creating a team space for a small team, there should be provision to upgrade to the design for a larger project. Going back from the large design to the small design is usually more difficult though, because it requires the deletion of content areas that may have already been populated.

In closing, keep in mind the requirements about aggregation across a collection of team spaces, and in particular the need for calendar and task aggregation for individual coherence. When introducing multiple team space designs, ensure that the design of the calendar and task list is consistent across all designs, to support aggregation.

Governance Theme 4. Third-Party Products

Some collaboration products support the addition of third-party add-ons to cover inherent weaknesses in the basic product, to enable tailoring of the product for specific vertical industries, or to extend the product into areas that are beyond the vendor's expertise. In practice one signal of a strong product is the existence of a vibrant third-party ISV (independent software vendor)

community around the base product, although that can be taken to extremes. Third-party ecosystems supports Lotus Notes and Domino, Microsoft SharePoint, Jive, and even 37Signals Basecamp (an online service), among others. In the Notes world, common add-ons are for workflow design, reporting, and the

analysis of application integrity. In a SharePoint world, common add-ons are for offline access, aggregation, workflow design, and management of user access and privileges. Particular tools can make a tremendous difference; one of my clients found that the time taken to develop a workflow process decreased from three weeks to half-a-day when they purchased an add-on workflow tool for SharePoint. Across many collaboration products and services there are many options available—what do you do about it?

Some collaboration products support the addition of third-party add-ons to cover inherent weaknesses, enable tailoring for vertical industries, or to deliver extension capabilities.

Therefore the fourth theme for collaboration technology is your governance decision about third-party products. Will you purchase third-party products at all, and if so which ones? What is your process for making that decision? Or is your decision to take just what the vendor offers out-of-the-box and then depend solely on the vendor for future updates?

Here are the three broad options:

1. Any third-party product is acceptable, in order to round out the collaboration capabilities of the base product. If it has support from some business users and looks like it will add value to their workflow, let's do it.
2. Some third-party products are accepted within the environment, but only under certain pre-defined conditions. Since purchasing a third-party product requires establishing a relationship with a new vendor, a due diligence effort will be required on the vendor, and all third-party products have to be installed and tested in a pre-production environment before being installed into the production system. This includes all maintenance releases.
3. No third-party products are permitted under any conditions. We will use what is available in the base product, and if there are things we need but haven't been delivered yet, we will wait for our vendor to deliver them.

That's quite a range of decision options!

In terms of the advantages and disadvantages of these broad options, consider:

- With the first option, the advantage is that the product can be tailored to become what the business groups want right now. The disadvantages include increased cost, decreased flexibility for upgrades, increased testing complexity, and increased risk if a particular third-party vendor goes out of business. With respect to cost, buying third-party products can significantly increase the overall cost—sometimes making it 5-10 times more expensive.
- With option two, the advantages are that some third-party products will enhance the initial experience, and the organization has clearly stated the rules for doing so. The disadvantages are the same as those for option one, although hopefully the stated rules decrease some of the risk—particularly as a result of doing due diligence on the vendor. Another disadvantage also arises however, where people try to get around the rules and get their third-party product accepted.
- With option three, the advantage is that if anything breaks, all fault is directed at the original vendor. There is a single source of failure and responsibility, rather than a diverging mess of different vendors blaming everyone else. The disadvantage, though, is that business users are forced to work with what the product offers out-of-the-box, which may be insufficient for their needs.

If you don't allow third-party tools, there is a single source of failure and responsibility, rather than a diverging mess of different vendors blaming everyone else. But the system may be insufficient for user needs.

My general guidance is option two, which means that some third-party products will be accepted into the environment after suitable due diligence. However, some of my clients have taken the hard line and gone with option three—you use what the vendor offers and wait for them to add new things if you don't like it. While you don't have to agree with such a position, at least everyone knows what to expect and that there is no benefit to be gained by complaining.

Governance Theme 5. Intent of Collaborative Group Spaces

Collaborative groups provide a means of sharing learning and developing capability across the people in an organization, and there is clear value from doing so. Good ideas get tested and refined, and learning in one part of the organization can filter across networks of internal relationships to improve the performance of the whole organization. But the same technology that supports business-oriented learning could also be used for non-business learning—such as providing a place for runners to discuss running clothing, a place for people to list stuff they want to sell, and people seeking ride-sharing arrangements for getting to the office. The governance question, then, is what is the desired alignment of group spaces to business activities, and the degree of support for non-business aligned groups.

Here's three broad options:

1. Only business-oriented groups will be supported. Group spaces must show a direct linkage to the learning and capability development needs of the organization, and an alignment with current job responsibilities. The Strategy and Steering Group will approve the creation of specific group spaces, and employees are welcome to join any of these spaces.
2. Some non-business-oriented group spaces will be permitted. The intent is that these should be widely applicable, instead of being narrowly-targeted at a small number of people. If there is wide applicability, the creation of the group space will be approved by the Strategy and Steering Group.
3. A wide diversity of non-business-oriented groups can be created by employees. Permission to create a group is widely delegated, and employees are encouraged to take an active role in creating and supporting any such group.

The same technology that can support business-oriented learning could also be used for non-business learning—such as providing a place for runners to discuss running clothing.

Many firms have found that supporting some non-business-oriented groups helps with the adoption of the technology in business-aligned areas. The non-business groups draw people back into the system on a frequent basis, thereby making it a normal place to visit. The regular use of non-business group spaces creates competence in using the technology for holding conversations, a skill which rapidly transfers into business-aligned spaces. Finally, finding other employees with common interests builds relationships between people that could create opportunities for future collaboration. On-the-other-hand, the risk is that these non-business spaces become a distraction and people spend too much time playing around instead of getting their work done. But if that's the case, you have bigger issues to deal with.

Governance Theme 6. External Access for Clients and Partners

Collaborative projects frequently involve working with external parties, such as clients and business partners. This implies the sharing of documents, data, and decisions not just inside the organization but in appropriately secured ways with everyone involved. The final governance theme we consider in this chapter is how you make this happen.

There is a range of very different options:

1. Use a single integrated environment for all collaborative projects, and enable external parties to access the organization's single environment. This would require having a process for setting up people in the corporate directory, assigning access rights to particular team and group spaces, and managing the activities of external parties in line with current security policies.
2. Create a second and separate collaboration environment for projects that involve external parties. If a collaborative team will include people from outside the organization, the associated team space must be created in the second environment. If a collaborative team originally set up with only internal people is going to gain sustained involvement from external people, a process for moving the current team space to the external environment will be required.
3. Make use of a hosted collaboration service for cross-organizational collaboration initiatives. This could be a direct equivalent of your current internal collaboration environment, except that it is hosted by someone else, or a different tool altogether. There will need to be a method for giving and revoking access to the hosted service, and a method of creating a copy of the team or group space in your internal collaboration technology at the conclusion of the collaboration project.
4. Disallow any access by external parties to the organization's collaboration environment. Only employees are permitted to access and use the technology, and under no circumstances are non-employees given access. Collaboration with external parties must happen over email.

Collaborative projects frequently involve working with external parties, such as clients and business partners. Will you provide access to your internal collaboration environment?

Some collaboration products and services provide easy technical mechanisms for giving access to external parties, and some make it extremely difficult. The broad principle is that if there are valid reasons for external parties to be involved in collaborative initiatives, then you need to find a way of including them that's as seamless as possible. Disallowing access to external parties usually results in employees setting up rogue collaboration spaces in uncontrolled external services, a reality that's highly undesirable.

Patterns of Governance Themes

Some of these governance themes do not stand alone, since the decision made about one theme can be influenced or mitigated by another pattern. For example, theme one on space creation and theme two on space closure can be approached as a pattern, and the decision on either can reduce the risks experienced with the other. Thinking about the interaction between creation and closure could result in either of these two cross-theme patterns:

- An extremely open policy about team and group space creation rights—anyone can create any space for any purpose at any time without any approval—but linked with a very stringent team and group space closure policy. Closure happens automatically after a given team or group space has remained unused for 45 days, and after a warning of pending closure at 30 days to the owner.
- An extremely hardline policy about team and group space creation rights, involving multiple layers of approval, and linked with the ongoing preservation of team and group spaces. Since many fewer team or group spaces will be created in the first place, and those that are created represent the bigger initiatives of the organization that involve activity over a sustained period of time, they can remain in place without having to be closed (subject to any specific archiving and compliance requirements).

Some of these governance themes do not stand alone, since the decision made about one theme can be influenced or mitigated by another pattern.

Both of these patterns provide a valid way of dealing appropriately with the opportunity afforded and the risks that have to be mitigated with creation and closure. In other words for some themes, consider the broader perspective and particularly the interaction between themes when making governance decisions. Make optimal decisions across a collection of themes instead of optimizing the individual decisions.

Summary—Governance Themes

The decisions you make about the governance themes in this book will define what the technology becomes in your organization, and how much of the opportunity offered by the technology—for benefit and chaos—will be embraced or held in check. The six governance themes in this chapter focused on particular opportunities with the technology, and called for appropriate decision-making (see Figure 5-11). These are part of the broader governance direction in *Collaboration Roadmap*. See also Chapter 3 for a discussion about value and vision, Chapter 6 on approaches to engaging the business, and Chapter 7 on strategies for user adoption.

Figure 5-11. Governance Themes for Collaboration

Governance Theme	Description of Issue	Recommended Starting Position
Team or Group Space Creation Rights	Who has the right to request or create a new team or group space?	Anyone can request a new team or group site, but it must be approved before being created by an IT administrator.
Team or Group Space Closure Policy	What happens to a team space when the project is finished, or to a group space when it is no longer needed?	Close and archive team spaces when the project is completed. Leave group spaces in place for 12-24 months after the cessation of activity, then archive the space.
Team and Group Space Standardization	What degree of design variation will be permitted for team and group spaces?	Develop a small number of team space designs—for small, medium, and large projects. Have as few designs for group spaces as possible—ideally only one.
Third-Party Products	Are third-party products that introduce extension capabilities to the base product or platform permitted?	Allow a limited number of third-party products, but only if the vendor and product pass due diligence activities.
Intent of Collaborative Group Spaces	Can group spaces be created for non-business groups, or only for groups undertaking learning and capability development that are aligned with business goals?	Seed the system with a few carefully selected non-business group spaces, and monitor what happens. Provide a way for people to request new group spaces, and track the nature of these to see how employees want to use the system.
External Access for Clients and Business Partners	Will clients and business partners be given access to your collaboration system, or be excluded from direct involvement?	If external people need to be involved, find a way to make it happen. Hopefully this design requirement has been taken into account when the collaboration system was originally selected.

The governance decision about particular themes define what the technology becomes in your organization. An initial starting position is needed, but it should be open to tightening or loosening as engagement and adoption activities run their course.

Getting Governance Going at Your Place

How do you get going with governance? While it may seem like a daunting prospect given everything we have specifically talked about in this chapter and more broadly in this book, the reality is less intense. There is definitely work to be done, but it is work that can be done. So how do you begin?

Take another look at the three levels of the governance journey below (see Figure 5-12), and ask “Where are we today?” Are you at Level 1 of Operate/Explore? Are you at Levels 2 or 3? Once you have identified where you are today, you need a plan for moving to the next level—which in essence means mitigating the risks of the current level and starting to put into practice the required disciplines of the next level.

Once you have identified where you are today, you need a plan for moving to the next level.

Figure 5-12. Three Levels on the Governance Journey



Getting governance going involves assessing where you are today in your governance journey, and making a plan to both achieve the objectives of your current level and develop the disciplines and structures required to support the next level.

We Are At Level 1. Operate/Explore

If you are at the Operate/Explore level, the next step is to Manage/Control. To earn the right to take that step, your action list has three items. First, you need to mitigate the risks of Level 1, such as unstable technology and inappropriate hardware. You need to ensure that the technological foundation is sound and trustworthy. Second you need to change the focus away from the features and functions of the technology and onto how the technology can be used to deliver value in your organization. This will definitely involve engaging with people on the business side about their work and areas of improvement, and this will help with the third task of gaining wider structural support for a value-focus.

At Level 2 a multi-group governance structure is beneficial for division of duties and the introduction of checks and balances. Starting to lay the foundation for that now is appropriate. Brainstorm who could be included on the different groups, and seek input from other people who have an interest in or responsibility for making collaboration work.

We Are At Level 2. Manage/Control

Organizations at Level 2 are focused on making the technology productive in the pursuit of value. That's the goal and there are various disciplines to master to get there, including defining value, building relationships with business departments, and encouraging user adoption of new ways of working. To earn the right to step up to Level 3 and take an even broader approach to the pursuit of value, your action list has two items.

Align the efforts of your governance groups with the governance themes relevant to your use of the technology in pursuit of value.

First, align the efforts of your governance groups with the governance themes relevant to your use of the technology in pursuit of value. There's a laundry list of governance themes in this book that could be relevant; pick the ones that are and develop a decision that will support your efforts.

Second, look for the existence of other efforts that complement what you are doing, and start building relationships with the people leading those efforts. Having an organization-wide approach is key to Level 3, and now is the time to lay the foundation for future collaborative governance activities. For example, if the Business Impact Group is focused solely on IBM Connections (or Microsoft SharePoint, or Cisco Quad, or Socialtext), are there similar groups focused on related technologies and approaches that could be approached in a more unified way?

We Are At Level 3. Value/Leverage

For organizations at or aspiring to be at Level 3 of the governance journey, the core discipline is to stay rigorously focused on value. Where are the new opportunities across your organization for applying collaboration approaches and technology to improve the way work gets done? See Chapter 8 for an approach to pursuing increasing value.

There are two additional disciplines for Level 3 organizations. The first is to scan for new innovations in approach and technology that could add value to your current collaboration efforts. Some of the ways you work today will become quickly outdated or inefficient in light of new innovations, and the governance task is to incorporate these new approaches as part of normal business operations. The second discipline is to create a way for people to experiment with new ideas that do not offer an immediate value payoff. While this may seem at odds with the core discipline of staying rigorously focused on value, the reality is more nuanced. Funding a raft of initiatives for the purpose of learning is money well spent.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to set the topic of governance for collaboration on its right foundation. Governance is frequently talked about as a way of optimizing technical factors—what I called “in-the-box” or micro-governance—and which I disagree with if that’s the extent of “governance.” What’s needed is a much fuller perspective centered on how collaboration technology and approaches can be used to create value for the organization. This is a macro-governance approach.

In addition to the conceptual discussion about the different levels of governance, we talked about a structure for governing collaboration in an organization, and a process for considering governance themes and making appropriate decisions. We looked at a number of more technically-oriented governance themes—several business themes are examined in other chapters—and concluded with a discussion on how to get governance going in your organization.

In the next chapter, we move to discussing approaches for engaging the business in collaboration initiatives. This too is a governance theme.

What’s needed is a much fuller perspective centered on how collaboration technology and approaches can be used to create value for the organization.

¹ For a detailed explanation of this position, see my January 2010 research report, *Lotus Roadmap: Enhancing Business Collaboration with Lotus Software*, at www.michaelsampson.net/2010/01/lotus-roadmap.html.

² Organizations buying a cloud-based service face a different cost profile compared to a behind-the-firewall architecture. Monthly service fees are payable on a recurring basis, but the costs for customization and integration, along with administration and support costs are non-existent or significantly lower. The behavioral costs remain, however.

³ See *Share2010 Session: Mike Rawson from DB Breweries on "The Art of SharePoint,"* November 2010, at currents.michaelsampson.net/2010/11/share2010-session5.html.

⁴ See *SharePoint Governance for Collaboration: Site Creation Rights*, January 2010, at www.michaelsampson.net/2010/01/governance-sitecreationrights.html.

⁵ The survey data on Site Closure Policy for SharePoint has not been published. It was collected in early 2010, from just over 150 respondents. If the survey is published, you will find it via my SharePoint for Collaboration Resource Center, at www.michaelsampson.net/sharepointcollaboration.html.

⁶ Template standardization is one of the key themes in Chapter 12 of my first book, *Seamless Teamwork: Using Microsoft SharePoint Technologies to Collaborate, Innovate, and Drive Business in New Ways* (Microsoft Press, 2008). See www.michaelsampson.net/seamlessteamwork.html. Chapter 12 is an online-only chapter, but if you buy the book you can download it at no charge.

Chapter 6.

Make Every Effort to Engage the Business

“*Sharing knowledge is not about giving people something, or getting something from them. That is only valid for information sharing. Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes.*”

Peter Senge

Technical capability, a vision of improvement, and a starting place for governance come together in business engagement. It's here the options, possibilities, and aspirations of collaborating better are tested and explored in real situations. Value from collaboration ultimately flows from employees in the business changing the way they work to embrace new collaboration technology and approaches. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the concept of “engaging the business,” and to take the concept from a high-and-mighty sounding idea to something you can start tomorrow (or today, if it's still early enough!). This chapter focuses on work that the Business Impact Group will be carrying out.

In this chapter, you will:

- Discover what engagement is, and why it is so important.
- Find out about the five hallmarks of engagement.
- Learn various strategies to engaging with the business.
- Explore a couple of case studies about how engaging with the business can be put into practice.
- Be warned of the dangers of pretending to engage.

What is Engagement?

First a warning: “Engaging the business” runs high on the buzzword scale. You have probably met people who mouth the words “let’s engage the business on that,” but offer no substance to back up the proposal. Hence a great idea is quickly relegated to buzzword status, because proper attention is not paid to working the idea to completion.

There is a real and essential idea tied up in the phrase “engaging the business,” but you have to unpack it to get there. In this section we begin the unpacking, by defining the concept.

How We Talk About Engagement in Daily Life

As we begin to tease apart the concept, let’s look at what engagement means in other spheres of life:

- When two gear wheels are “engaged,” the turning of one automatically turns the other, thanks to the gear teeth. So when a car is in gear, forwards or backwards motion is possible, thanks to linked action. When a car is not in gear, the gear wheels turn independently, or sit idle and do nothing.
- When a young couple are “engaged to be married,” they have entered a time of their lives where they are not yet married—with all of its privileges and responsibilities—but have stated publicly that they are moving towards marriage. The period of engagement is a defined time and space for learning about each other, and deciding individually and jointly whether the greater commitment of marriage will be embraced. There is joint intention towards marriage, but the realization of that intention has not yet happened.
- When someone is “engaged in an occupation,” we say they are carrying out the tasks and activities associated with that occupation. However, it also signals something more than merely going through the motions without any enjoyment or ongoing learning. While the person is definitely doing the work, they are also discovering new and better ways of doing what they do—there is a sense of active involvement. There is a life and energy far beyond just turning up.
- When someone says “I find that idea quite engaging” during a conversation with another person, they are signaling two things. First, that the idea has captured their imagination and they are trying to think through what it might mean for them. And second, that they have not yet made a final

In common usage, the term “engagement” portrays the ideas of linked action, joint intention, ongoing discovery, and unfolding awareness.

decision about what to do with the idea—they may ultimately reject it and move ahead with the current approach or a different new idea, or they may embrace the idea and make the requisite changes to put the idea into practice.

In summary, in common usage, the term “engagement” portrays the ideas of linked action, joint intention, ongoing discovery, and unfolding awareness.

How IT People Talk About Engagement

I asked some clients and colleagues to define “engagement with the business” in their terms. Although I gave them some background on the basis of the question—that I was working on material related to the engagement topic—I didn’t over describe the reason for asking. I wanted their interpretation of what it meant for them. Here’s what I heard back:

- Lee—from a hedge fund in the United States—defines it with this sentence, *Understanding issues and challenges in their terms—the problems they are trying to solve, not the IT solutions.*
- Paul—from a SharePoint solutions firm in the United States—talked about engagement as, *Talking with business people about the pains they experience in their work, to discover where improvements could be made. We don’t even mention the term ‘SharePoint’ during initial engagement discussions.*
- Christa—from a consulting group in Europe—wrote, *To talk and work for and with business users in business units, not the people in IT departments. I expect responsibility from them—they have to state clearly what they want to do (NOT how), and what they need to achieve. When I can’t convince them that they should tell me the what, but they are still telling me how, I would educate them on the technology, to enable them to think in new ways.*

In common technical usage, we have the ideas of learning about the issues and challenges of others, looking for areas where IT can help business people, and focusing on those that are outside of our normal group.

In summary, in common technical usage, we have the ideas of learning about the issues and challenges of others, looking for areas where IT can help business people, and focusing on those that are outside of our normal group.

A Working Definition of “Engaging the Business”

Based on our discussion above, how do we define “engaging the business” then? As an initial attempt at a definition, how about:

Engagement is an interactive process of discovery where two or more different parties learn from each other as they work towards an outcome that is meaningful to both of them.

For a first cut, that’s a reasonable definition, but there are a couple of ideas that are not adequately portrayed. The first is that the jointly meaningful outcome is going to start off at a high-level of definition when the two parties start working together. This is a polite way of saying that neither party really knows what’s going to happen as they work together; but each has a rough idea. Their joint commitment, though, is to see if they can co-create an outcome that is jointly meaningful—and appropriately defined—by the end of the engagement process. If they cannot, both parties will disengage and return to their pre-engagement state.

Neither party really knows what’s going to happen as they work together, but each has a rough idea.

The second idea that is not adequately represented is that of haphazard evolution of discovery. By using the term “process,” we run the risk of signaling that engagement can be reduced to a re-producible and risk-free recipe. Whenever you have multiple people with different backgrounds involved in any human endeavor, it’s never going to be risk-free. Maybe the term “journey” is a better one for us to use than “process,” because it signals something less definite and leaves open the possibility of meandering.

Once we take on board those two modifications, our definition becomes:

Engagement is a journey of discovery where two or more different parties learn from each other as they work towards defining an outcome that is meaningful to both of them, or until they decide that continuing the journey offers no value.

Let’s run with that!

Engaging the Business Versus Business Requirements Capture

Engaging the business is a different concept from business requirements capture. The latter conveys passive action—sitting down while business people throw their full-formed requirements for you to catch. It assumes that business people have a perfect understanding of collaboration technology, and a high level of technical capability to phrase their requirements in specification-ready language. While there will be some people like that at your firm, and the greater availability of consumer-grade collaboration

services will help educate a new generation of business people, we're not there yet. Engagement—an active and effortful activity—is required to explore possibilities, model options, and synthesize common themes. Having said that, if you are blessed with business people who have a clear understanding of how business and technology can intersect effectively, don't shut them out. Actively work with them.

The Role of Engagement in Collaboration

Collaboration is about working together. If your role is to help people work together better—by introducing new collaboration technology and approaches—it would be hypocritical to do it without working with them. You would be not collaborating about collaboration. Engagement is the place where this starts. Model the journey and the possibility of collaboration.

Let's face it: engaging the business will be difficult if:

- You don't involve other people.
- You don't listen to their ideas.
- You haven't had anything to do with them until now, and you suddenly turn up with a slick smile on your face.
- You have a reputation for steamrolling other people and getting your way, "no matter what."

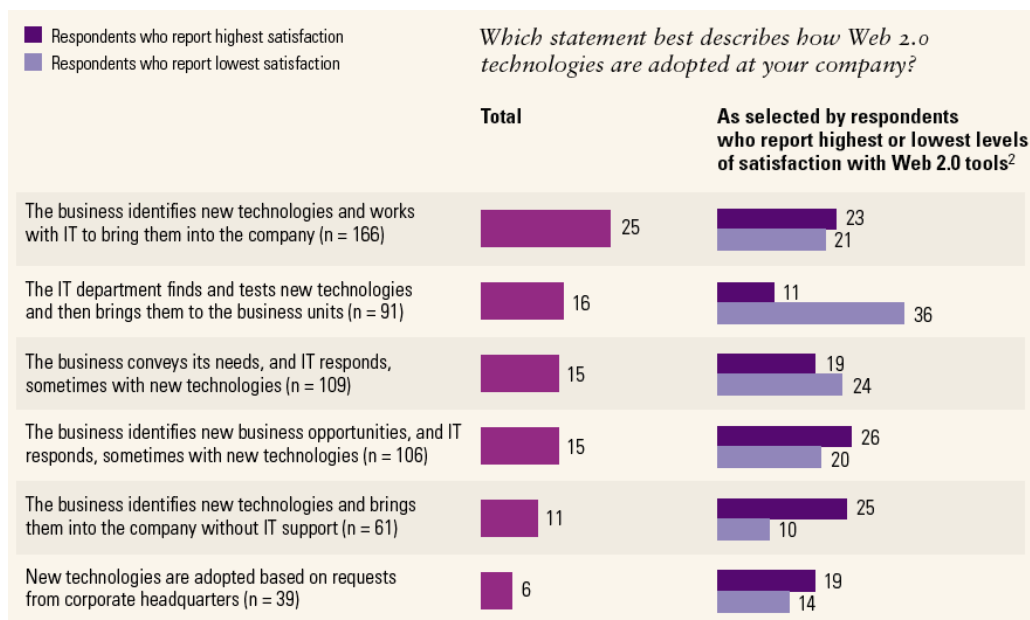
McKinsey: Your Approach Matters

In its 2008 report on Web 2.0 technologies in business organizations, McKinsey & Company found that the approach taken to introducing new technology is correlated with both satisfaction and dissatisfaction (see Figure 6-1).¹ Note that McKinsey uses the term "adoption" to convey the initial

presentation or introduction of the technology to the enterprise, rather than talking about "user adoption" as we do in this book. What's startling is that in every case, satisfaction is higher and dissatisfaction is lower if the business had some involvement early in the process of technology introduction compared to an IT-dominated approach. That is, "The IT department finds and tests new technologies and then brings them to the business units" (option 2) receives the lowest level of satisfaction and the highest level of dissatisfaction. In each of the other six options, business units have varying levels of greater involvement earlier in the process, resulting in a higher level of satisfaction and a lower level of dissatisfaction.

Business units that are engaged in the process of adopting collaboration technology have high levels of satisfaction compared to those not involved.

Figure 6-1. McKinsey on How Companies Adopt Web 2.0 Tools



McKinsey found that business involvement and leadership in the process of introducing Web 2.0 technologies at work resulted in higher satisfaction and lower dissatisfaction with the tools. Involvement and engagement during selection translated to higher satisfaction.

Five Hallmarks of Engagement

Armed with a working definition of engagement, how can we tell if what we're experiencing is real engagement or not? Here are five hallmarks of real engagement:

1. Joint discovery and learning.
2. People from different groups and backgrounds.
3. Permission given to others to not know what you know, along with a commitment to teach them what you know.
4. A willingness to overlook apparent fault.
5. Joint intention towards an evolving shared vision.

Let's explore each idea in turn.

Hallmark 1. Joint Discovery and Learning

The first hallmark to look for when assessing whether engagement is real or not is joint discovery and learning. Are the people involved discovering and learning new things? In the collaboration context, the IT people should be discovering from the business people how they do their work. Likewise, the business people should be discovering from the IT people how different collaboration technologies are able to support and enhance their work in new, different and better ways.

An “engaged” conversation between IT and the business should not consist of two monologues, where the business people prattle on about their work, and then let the IT people prattle on about their technology. That’s a recipe for “never the twain shall meet.” On the contrary, a joint discovery and learning session—and series of sessions—will have the following character:

An “engaged” conversation between IT and the business should not consist of two monologues, where each group prattles on about their work.

- Back-and-forth sharing of information about what you do, leading you from lack of context to insightful clarity about how other people work. While previously you had an unclear view about what other people did all day, the sharing and discussion brings needed clarity.
- Ongoing questioning to understand in greater detail the work that someone else does. Open-ended questions and active listening are key here. For instance, responding with “I don’t understand what you mean by that. Can you explain it again please?” will result in a greater depth of understanding than merely nodding your head in token assent.
- Expressing the desire to “see” or “experience” what someone does, rather than relying on words alone. That could involve observing them for a few hours while they do their work, or going along to some of their project or client meetings. Seeing what people do in the normal course of their day-to-day interactions provides a very grounded perspective.
- An attempt to understand whether what’s being said is an “occasional,” “frequent,” or “all-the-time” happening. You want to gauge the extent of the problem or opportunity that’s being talked about. Equally, you want to discover if the particular thing is an isolated example just for that person, or is it a common way of working spread across tens, hundreds, or thousands of people?
- Additional business people will add richness to the conversation when one of their colleagues is talking about they do. These additions help to clarify what’s

being said, and to extend the conversation and awareness. Gaining input and perspective from multiple people broadens the applicability of the conversation.

- The testing out of ideas on other people to gain their reaction and feedback, and to see what ideas resonate, versus those that sink like a lead balloon. “Could you see yourself doing that?” and “What would it be like if your group were to change from this way to that way?” provide an opportunity for the business person to imagine what something would look like. It enables you to gain their perspective, rather than having to make it up yourself.
- The realization that a single session won’t do it, but that you need multiple sessions, meetings, and interactions as you work through the journey of discovery. The first session is the starting place, not the starting and finishing line in a single shot.

There is a prerequisite to such engagement taking place between IT and the business, and I’m going to make up a fancy name for it: “competence equivalence.” You’ve got to be good at what you do, and trust that the others are good at what they do. For example, if you represent the IT department, then you need a solid grounding in the capabilities of collaboration theory, collaboration technology, and the roadmap to success. This allows you to listen to what the business people are talking about, and propose ways of helping them achieve their outcomes.

**Engagement requires
“competence equivalence.”
You’ve got to be good at
what you do, and they’ve
got to be good at what they
do. It goes both ways.**

Equally, you have the right to expect that the people you are working with on the business side are good too. They should know their stuff. They should have insight into what’s happening and how it happens. They should know the grievances other people in their business unit have with their work and the tools they are required to use today, so that they can represent that in appropriate terms to you.

Hallmark 2. People From Different Groups and Backgrounds

The second hallmark of engagement is that it involves people from different groups and backgrounds. For example, it’s not engagement if you have only IT people in the room, hypothesizing about what the business users may need. Sure there is a time and a place for doing this, at the front end of the engagement journey, when you are brainstorming how to start, but it’s not engagement.

Engagement demands that you actually get out there and start working directly with people in the business—across the different units, with sales and marketing, with product development, with service delivery, and with human resources.

Hallmark 3. Permission to Not Know, Commitment to Teach

The third hallmark of engagement is that permission is given by all parties to all other parties to not know something. A lack of knowledge isn't viewed as an indication of being incapable nor incompetent. Rather a lack of knowing is taken as an opportunity to educate and help the other parties understand and learn. As we stated previously, engagement is collaboration in action.

A lack of knowing is taken as an opportunity to educate and help the other parties understand and learn. It's not viewed as an admission of incompetence.

In an engagement journey between IT and business units, the different parties start with having their own specific competencies as well as lacking the specific competencies the other party has. For example:

- The IT professionals have competence in understanding the technical capabilities of the chosen or preferred collaboration technology, along with insight into how business people could use it in their work. But they are unclear about how much the business side of the house actually needs those capabilities.
- The business people know the problems they are facing on a day-to-day basis, and the business challenges they experience. They have some ideas about specific things that could get better or be done in more enhanced ways, but they lack the depth of knowledge about how to make that happen. They may have heard about particular collaboration products—and have most likely used some in their personal lives that they'd like to use at work—but they lack the deep knowledge of the IT professional.

Thus engagement means bringing together both parties, each with different knowledge and understanding, and setting aside a time and space for them to jointly teach and educate the other. Each party has two strands of responsibility: the first is to know at an appropriate level what they should know. They need to be competent in their respective areas. The second responsibility, however, is to get to know, again at an appropriate level, what the other party needs them to know so both have a shared language, a shared understanding, and a shared conceptual model of current work practices and where the improvement opportunity lies.

Engagement is not one-sided, either for IT or the people in the business. It's not about the IT people turning up and saying "tell us your problems" without giving context and insight into where and how they might help. Neither is it about the IT people turning up to offer a training class on the latest capabilities in a collaboration product, without any awareness of the current needs from the business side. Equally, it's not about the business side talking about their problems and challenges without learning from the IT people how and where new approaches could make a substantive difference.

Hallmark 4. Willingness to Overlook Apparent Fault

As a journey, “engagement” indicates that two or more people, teams, or groups want to move towards something bigger than can be achieved by either party acting independently. In viewing engagement as a multi-party journey then, you must accept that there is going to be plenty of talking and sharing of information—but more than mere sharing—contextualizing and explaining the importance of particular pieces of information to the other parties. During this journey, someone from one party is going to say something wrong that offends someone from the other party. Perhaps they assume something that’s not true. Perhaps they say something that is only partially correct.

During the engagement journey, someone is going to say something wrong that offends someone from the other party.

As a hallmark of engagement, each party commits to helping the other parties understand the full nature and truth of the reality in which they live and work, and when someone from the other party says something wrong, dumb, or stupid, it’s treated as honest ignorance. And then there is a journey of education and further discussion to help the other people understand more accurately.

For example, this could mean:

- When an IT person downplays the importance of a particular work process, the immediate response is to educate rather than execute them. The opportunity for further discussion and clarification by both sides is sought, and if that doesn’t achieve the desired result of both parties having a common view of importance, a neutral third-party could be brought in to help facilitate joint understanding. The issue at stake would need to be suitably important to take that step though.
- When a business person, frustrated by what they see as a slow-moving IT department, lambasts the nearest IT professional for their complicity in the current situation, steps are taken to give the bigger picture regarding IT constraints rather than firing back about business unit incompetence. Truth be told, if business opportunities are being lost due to a poorly performing IT department, it’s entirely normal for the business person to be frustrated—especially when it’s impacting their budget. But taking it out on someone who can’t do anything about it is wrong, and will need to be addressed in order for the engagement journey to work.

In summary, both parties need to make the upfront assumption that the other is trying to do their best, and that misunderstandings are a normal and natural part of learning to work together. Jointly seeking an awareness of the shared vision that drives them together plays an important role in this.

Hallmark 5. Joint Intention Towards an Evolving Shared Vision

The final hallmark of engagement is joint intention towards an evolving shared vision. When two parties start the journey of engagement, their shared sense of destination is at a high-level. During the engagement journey their shared sense becomes clearer. For example, the IT side of the house want “the business people to collaborate better,” and the business side of the house wants to “explore how to collaborate better with collaboration technology.” While this shared vision is not phrased in exactly the same way, there is enough of an overlap to allow the two groups to engage.

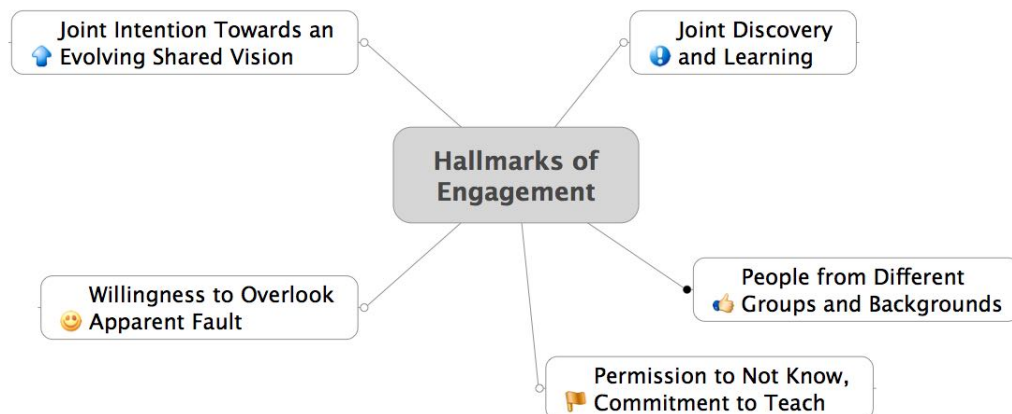
When two parties start the journey of engagement, their shared sense of destination is at a high-level.

Over time, as a consequence of talking, negotiating, thinking together, and proposing ideas the nature of engagement becomes clearer and better understood. As both parties begin to get a clearer sense of where and how they could work together, their joint intention towards their shared vision is updated and revised.

Summary—Five Hallmarks

Engagement can be much more than a mere buzzword. In this section we have discussed the five hallmarks of engagement.

Figure 6-2. The Five Hallmarks of Engagement



Engaging the business is a journey of joint discovery and learning between people from different groups and backgrounds. Practices such as a willingness to overlook apparent fault are necessary to effective engagement.

Strategies for Engagement

Now let's take our examination of engagement from the realm of theory to practice. We have defined engagement and discussed what it looks like—but how do we practically do it? In this section we look at seven strategies for engagement:

1. *Lunch*. For relationship building and getting a sense of possibilities.
2. *One-on-One Meetings*. For more in-depth discussions about opportunities.
3. *Brown Bag Lunches*. For talking about possibilities with a bigger group.
4. *Workshops*. For discussing concepts and exploring applicability with a particular team or group.
5. *Proof-of-Concept Examples*. For giving teams and groups a demonstration of what's been talked about—taking it from a discussion to something hands-on.
6. *Internal Surveys*. For assessing common themes and opportunities across the organization.
7. *Exploratory Pilot Projects*. For trying out the new approach with a current team or group, for the purpose of learning.

None of these strategies are sufficient by themselves. You can't have a solitary one-on-one meeting or run a single workshop and be done with it. You need a mixture of strategies as you work through the journey of engagement. As shown in Figure 6-3, engagement transitions from locating people to engage with through to an exploration of opportunities for improving work style.

Figure 6-3. The Engagement Journey



Engaging the business to understand collaboration opportunities requires the use of multiple strategies. Engagement is not a one-time event but rather an ongoing journey.

Strategy 1. Lunch

Eating lunch is a good place to start the journey of engaging with the business. While having a nice meal and a great cup of coffee sets the stage for an afternoon of work, it wasn't the nutritional value I was thinking of. Instead, lunch is a great place to start if you eat it with someone from the business.

You need to find someone from one of the business groups who is keen to understand how new collaboration technology and approaches can help them improve and enhance their work. Maybe they are an early adopter of new technology. Maybe they experience a major ongoing pain in the way work is done today, and are willing to be an advocate for new ways of working. With the widespread availability of consumer-grade services on the internet, people are better educated about what's possible. Frequently people have better technology at home than at work, and use various internet services for staying in touch with family and friends. Such a person will teach you the realities of their work, just as you teach them about what's possible and available to help them do their work in the organizational setting.

Lunch is a great place to start if you eat it with someone from the business.

Here's some ideas for leveraging lunch as a business engagement strategy:

- Set a regular lunch appointment, perhaps weekly or every second week. Don't let too much time disappear between lunch appointments—too much changes if you only meet every month.
- Your time together should be about sharing stories and ideas about your respective work. The aim is that both of you start to understand the world of work as experienced by the other.
- Go along to your regular lunch appointment with the main idea of asking them what they are working on, where they think things could be improved, and about other people they work with who share the same ideas. You should also expect that they will ask about your work and how you could help them.
- Make use of their network of contacts inside your organization by asking for an introduction to other people who share similar frustrations, or see similar opportunities. Building your connections with likeminded business people will pay tremendous dividends downstream.

Building a relationship over time with such a person will help you on an ongoing basis to understand their work. It will also provide great credibility for you in front of others, and give you the scoop on areas for improvement. For example, being able to talk at an engagement workshop about specific examples of recent work done by the team, and how new technology and approaches could have helped is tremendous for showing credibility.

Strategy 2. One-on-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings with people in the business groups are a second strategy for gaining insight into current work practice and areas for improvement. Find—or identify—some people you know in the different business groups you support, and set up meeting appointments with them. If you don't know who to talk to, ask your colleagues or your manager for an introduction to someone appropriate, or approach the manager of a particular business unit directly.

Find—or identify—some people you know in the different business groups you support, and set up meeting appointments with them.

If possible, you should visit them at their desk or in their office, so make these local meetings in the first instance. That isn't always practical due to the increased geographical distribution of employees around the country or world, but if they're in the same city, you have no excuse for not making the effort to turn up in person. If you can travel in under two hours to meet with them, try and get the budget to do so—but use your time wisely and meet with multiple people during the same trip.

During your one-on-one meetings, focus on:

- Learning about the work they do. What do they do all day? What do they spend their time doing?
- Understanding the technology they use to support their work.
- Exploring the inefficiencies they experience in carrying out their work. Since they have to perform their work, they should have a sense of what's working well and what's not.

The benefit of having local meetings where you can visit people in their office, is that you can use your powers of observation to complement what you are hearing as they speak to you. You may be able to see whether what they're saying is really happening—particularly if you ask them to show you a recent example and how it was carried out. You can also observe whether they are doing things in inefficient ways they can't put into words.

Aim for at least 10 one-on-one meetings with different people so you get a broad understanding—although that does depend on the size of your organization, and the diversity of its work. Ten meetings may be far too few; one way of knowing you've met with enough people is when you stop learning new things. Based on what you learn from your one-on-one meetings, start analyzing the common themes about work style, work practices, and the problems they experience in getting their work done. Your new understanding will be important background as you explore opportunities for enhancement with these people through other forms of engagement.

Strategy 3. Brown Bag Lunches

Lunch with your business friend provides an opening to discover whether something more could happen with other people from his or her group. Once you have a good grasp of the opportunities and possibilities that exist within the group, seek wider feedback on the applicability of those ideas from the team or group itself. An accepted way of doing this in many organizations is a brown bag lunch.

Here's what happens:

- A date and time is set, and a rough agenda is outlined. Let's say the agenda is "to discuss some of the new capabilities in SharePoint to support document reviews," or "to explore how meetings can be more effective by using a wiki."
- Everyone supplies their own lunch. Although it's in the title, the "brown bag" is entirely optional. The "brown bag" goes back to school days where we took our lunch to school in a ... brown paper bag. Perhaps you can supply coffee and tea, or orange juice for those so inclined.
- While everyone eats the lunch they've brought, someone gives a presentation on the topic of using SharePoint for document reviews, or how meeting agendas, minutes, and follow-up action points can be better captured using a wiki than email. The presentation should have words and pictures—the words to describe the current state based on your earlier engagement work, as well as the future possible state based on new technology options. The pictures should show what it looks like—a sample screen layout, the hand-offs between multiple people, and any alerts or notifications to keep people in the flow of current work.
- After the presentation, there is a question and answer session, and the option for discussion. Hopefully the ideas in the presentation will resonate with some of the people in the team or group, and they'll want to learn and explore more.

The big idea of a brown bag lunch is that while people are eating—an activity they have to do everyday anyway—they can hear ideas about a new way of working that may be able to help them.

The simple idea of the brown bag lunch is that while people are eating—an activity they have to do everyday anyway—they can hear ideas about a new way of working that may be able to help them. If they hear nothing, they haven't lost much, and may even have gained a complimentary cup of coffee. If they hear something of real value, then the stage is set for going deeper.

Strategy 4. Workshops

Workshops are a very common form of providing a time and place for people to work together on a topic of joint interest, and can thus be used as a forum for engagement. Once you have laid the foundation with some key people in the business groups—through one-on-one meetings or a brown-bag lunch—then a workshop with a wider group of people is an appropriate next stage. While it is a more formal strategy than a brown-bag lunch, because you have the right to expect the people from the business groups to share more about what they are doing, it's not so formal as to be restrictive.

Workshops are a common form of providing a time and place for people to work together on a topic of joint interest, and can be used as a forum for engagement.

There are different types of workshops:

- *Exploratory Workshops.* A one or two-hour long exploratory workshops to explore ideas and potential fit between the work people do and the new collaboration technology. For example, holding a workshop with a particular department to demonstrate how particular processes or documents can be supported through the new tools provides a forum for gaining their feedback on applicability. It will also bring to light additional factors that need to be brought into consideration—such as the ability to support a couple of remote employees that you didn't previously know about.
- *Sharing and Planning Workshops.* A half-day or full-day workshop where there is already some degree of buy-in to the idea that new collaboration technologies have something to offer the business group, or where the business group is actively championing the use of new and better tools. The purpose of the workshop is for both parties to learn more about how it might work, and what would be involved in changing work practices to align with the new technology and approach. Both groups should come to a workshop of this type well prepared to teach the other about what they do.
- *Best Practice Workshops.* A workshop focused on talking about and demonstrating what other parts of the organization are doing with new collaboration technology and approaches, with the intent of discovering whether such ideas could be applied more broadly. By exhibiting examples of where other teams and groups are getting value, other teams and groups may express interest in learning more.
- *Deep Dive Workshops.* Full-day or multi-day workshops give everyone a much longer time to explore ideas and look at how things might work in a real scenario. On the IT side, having the capability to demonstrate real ideas implemented in the collaboration technology of choice greatly helps business people understand what is being talked about and proposed. On the business side, coming with real

examples and a full complement of everyone involved helps with getting the full picture. Both parties work together throughout the workshop to explore applicability, discuss options, and deal with potential roadblocks to success. A workshop of this type should end with the business group ready to start using the new approach. That the commitment to proceed is expected by the end of the workshop should be known by both parties in advance—the technology as well as the people should be ready. Having the desire to proceed without the technology being ready is very frustrating for the business groups, and vice versa.

Workshops are messy affairs—you can't plan them down to the minute—but they can contribute greatly to fostering engagement.

Remember, the first three hallmarks of engagement are joint discovery and learning, that people from multiple groups are involved, and that there is permission given on both sides to not know everything. In other words, the workshop won't be perfect. Workshops are messy affairs—you can't plan them down to the minute—but they can contribute greatly to fostering engagement.

With respect to pragmatics, aim for at least 10 people at a workshop, if not 15-20 people. You want multiple people from IT involved, and multiple people from the business side too. While 15-20 people makes for a large workshop, it also gives a breadth of experience and involvement in one room that is invaluable for making rapid progress. A good workshop facilitator will be able to bring that number of people together, and if you don't have such people inside your organization already, train them up or bring in an external facilitator.

Among other things, one of the outcomes you get from a workshop is openings for further conversation. The workshop plays a dual role—developing shared understanding of a common topic between two or more groups, as well as setting the stage for further engagement activities. During the wrap-up to your workshop, ensure you have agreement about who will play point person for the business group regarding future discussions.

In my work with clients, I find that I'm often used as an "attraction" in an early engagement workshop between IT and business groups. As an external person, I am both an unknown quantity—which adds spice to the meeting—and a global student of collaboration. My clients on the IT side of an organization find that bringing me in helps with their internal engagement journey. While it doesn't have to be me, you can co-opt this idea and bring in an external expert to support your engagement efforts.

Strategy 5. Proof-of-Concept Examples

A proof-of-concept example takes concepts from an ephemeral phrase into a touch-it-and-play-with-it arena. It's about implementing the verbal expression of an idea using collaboration technology to demonstrate actual functionality. In comparison to a live demonstration during a workshop—which is confined in time and place to the workshop—the intent of a proof-of-concept example is to leave it with the business groups involved so they can experience and test at their own pace.

A proof-of-concept example implements the verbal expression of an idea using collaboration technology to demonstrate functionality.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of proof-of-concept examples: generalized and specific. Each attempts to do something slightly different. Let's talk about the role of each.

Type 1. Generalized Proof-of-Concept: Demonstrating Functionality

A generalized proof-of-concept example shows off a limited number of capabilities in the collaboration technology and demonstrates how these can be used in a general sense. The hope is that people interacting with these generalized examples will “get” what the technology can do, and ask IT for such capabilities in their work. Hearing someone say “I want that” means you have achieved your purpose.

A generalized proof-of-concept example requires something that is real and not contrived, and is likely to offer value to the business. The identification of target opportunities for generalized proof-of-concept examples should arise from your earlier engagement activities, and the sense you have build about common themes.

Three examples are:

- A central place to find all training materials for specific IT systems. Hopefully, when someone from a business group sees what you've done, they'll say “I could use something like that in my work.” For example, the Marketing team could say, “We need to share the latest product brochures with salespeople. Could this approach work for us?”
- A site to collate news about competitors, made available on-demand through email alerts. People can elect to receive a daily or weekly summary of competitor news items, and can also visit the competitor news site whenever they want to see what's going on. This generalized example shows what's possible as a way of cutting down on broad email distribution lists, and gives power back to individual users to subscribe and unsubscribe from matters of interest.

- A group space for people who share common work interests within your organization, or have similar roles but in different geographical locations. The group space would show how discussions can be structured, and how documents and other artifacts can be shared for joint learning.

These are generalized examples because they have been created without reference to a specific business group, but the capabilities demonstrated can be applied generally across many business groups and situations.

Type 2. Specific Proof-of-Concept: Demonstrating Business Value

The second type is a specific proof-of-concept example. Rather than demonstrating functionality, it is designed to demonstrate business value to a specific business group. The idea is that you take what you learn through the engagement journey with a specific group, and in consultation with one or more of their key people, spend 2-3 days creating a concept team or group space. Once the space is created, it becomes a tool for further discussion and exploration about how it could be used to improve and enhance their work.

Specific proof-of-concept examples become a tool for further discussion and exploration about how it could be used to improve and enhance their work.

A couple of notes about creating a specific proof-of-concept example:

- It doesn't have to be fully implemented. It's a "mock-up" or a "rough draft" that's designed to stimulate further discussion. In other words, while it should contain real functionality, it doesn't have to be perfect.
- It has to have enough capability to show what's possible, aligned with the key requirements of the business group. You should know these based on your earlier interactions with them.
- It should be quick to build. Don't take more than 2-3 days to create a specific proof-of-concept example.

I was recently speaking with Carol, a research manager at a government agency. Carol wanted to explore how the discussion list capabilities in SharePoint could be applied in a group setting, and I recommended that she approach her IT department about creating a specific proof-of-concept example. I knew that she had previously used discussion list software in other agencies, so she had a good grasp of what was possible. A specific proof-of-concept example was the next stage to help her evaluate the effectiveness of SharePoint's implementation in her work.

Strategy 6. Internal Surveys

While they lack the personal touch of other engagement strategies, internal surveys provide a mechanism for assessing the applicability of new collaboration approaches across a broad range of people. Write the survey questions based on your initial engagement work, and the big ideas that emerged from there. For example, if sharing in-progress work is an important theme for collaboration at your organization, create a series of question to probe the concept (see Figure 6-4). If your collaboration technology supports it, create the survey using the tools you have available. If not, you could send the survey around by paper, but that quickly becomes messy to coordinate—not to mention challenging to collate and analyze the results. A better option if you don't have an internal surveying capability is to use one of the services on the internet, such as SurveyMonkey.

Figure 6-4. Sample Questions for an Internal Survey

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sharing In-Progress Work					
Sharing in-progress work is a regular part of my job	1	2	3	4	5
I regularly share in-progress work with my direct colleagues	1	2	3	4	5
I regularly share in-progress work with people in other departments	1	2	3	4	5
I have the tools I need to efficiently share in-progress work with direct colleagues	1	2	3	4	5
I have the tools I need to efficiently share in-progress work with people in other departments	1	2	3	4	5

Gaining feedback on key questions from hundreds or thousands of employees through an internal survey gives a quantified sense of relative importance of opportunities across the organization. Surveying tools are readily available, making analysis simple to perform.

In designing your survey, make sure you ask for people's names and contact details, as well as permission to contact them again. Seeing a clear opportunity across a whole range of people is frustrating if you have no way of establishing direct contact with them. Requesting permission to contact even internal people shows respect for their preference.

Strategy 7. Exploratory Pilot Projects

An exploratory pilot project involves a trial of the new collaboration technology and approaches with one or more significant teams, groups, or divisions. It requires having the technology available for active use, and the intent is joint learning. It is more structured and more in-depth than the other strategies, and represents a significant investment of time and effort from both the business and IT departments.

While technology must be available for an exploratory pilot project to work, this does not demand that a final decision has been made about what technology to use. For instance:

1. *The Technology Has Been Selected.* The pilot project provides a way of testing collaboration concepts within an organizational setting. Based on earlier roadmap work on the vision, plus the understanding developed through early engagement efforts, the pilot project puts these to the test for 3-6 months.
2. *The Technology Has Not Been Selected.* The pilot project provides a way of testing the technology, in line with a few specific collaboration concepts. Clearly some technology must be available, and this could be a trial implementation of a top contender, or a cloud-based variant of a particular tool. Either way, the technology is put to the test in a real organizational setting. If the pilot project fails to deliver though, it is vital to draw a distinction between the failure of the technology and the failure of the concept.

An exploratory pilot project is more structured and more in-depth than the other strategies, and represents a significant investment of time and effort from both the business and IT departments.

To make an exploratory pilot project work you will need a project manager to oversee it. They will be the initial champion of the new collaboration technology and approaches, and will work closely with specific people in the business group to develop understanding and gain adoption.

Summary—Strategies for Engagement

We have looked at seven major strategies for engaging the business. Before we shift to looking at four examples of engagement in action, it's worth reiterating two comments from the beginning of our discussion: engagement is not a one-shot event and none of these strategies are sufficient in themselves. The various strategies should be used together during a multi-phase engagement journey.

Examples

Having established a range of strategies that can be used during the engagement journey, let's look at five examples of how these strategies have been used in practice.

Example 1. Insurance Firm

A large insurance firm was migrating to a new collaboration product, and the IT department wanted to engage appropriately with the business—in order to understand their needs, to help them succeed, and to increase the chance of succeeding with the new product. Here's the approach taken by one of the leaders on the collaboration project:

- A six-person, co-located group was approached about the new collaboration product. They had not seen the product before, but knew it was coming. The challenge was to discover a way of enhancing their work.
- A joint workshop was convened, led by the IT department. The focus of the workshop was to understand the nature of the work undertaken within the group, and the pain points they were experiencing. Numerous ideas were floated. The main challenge was improving the way documents were authored and revised.
- An internal consultant from IT used a mixture of one-on-one observation, interviews, and workshops to develop a better understanding of the current approach to work. Within three weeks the consultant was able to understand the current process, and divide it into five steps. These steps were matched with specific capabilities from the collaboration product.
- To help the business users enact the new process, a one-page "How To" document was written for each of the five use cases. These documents were made available to each user. Also a training course of one-hour in duration was run for the group, followed with one-on-one coaching for those people who needed some more help to learn and embrace the process.

A joint workshop was convened, led by the IT department. The focus was to understand the nature of the work undertaken within the group, and the pain points they were experiencing.

After concluding the engagement with this group, an attempt was made to quantify the benefits they gained. Three main benefits were identified: an 80% reduction in email traffic, a 20-fold reduction in the number of different copies and versions of a document (so that there is now only one true version), and a weekly time saving of 2-3 hours in document rework and checking up on the status of each document.

Example 2. Research Firm

The IT group at a global research firm selected and implemented SharePoint as the main collaboration toolset for researchers—a classic starting point for an IT-led collaboration situation. They knew, however, they had to do more than just make it widely available, and thus embarked on an engagement journey to understand the collaboration needs of researchers.

The engagement journey unfolded over a four month period, as follows:

- A one-hour exploratory workshop with researchers from a variety of groups. This was facilitated by an external consultant. Some 15 researchers attended in the main office location, and 2-3 others joined via video conference from remote offices. The main finding from the workshop was that document collaboration was mired in an email and attachments approach, and that introducing better ways of writing documents together would be helpful. Before leaving the workshop, some researchers expressed an interest in learning more.
- The IT group scheduled a number of follow-up meetings with groups of researchers to talk about their needs and how SharePoint could help with document collaboration. What they heard consistently, though, was a request for one-on-one meetings. The researchers wanted the ability to discuss their specific work with someone from IT, in order to explore how SharePoint and other collaboration tools could help. This was an unexpected request for the IT group, but they made it happen—both in the main office location, and in remote offices via scheduled visits.
- The IT group ran a series of workshops which focused on presenting and discussing key scenarios in which researchers could use SharePoint. In essence, this was about showing proof-of-concept demonstrations as a way of learning whether the scenarios were of interest or not. Some research leaders expressed interest in one or two scenarios, which opened the door for further explorations.

They knew they had to do more than just make it widely available, and thus embarked on an engagement journey to understand the collaboration needs of researchers.

There are two interesting points to take from this case example. First, the IT group had a genuine interest in making SharePoint work, and were willing to invest the time and effort to do so. While the starting point was traditional—in that IT selected the toolset by themselves—the engagement approach was contemporary. Second, the engagement strategies used first were the “big” ones—the workshop and group meetings—but the researchers made it clear they wanted the “little” strategies too. To their credit, the IT group listened to this and offered opportunities for one-on-one meetings.

Example 3. Professional Services Firm

A professional services firm with offices around the country wanted to understand opportunities for collaborating differently. While a particular technology had been identified by the IT manager as being most appropriate for the firm, the decision to purchase it had not been made. It was felt this approach would better enable the conversations to be informed by capabilities, not limited by a product.

An external collaboration-focused consultant was contracted to lead the internal engagement journey, and a five step approach was followed:

By not selecting a product in advance, it was felt the engagement journey would enable the conversations to be informed by capabilities, not limited by a product.

- *Step 1. Initial Discussions.* Three initial discussions were held between the IT manager and the collaboration consultant, in order to build shared understanding of the people and groups in the business, and their tentative needs.
- *Step 2. Pre-Meeting Briefing Document.* In advance of a series of one-on-one meetings with business leaders around the country, a one-page briefing document was prepared. This document gave the background and context of the project, and outlined the focus of the one-on-one meetings.
- *Step 3. One-on-One Meetings.* Nine one-on-one meetings were held in a meeting room at two separate office locations. Each meeting lasted no more than 60 minutes, and gave each business leader the opportunity to discuss their work, their current tools, and the challenges of aligning both. Detailed notes were taken during the meetings, along with a short video clip of each business leader discussing one of the challenges they faced from a collaboration perspective.
- *Step 4. Findings Document.* The consultant synthesized the interview notes from the one-on-one meetings, setting out the key themes across the firm. The interview notes were included in an appendix, cross-referenced to the findings.
- *Step 5. Executive Workshop.* A two-hour executive workshop was facilitated by the consultant, to report back on the key themes from the one-on-one meetings, and to provide a number of short product demonstrations about how new collaboration technology could be used to improve current work practices. At appropriate points, the relevant video interview about one of the challenges was played. The executives were able to discuss the applicability of the key themes.

Two next actions were agreed at the conclusion of the Executive Workshop. First, the IT manager would host a technology-focused workshop to assess the fit between the scenarios and various technologies. Second, the IT manager would write the business case.

Example 4. Manufacturing Firm

A manufacturing firm with operations around the world wanted to make effective use of its IBM collaboration infrastructure. The IT manager contracted an external IBM collaboration consulting firm to work on software development projects. These were initially identified by the IT manager as being of relevance to the firm, based on discussions held at the management team level, and subsequent interaction with the different business units.

The consulting firm took the broad directive from the IT manager and used the engagement strategies of one-on-one meetings, workshops, and proof-of-concept examples to explore the opportunity with the business team. As the new system was intended to replace a current system, the consultants also examined the main capabilities of the current system.

Example 5. Global Consulting Firm

The IT division at a global consulting firm was re-examining its strategy for collaboration technology. The people leading the project specified several approaches for examining the technology, but the strategy was driven by the overall ethos of improving work practice for the consultants. It was clearly understood that while technology creates opportunities for working in different ways, these had to be of a suitable scale and scope to be relevant to the firm—it wasn't about buying new technology for the sake of it.

Several engagement strategies were used to understand improvement opportunities:

- One-on-one meetings with key representatives at different offices around the world. These were usually held by phone, but when possible, a face-to-face meeting was scheduled.
- Ongoing workshops with selected consulting teams. The agenda was two-fold: to discuss the opportunity for improvement by exploring the pain points in current work practices, and to look at specific technologies that offered a possible resolution to these. As the project progressed, demonstrations of specific technologies were included in these workshops so as to elicit feedback.
- A multi-day workshop with an external collaboration consultant to envision new ways of working. The workshop came mid-way through the overall project. The purpose was to develop before-and-after scenarios for work design, based on the earlier engagement work with business teams, and the types of technologies being explored for implementation.

The project spanned a 12-month period.

Capturing What You Learn

As you work through your engagement journey, you will develop a sense of the opportunities for new collaboration technology and approaches within the business. You need some way of “capturing” this developing sense, which generally means using an external representation such as a document, wiki or database to write out what you are learning. Let’s talk about these options in more depth.

Written Notes

Take detailed notes during the more formal engagement sessions. It’s clear you are there to learn. Writing down what the other people are saying is an excellent aid to learning, and a stimulant to recollection of the finer points of the discussion at a later time. There are many ways of writing your notes, from a document, to a wiki, to a text editor.

If you need to be fully immersed in the discussion, then take along someone else to take the notes for you, or use an audio recording device to capture the discussion. This will need to be transcribed after the meeting or workshop though, to make the learning more accessible.

You are there to learn, and taking notes during the discussion is an excellent aid to learning, as well as a stimulant to recollection at a later time.

Detailed notes are not required from a lunch meeting, but it’s useful to have a small notebook with you in which to capture the key discussion points. These can become prompt points for subsequent discussions.

Video

Taking a video recording of an entire meeting or workshop is an option for capturing what you learn, but it’s involves a significant investment of time and effort. The technical details have to work too. For an entire meeting, you’ll need a videographer to point the camera at the person who is currently speaking, and will need the right audio equipment to capture what people are saying. Poor audio quality ruins video recordings. As with an audio recording, the video will need to be transcribed to support accessibility after the meeting or workshop.

An alternative way of using video, and one that’s much less resource intensive, is to record short interview snippets. These involve asking one person at the meeting or workshop to restate something they’ve just said while you video them—for 1-2 minutes. All you need for this is a point-and-shoot digital camera that has a video mode, and a tripod. Even a smartphone with a video camera may suffice, but again, the tripod is essential. If you have access to a digital video camera all the better, but it’s not essential for short interviews.

Analyzing What You Learn

Your notes from the individual engagement sessions will need to be analyzed for patterns and common themes. You want to draw out the broad conclusions from your various meetings, workshops, and the feedback from proof-of-concept examples. This requires careful work and should not be rushed. Here's a couple of ways to document your analysis.

Database or Wiki

A database or wiki can be used to support the analysis of your learnings. While there are many ways to structure the database or wiki, the three essential elements are:

Draw out the broad conclusions from your various meetings, workshops, and the feedback from proof-of-concept examples.

- A document or wiki page for each of the individual engagement sessions. In a wiki, for example, you would create a new wiki page for your interview notes from your meeting with Peter on Tuesday the 24th at 10am. You would have another page for the notes from your meeting with Sally the same day at 12pm.
- A document or wiki page for each of the major themes, synthesized from across the individual sessions. Continuing the wiki example, if real-time document co-creation was a need raised by people during the engagement sessions, create a page called "Real-Time Document Co-Creation" and include snippets of the discussion from the relevant people. It's good to include links back to the original interview to show traceability.
- A summary table to plot the frequency of needs against the different business teams, groups, and divisions. This allows everyone to get an at-a-glance view of the relative importance of the different themes.

Some people prefer a tagging or classification approach to exploring common themes, instead of creating a separate page for each. The implication of this approach, however, is that the reviewer has to trawl through the full transcript of the original interview notes to find the relevant point. Creating a separate page that brings together the input from multiple people takes more time initially, but greatly simplifies usability of the learning.

Document

Another approach is to use a Word document to create the same structure as the database or wiki, but this should be the least preferred option. A database and wiki give the ability for exploration, and have advantages for user-directed navigation. But ultimately it comes down to the tools you have available.

Warnings About Engagement

Engagement quickly becomes a farce if not taken seriously. In other words, if the ethos of the people leading an engagement process comes from the wrong place, the journey of engagement is a waste of everyone's time. Here are three warnings about engagement:

1. Only pretending to engage has a cost.
2. The right to "big engagement" is earned via the "little engagement" strategies.
3. Don't drive change—facilitate it.

Let's take each warning in turn.

Warning 1. There is a Cost of Only Pretending to Engage

It's possible to fudge the journey of engagement. It's possible to make it appear that you are engaging with the business but really you aren't. In such situations, the key sign that you are pretending is that you are not willing to hear what others are saying, or be open to their ideas. You might say you are, but you're not in practice. You—and the rest of your group—have made a decision about what new collaboration technology and approaches will be used for, and "business engagement" is merely a "tick-the-box activity." It's a pretense.

You are only pretending to engage when you are not willing to hear what others are saying, or be open to their ideas. You merely push what you think should happen.

Let's think about how this would work. As an IT professional, you and others have decided that the new technology is going to be used to support collaboration. You have also decided that you will have a single version of the truth for all the documents related to a collaborative project, along with tracking of milestones. You've decided that the team spaces will be structured in a particular way, but you are struggling to get the business interested in what you are pushing. So you decide to hold some workshops, to increase "engagement." The workshop unfolds as follows:

- You talk about the solution that you are offering, without any attempt to understanding the problems the business users are facing. Perhaps a single version of the truth and tracking of milestones is irrelevant to them.
- You ask for feedback on your ideas, but squash all attempts to give critical feedback with a curt reply.
- You want to know when the business users will start using what you have to offer, rather than asking them about the challenges they are facing in their work.

There are very high costs when you pretend to engage:

- *You lose credibility.* People see you as a little better than a drug pusher, and don't want to have anything to do with you. You lose the ability to work alongside the business, and get relegated to the background. Once you have lost your reputation in this game, it's hard to earn it back.
- *You lose an opportunity to understand.* There are real challenges faced by business people on a day-to-day basis, in dealing with the information systems they are given to manage the daily avalanche of information. If you assume that you know what these are, and don't listen to learn, you miss out on gaining better and deeper insight. Business people aren't the enemy; they're the reason for IT to exist and do great work.
- *You multiply the risk of failure.* Because you have pretended to listen and understand, you will have turned potential allies into enemies, and when you release your system into the world, your new enemies will do all in their power to make it fail. They won't use it. They will actively discourage others from using it. And if you force them to use it—say through senior manager mandate, or the removal of alternatives—then they will only do so in a grudging manner, or go around you and use internet-based services.

In the final analysis, if you have decided there is no room for hearing what the business users are saying and taking their feedback and ideas into account, then don't go through the engagement journey. You are wasting their time, and destroying your reputation.

Warning 2. Don't Demand "Big Engagement" Before "Little Engagement"

Some of the engagement strategies in this chapter are "big engagement" strategies, while others are "little engagement" strategies. You earn the right to pursue the big engagement strategies—such as the multi-day workshop, or the exploratory pilot project—by diligently completing the little engagement strategies first.

Have the lunch. Schedule the one-on-one meetings, and turn up to listen and learn. Build effective working relationships with people on the business side of the house. Gain their trust. Learn about the challenges they face. Explore ideas that might work in their day-to-day work.

Earn the right to pursue the big engagement strategies by diligently completing the little engagement strategies first.

Once you have built effective relationships, pursue the bigger engagement strategies as a natural extension of the current relationships. You will be a known and trusted entity, and working towards the bigger strategies will be seen as part of the journey of joint discovery and learning.

Warning 3. Don't Drive Change—Facilitate It

A good general rule of thumb about change is that people hate being changed, but like changing. Or put another way, people hate it when they are forced to change, but they like the process of changing themselves. Let's think why that might be true:

- People have a degree of control over the change when they are actively involved in leading or initiating change.
- People have an interest in the process of change when they have been involved in exploring the options.
- People have an expectation about the outcome of change when they have expended time and effort to explore the benefit of changing.

When people make changes for themselves they grow in confidence and motivation—when change is forced upon them, they pull back and retreat.

I do not advocate the approach of driving or forcing change on others. If you want to force change on people, the strategies and tactics you embrace when engaging with the business are quite different than if you want to facilitate change—and you'll need to find a different book than *Collaboration Roadmap* to explain those strategies and tactics.

Here's what it looks like to facilitate change:

- People are keenly aware of the limitations and frustrations in their own work, and the things that hold them back from being as productive and effective as possible. It's your job to understand the nature of this, and to provide education and solutions to solve the problem.
- For whatever you are offering, you need to be very clear that it is going to lead to betterment for them. This is where the real-to-life scenarios approach—and a number of the other user adoption strategies in Chapter 7—come from.

You need to become less interested in pushing the latest technology on them, and more focused on helping them align with the right collaboration technology and approaches to make their work better. In one you provide technology, in the second you consult on business improvement. We need less of the first, and more of the second. Generally speaking,

You need to become less interested in pushing the latest technology on them, and more focused on helping them align with the right collaboration technology and approaches to make their work better.

collaboration technology has become so good, that any of the current offerings on the market are good enough. But the challenge is in helping people understand how they can do their work better, and someone from outside the group who is not so seeped in the traditions of work practice is well positioned to help in this way.

As a facilitator of change—or someone who “enables” or “encourages” change—I don’t think any of the following are implied:

- That you are wishy-washy, and don’t know what you want.
- That you are willing to leave it up to chance.
- That you are a pushover and will back down quickly if challenged.

A facilitator is invited to come, plans for improvements are collaboratively developed, and those plans are implemented in a collegial environment. Feedback, discussion and mid-course corrections are a natural part of working with a facilitator. An idea for improvement part way through the process isn’t taken as an affront, but the stimulation to work more effectively to a mutually desired outcome.

In short, being collaborative requires a mindset of facilitation, not of applying increasing levels of force until you get what you want. See Appendix 1 (*Collaboration Theory*) for more on the human practices of collaboration.

Engagement Versus User Adoption

What’s the difference between “engaging the business” and the user adoption strategies focus of the next chapter? As in, if you’ve read through this chapter, what are you going to learn in the next one? In one word: scope.

To use a few more words, the difference is this: engaging the business requires you to work with representative users from the business, but user adoption strategies require that you have some way of working with and helping all users in the firm. Engaging the business is the first step; user adoption strategies the second.

What’s the difference between engaging the business and user adoption in one word? Scope.

In one you are looking for general lessons and ideas that can direct where collaboration technology and approaches can be of use to business people. In the second you are looking at how to help people use those innovations in their work.

Summary

This chapter has focused on the importance of engaging business teams, groups, and departments in order to understand where the opportunities for work improvement and enhancement lie. Engagement is a vital discipline for building shared understanding of where and how new collaboration technologies and approaches could be used by business groups. It requires effort to pull off though—it's not a passive activity.

In this chapter, we have:

- Developed a working definition for engagement. We settled on:
Engagement is a journey of discovery where two or more different parties learn from each other as they work towards defining an outcome that is jointly meaningful to them both, or until they decide that continuing the journey offers no value.
- Explored five hallmarks of engagement—the clear signs that show whether engagement is really happening or not. Some hallmarks are not easy to live out, such as the one that requires overlooking apparent fault. But if participants are being called to do so, it's a good sign that engagement is really taking place.
- Discussed practical strategies for business engagement, starting with lunch and ending with pilot projects. We also noted a few pointers about mindset (“encouraging change” rather than “driving change”), and the costs of pretending to engage.

Engagement is a vital discipline for building shared understanding of where and how new collaboration technologies and approaches can be used by business groups.

In the next chapter we turn our attention to user adoption strategies.

¹ McKinsey & Company, *Building the Web 2.0 enterprise: McKinsey global survey results*, 2008. See www.mckinsey.com/clientservice/bto/pointofview/pdf/building_the_Web_enterprise.pdf.

Chapter 7.

Apply Intentional Energy to Adoption

“Adoption cannot be mandated. End users have to want to use the product, and will do so when they see a net benefit to them and their work.¹”
Michael Idinopulos, Socialtext

What is the biggest complaint around the introduction of new collaboration technologies into a group or organization? The answer: No one uses them. The new tools are barely used for five minutes before being rejected, if they're used at all. The very people who are supposed to use them don't—they keep going with earlier ways of working. Naturally, user adoption will not be such an issue in your organization if you have followed the roadmap concept as outlined in the first six chapters of this book, but intentional energy must be invested in user adoption in order to reap the desired benefits.

In this chapter, you will:

- Find out that user adoption is a common problem with collaboration technology.
- Explore a number of models of change, to inform your user adoption work.
- Learn about a framework for approaching user adoption.
- Discover a range of practical strategies you can use in your user adoption work.
- Receive tips and tricks for developing your user adoption approach.

This chapter is a synopsis of my book *User Adoption Strategies: Shifting Second Wave People to New Collaboration Technology*.² For more detail, see the book.

Adoption Theory: Key Concepts

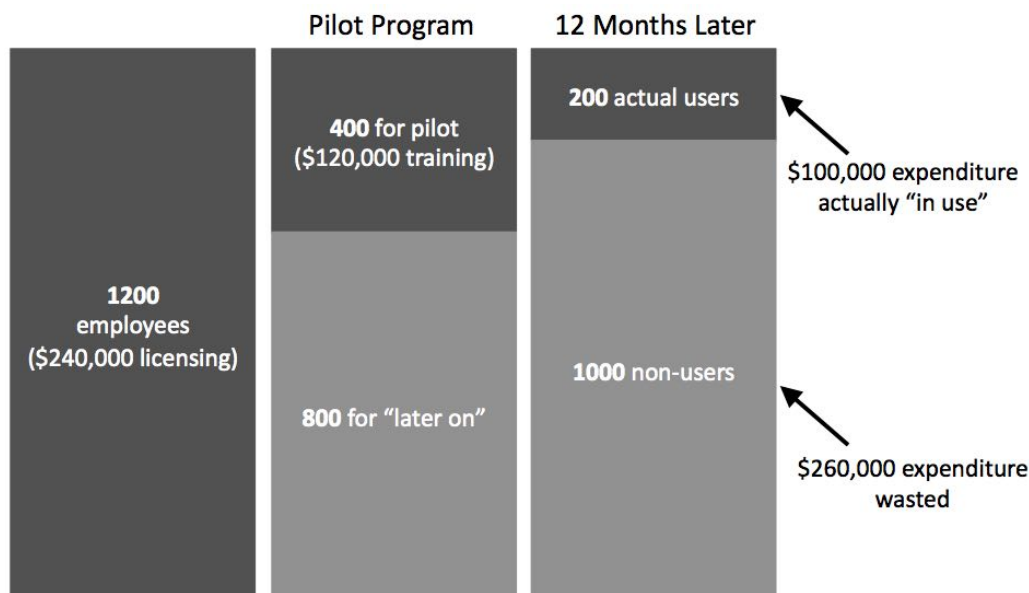
Irrespective of the work put into taking the collaboration journey to this point, if employees don't adopt the new way of working there is no benefit. Following the roadmap approach means the risk of this happening is minimized—there's a clear vision of improvement, the technology is recognized as a small part of success, and both governance and engagement are being with in an appropriate manner. But if the effort stalls at adoption, the expenditure on the technology and the effort on the roadmap have been for nothing.

If the effort stalls at adoption, the expenditure on the technology and the effort on the roadmap have been for nothing.

No Adoption, No Benefit

Consider an organization of 1,200 employees that is embarking on the collaboration journey. The technology costs \$200 per employee, and the decision is to license it for everyone immediately, and then run a pilot program for 6 months with 400 staff. These 400 staff receive training and encouragement to use the new approach (at \$300 each). Twelve months later, only 200 people are using the technology, and then only in a half-hearted way. Of the \$360,000 out-of-pocket expenditure, \$260,000 has been wasted.

Figure 7-1. Poor Adoption Equals Wasted Expenditure and a Lost Opportunity



The failure to adopt new collaboration technology and ways of working results in wasted expenditure, missed opportunities, and a low chance of achieving the initial vision that drove the investment in the first place. Adoption is critical to success.

User Adoption is a Common Problem

User adoption of new collaboration technologies and approaches is a common problem. It's not limited to a single technology:

- For organizations deploying SharePoint, user adoption is the biggest problem. SharePoint demands changes in the way people work, and given the IT-dominated approach to acquiring SharePoint—often with nil involvement from potential users—many organizations assume adoption will just happen. It doesn't.³
- Socialtext, an enterprise collaboration software and professional services company, released a white paper on user adoption in 2009.⁴ The opening section states: *The success or failure of any social software solution ... [is] a direct result of its adoption rate There are plenty of examples of failed social software projects. Why did they fail? Because they were not embraced by users.*
- NewsGator, a software company focused on enterprise social computing extensions for SharePoint, also released a white paper on user adoption in 2009.⁵ In the opening remarks, NewsGator says: *This paper presents a model for proactive analysis that should be undertaken prior to or during the early phases of deploying an enterprise social computing initiative. Investing the time and effort to complete the analysis should greatly increase the opportunity for successful adoption and active ongoing participation. In other words, how you approach social software in the enterprise has a big impact on adoption.*
- The UC View published an article I wrote on user adoption and IBM Connections in April 2009.⁶ I started with: *Increasing user adoption is a common challenge for organizations that introduce collaboration and social software tools such as IBM Connections. Administrators often find it difficult to teach business users how new tools can help them in their work. People are busy, and in today's economic maelstrom, people are scared. In such times, the safe approach is to stay with what you know given the inherent productivity and efficiency of this option.*
- Vendors outside the collaboration camp are also advocating the importance of user adoption. In a March 2005 white paper from Business Intelligence (BI) vendor Business Objects, the author writes: *A typical BI project has a return on investment (ROI) of 430%—assuming proper implementation and organization-wide user adoption. Failure to achieve user adoption results in missed deadlines and compromised business performance. Despite today's pressures, proactive organizations with an eye to business advantage can enjoy unprecedented benefits. New thinking suggests that user adoption is a key determinant of success.*⁷

In summary, user adoption is a challenge faced across a plethora of collaboration technologies and approaches.

Models of Change

Adoption of something new implies letting go of something old—and people put up roadblocks when faced with such change. Understanding these roadblocks as well as models of effective change can inform our adoption efforts.

Roadblocks to Change

Individuals, groups, organizations, and even nations resist change. Typical roadblocks are:

- *Individuals.* Roadblocks include fear of the unknown (will the new approach really be better than what we have now?), comfort with the status-quo, and a pushback at being forced to change.
- *Groups.* Roadblocks include the difficulty of overcoming group habits (because more than one person has to change), the difficulty of going back to today's state if the future state isn't any good, and the pain of unstitching old technology from current work practices.
- *Organizations.* The lack of a collaborative culture, the presence of politics, and inconsistency of vision and direction can be roadblocks to change at the organizational level.
- *Nations.* Among other things, national culture and strict privacy laws can act as roadblocks to change.

**Individuals, groups,
organizations, and even
nations resist change.**

These roadblocks can cause us to throw our hands up in despair when embarking on the collaboration journey. But rather than doing that, let's look at four models that can help overcome these roadblocks

Four Models of Change

Much academic and practical work has been done on the introduction of change to individuals and groups. Here's a brief review of four resulting models:⁸

1. *Stages of Change.* Change is not a one-time event. It's a process with a several stages, that include both contemplating a change and preparing for that change before any action is first undertaken. Once the change has been made, deliberate ongoing effort is required to maintain the new state. Without this effort, it's most likely that people will go back to their old state and the change won't stick.
2. *Diffusion of Ideas.* New ideas enter a community through a trusted opinion leader. People follow people they respect, and as this dynamic works its way from

person-to-person, change is introduced and new social norms formed. This diffusion of ideas from an opinion leader operates for both good and bad ideas.

3. *Work Practice and Culture.* Culture is made up of goals, values, attitudes, and work practices. Some changes require a fundamental revision across all of these dimensions, and therefore requires a much higher level of support to make the change stick. If the change only effects work practice though, it's easier to introduce.
4. *Sticks and Carrots.* Change can be thought of as a stick or carrot. The first involves (figuratively) beating people with a stick to make them do what you want. However, when you stop beating them, they usually stop changing. With a carrot, you give financial or other rewards to lead them towards the change. However, when you stop providing the rewards, usually people stop changing. A third and more effective approach is increasing the utility they derive, so that they want to make the initial change, and then maintain it over time.

Key Lessons on Effective Change

We can draw six lessons from these models of change:

1. *Involve people in the change.* Do change with people, not to them. Get them involved in considering changes that would benefit their work, and let them have a say in what's happening.
2. *Deploy the right levers for change.* Common motivators for change are the avoidance of pain, social pressure, and perceived deviance from the norm. In terms of the latter, the perception that "everyone else is doing it" is a huge motivator to act in a different way.
3. *Make it about organizational improvement.* Present the change as ongoing improvement, not an attempt to label the current approach as wrong or a failure.
4. *Repetition makes the change real.* Repetition shows that the change is real, not a one-time flash in the pan. It shows that people are serious about the change.
5. *Encouraging change rather than driving it.* Don't drive change—encourage it. Help people to understand the value and benefit of changing to a different way; help them see that, and change will follow naturally.
6. *Give people time and space for change.* People need time to consider what change would be like for them, and then time and space to perform the actions necessary to make the change. If they have no white space in their calendar, it's going to be nearly impossible to get any meaningful change happening.

First Wave Versus Second Wave People

“Second wave people” represent the largest contingent of people in a team, group, or organization. They are the ones who have to use the new collaboration technology as it’s given, instead of having any direct input into what it is and how it could be used. They are very different from “first wave people”—those early adopters of anything new, the advocates, the champions, or the enthusiasts. First wavers are more at peace with change, permissive of chaos, unfazed by ambiguity, and actually derive enjoyment from figuring something out. The real user adoption challenge is with second wave people.

There are seven key differences between first and second wave people:

1. *What-why reversal.* A first wave person is attracted to the “what” of the new collaboration technology, but may struggle to articulate the “why”—the future oriented picture—to other people. A second wave person gets the “why” (if it’s conveyed in terms of their work), but will need help with the “what.”
2. *Different reference groups.* A first wave person sees their use of the tool within a self-created reference group, usually outside of their organization. A second wave person sees their own work and how it relates to their internal reference group.
3. *Different rewards.* Getting to use new tools is reward enough for first wavers, but second wavers have to understand how the new tools will improve current work.
4. *Speed of adoption.* First wavers quickly embrace new tools, and learn how to do so through trial-and-error. Second wavers need greater external help and handholding in successfully making the transition to new tools and approaches.
5. *Nature of involvement.* First wavers have a high degree of involvement in defining what could be done, what should be done, and how to do it. Second wavers are generally expected to follow along and do what they’re told.
6. *Dealing with the old.* First wavers will be quick to call the old stuff “dead” and will want to move away from it ASAP. Second wavers want to embrace new things within the context of what they already know and have.
7. *It is their job vs. It could be used for their job.* First wave people often have an organizational responsibility to try out new things, and see what could be useful to the way work gets done. It’s part of their job to explore the new. For second wavers, they actually have a “real job” to do, and the tools are at best tolerated.

Think of these differences as “ideal-types.” Few individuals will exhibit them all, but once you see three or more coming through, you’ll know which wave someone is on.

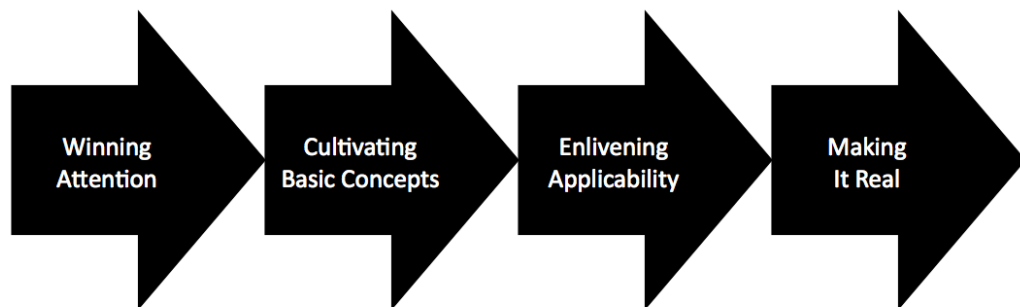
Four Stage Model of User Adoption

One of the key conclusions from our quick review of the models of change is that “change is a process, not an event.” In other words, change doesn’t usually happen with a single “big bang” event; there are a series of distinct events that make up the overall process.

When we apply this thinking to the challenge of user adoption for new collaboration technology with second wave people, there are four distinct events—although the word “stages” is preferred in this chapter.

Change doesn’t usually happen with a single “big bang” event; there are a series of distinct events that make up the overall process.

Figure 7-2. The Four Stages Model of User Adoption



The Four Stages Model of User Adoption provides a framework for approaching second wave people with new collaboration technology. People’s attention must first be won regarding the potential value and opportunity of collaborating in new and different ways. This is followed by three stages that teach essential concepts, discover applicability to the individual and group, and make it real as the new way of working.

Is the Process Linear?

Figure 7-2 depicts four arrows, starting on the left-hand side of the page and progressing to the right-hand side. I have also used the word “stage” in naming and describing the model. Does this mean the process is linear—that Stage 1 must be fully completed before moving to Stage 2, which in turn must be fully completed before moving to Stage 3? In a word, No.

The intent is this: take a linear approach to planning your user adoption work, but a circular or repetitive approach to the implementation of your plan. That is, make a general plan about how you will approach the user adoption challenge, and then implement it in

small ways with different groups, capturing what you are learning in each stage to inform and improve the way you implement the stage the next time. For example:

- You develop a couple of Real-to-Life Scenarios (Stage 1, Winning Attention), and make these available to people within your organization through the intranet, a road show, and various channels of communication.
- A few people show quick interest in learning more, and so you schedule a web-based training session with them and their group. The basic concepts of the new collaboration technology are explored (Stage 2, Cultivating Basic Concepts).
- One group wants to apply what they have learnt in their work, and various strategies from Stage 3 (Enlivening Applicability) are put in place. For example, a Facilitated Group Re-imagining session is held with a group to explore current and new ways of working.
- Finally, the group develops a new picture of how it is going to work, and a Bulk Loading Party is staged to get everyone into the new way of doing things. After the party has finished, current ways of working are de-emphasized (the Zero Other Options strategy).
- What you have learnt through the process of working with this particular group is linked back to the Stage 1 activities. In particular, a new Exemplar Story is created, which will form the basis for future “Winning Attention” endeavors.

In summary, Figure 7-2 could show the model as a non-linear process, but while that depiction would be more true-to-life, it would be much more confusing about what you should actually do.

Don't Do Them All

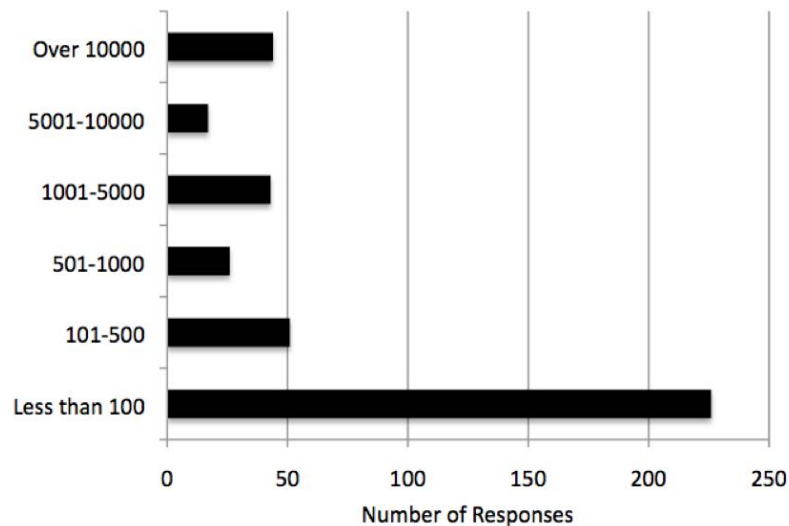
Before we jump to a brief discussion of the user adoption survey, two vital comments need to be made. There are almost 20 strategies discussed in this chapter. Don't do them all! The purpose of discussing each strategy isn't to be directive and say that you *should* do it, but rather to be informative about what you *could* do within the context of each stage. It's the stage that matters, not the particular strategies. The strategies are just possible ways of implementing the intent of the stage. Equally, you may have a different idea for a strategy to use in each stage. Go for it! If you know how to implement the strategy, and have experience with its effectiveness, then run with what you know.

Secondly, none of the strategies for user adoption are “perfect.” They all have pros and cons. The purpose of discussing the strategies in this chapter is to highlight possibilities, and to give you the tools needed to select appropriate strategies for your work.

User Adoption Survey

The data presented in this chapter on the use and effectiveness of various user adoption strategies is based on survey data. In early 2010, I commissioned a global survey on the use and effectiveness of various user adoption strategies. The survey received over 400 responses, from people across a range of organization sizes (see Figure 7-3). The survey collected data on user adoption strategies being used with multiple collaboration tools: Microsoft SharePoint, IBM Connections or Quickr, Socialtext, Google, and Central Desktop, among others. The first question to the survey allowed multiple answers, so respondents could indicate the use of multiple products. The two most common technologies were Central Desktop (a hosted collaboration service) and Microsoft SharePoint (generally an in-house technology).

Figure 7-3. Size of Organization



Respondents were from organizations of different sizes. While the most common size of organization was “Less than 100” employees, 25% of respondents were from organizations with over 1000 employees.

People participated in the survey for two reasons:

- Participants wanted to learn about the use and effectiveness of user adoption strategies, and were willing to disclose their approach in return for wider insight.
- Everyone who completed the survey and provided his or her contact details received a free report about the survey, or a copy of *User Adoption Strategies*.

For more details on the survey, see the corresponding section in *User Adoption Strategies*.

Strategies for User Adoption

The Four Stage Model of User Adoption provides a framework for approaching the user adoption challenge—with each stage denoting a particular intent. Various strategies are available to operationalize the intent of each stage. This section looks at almost 20 strategies for user adoption, divided into stage-appropriate strategies.

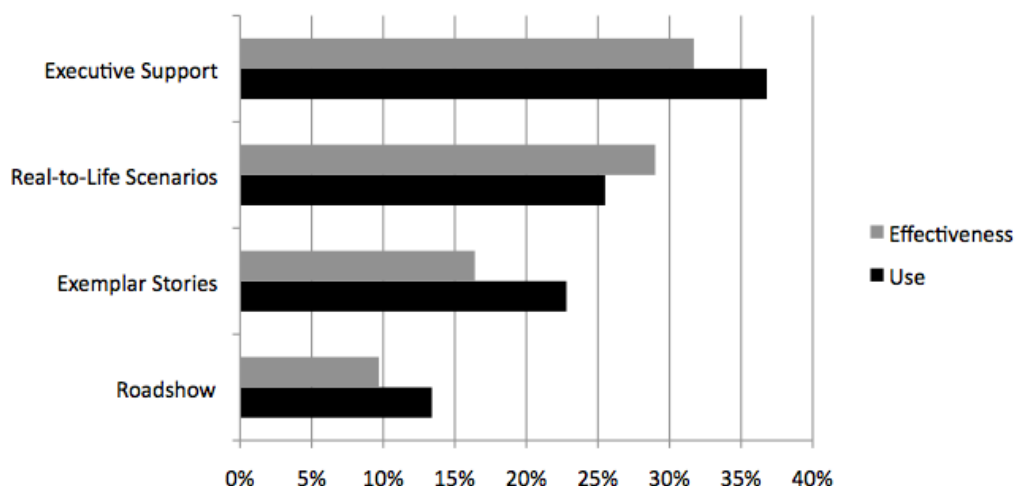
Stage 1. Winning Attention

In Stage 1, you have to win the attention of second wave people. By their very nature, second wave people have little interest in product features and benefits stated within the context of product features. Something else is necessary, and in this first stage, there are various strategies that can be used effectively to win attention. For example, if Yammer is being explored as a new collaboration technology for an organization, don't talk about micro-blogging, hashtags, and following people. Instead provide a "Real-to-Life Scenario" about how Yammer could help particular groups become more effective and efficient.

If Yammer is being explored as a new collaboration technology for an organization, don't talk about micro-blogging, hashtags, and following people.

Four strategies for Winning Attention were included in the survey.

Figure 7-4. Survey Results for Strategies for Winning Attention



Four strategies for Winning Attention were queried in the User Adoption Survey. Executive Support was the most commonly used strategy, and the most effective. Only Real-to-Life Scenarios was ranked as having higher effectiveness compared to its usage.

Strategy 1.1 Executive Support

Executives who actively use the new collaboration technology as part of their work, and expect others to do the same, win the attention of those around them. Such executives show the new approach is real, demonstrate they have mastered the skills involved, and that they expect other people to get on board too. For example:

One of the more successful SharePoint solutions I've observed was in an organization where a key executive stopped responding to any e-mail message with an attached document. He politely replied to each sender that he would read the message when the message included a link to the document they wanted him to review rather than an attachment. He truly "owned" the solution and took accountability for effecting change by modeling the behaviors he wanted every employee to follow.⁹

Executive support also encompasses the allocation of resources to the program of work, and help in removing organizational roadblocks to effective adoption and use.

There are three steps to using the executive support strategy:

1. Convince senior executives that improvements in performance are possible and attainable as a consequence of changing work practices.
2. Get senior executives to speak about the new way of doing things, the new way of working. This should be done in internal town hall meetings, on the internal CEO blog, in conversations with others, and so on.
3. Get senior executives to start using the new approach (assuming it's relevant to their work), and to be seen as being active in doing so.

There are pre-conditions to using the executive support strategy—make no mistake about that! You can't just bowl up to an executive and ask them to start doing stuff publicly and within their own work practice without laying any groundwork. In other words, you need to be credible in their eyes (by having a history of delivering good outcomes for the organization), have a credible message (what you are saying is logical and believable, and you can back it up with facts and reasoning), and show a credible link between what you are advocating and the changes and improvements they are trying to bring about in the organization (they can see the value and benefit in line with their wider objectives).

You need credibility to use the executive support strategy.

Therefore be very clear that gaining executive support takes time. It's much less about a conversion experience as a result of a one-time three-minute conversation in the hallway, and much more about relationship building and proving yourself over months and years. If you don't have it, find someone else who does!

Strategy 1.2 Real-to-Life Scenarios

Real-to-life scenarios provide a narrative picture of how using a particular technology can improve the way work gets done. It describes how the technical capabilities of the new technology can be used by people to get their work done. The intent is that as people hear the scenario, they can compare and contrast what is being talked about with the experience they have today with current tools and approaches. If the scenario is sufficiently compelling, they will want to learn more about how to get involved. The strategy is designed to evoke an “I want that” response.

Real-to-life scenarios could be on:

- A day in the life of customer services.
- Discovering experts in unlikely places.
- A project being carried out by a research team.

Real-to-life scenarios explain technical capability inside a current way of working.

A scenario can be used to emphasize the benefits of the new way of working, especially if the new way of working eliminates time-consuming steps without reducing the effectiveness of the process.

There are three steps involved in making use of the real-to-life scenario strategy.

1. Think about the main business activities undertaken at your work. Depending on the diversity of your organization, you’ll come up with a short list (not very diverse, narrowly focused organization) or a very long list (highly diverse firm, broad focus). You need to develop the real-to-life scenario in the context of the work of your organization in order for it to hold power.
2. Select one activity from the list. Ideally, it should be an important activity frequently carried out within your organization, and where you know some of the people who are involved in doing that activity.
3. Write a story—or an “end-to-end narrative scenario”—about how the business activity can be enhanced through the application of new collaboration technology.

Real-to-life scenarios win attention in two ways. First, they describe an improvement opportunity that’s meaningful to the people reading or hearing the scenario—they should be able to see themselves inside the scenario. If you have done your engagement work well, you will have a list of improvement opportunities for particular teams and groups. Use these opportunities in developing your scenarios. Secondly, they provide a means of describing a desirable future state by putting new technology in the context of work. It’s not just a listing of technological features and functions, but rather a coherent description of how these could be used in an identifiable process.

Strategy 1.3 Exemplar Stories

Exemplar stories show how a particular aspect of a collaboration technology is being used by a real group or in a real situation in your organization. It relates something that has actually happened or is still happening. An exemplar story wins attention because it comes from your organization. This is because of the social and cultural sifting that has already happened in order for the exemplar story to work. On the social side, the exemplar story has happened with people who work within the same organization, which means that anyone else who hears it has the opportunity to actually go and talk to them! And on the cultural side, the story shows it's actually been proven that the new technology can work within your organization, thus eliminating potential roadblocks.

An exemplar story gives proof that the new technology can work within your organization.

An exemplar story could be:

- How a group in marketing is using the new collaborative document co-authoring service to work with outside marketing professionals. As a result, they have cut co-authoring cycle times by 40%.
- How a group in product development have switched from tracking projects on a whiteboard to using Lotus Quickr, and are now able to see current status at any time, from any place. Everyone feels much more in control of their work, and tasks are completed 30% faster.

Here are the steps involved in making use of the exemplar stories strategy:

1. Stay in touch with the teams and groups who were quick to embrace the new technology. This will enable you to learn what's happening for them.
2. Describe the improvements they are gaining. Write it up as a case study. Do a video interview with the people involved. Get some screen shots.
3. Share the exemplar story with relevant people in your organization. Publish it on your intranet. Include it in an internal newsletter. Hold a brown bag lunch and get the person to come and speak about what they are doing and what happened. Let the audience ask questions so they can understand for themselves what happened and the benefits that resulted. Use the story—and its method of communication—to spark people's interest in further engagement, social interaction and influence, and understanding.

Exemplar stories work because they convey that business value has been achieved by a knowable team or group in your organization. It has high social validity, because it is something real happening to real people and groups within the current organization. It's not a story from "out there" that "probably won't translate into our environment."

Strategy 1.4 Roadshow

A roadshow involves creating a small collection of presentations that convey the promise and potential of new collaboration technology to improve work, and then setting up a series of onsite meetings with people at various locations to present the ideas and engage in conversation and discovery with them. You (and ideally a few others) travel to different offices within your organization, make the presentations, demonstrate the potential, and gauge the level of interest from attendees—based on their questions, discussions during morning or afternoon tea, and follow-up email or phone calls. Those who show high interest become key contacts for pilot programs and early involvement.

A roadshow allows you to demonstrate the potential of new ways of working, and to identify key contacts for involvement.

There are four broad steps involved in holding a roadshow:

1. *Develop the message.* Work out what you are going to say, and for how long (if this is the first time you are doing it, half-a-day is more than enough). Craft the presentations and demonstrations you will use to convey the message, and gather up the real-to-life scenarios and exemplar stories you will talk through.
2. *Schedule the meetings.* Find a lead champion at each roadshow location to help with choosing a date, and signing up attendees. All the logistics will have to be organized too—booking a room, ordering the coffee and refreshments, booking flights and hotel rooms, and so on.
3. *Go traveling.* If you have staggered the roadshows so all are within a two-week timeframe, pack a large suitcase and hit the road! If you want to be kinder to your family and body, make shorter, more strategic trips. If there are multiple offices you need to visit in a far-off place, then try to accommodate all of them during one trip, not multiples.
4. *Follow-up.* Collect business cards or contact details while you are on the road, and follow-up when you get back to the office. Find out what resonated with them. Ask whether they are up for early involvement.

If you decide to run a half-day roadshow, your agenda should cover the business and environmental context, a description and demonstration of the new technology, scenarios and exemplar stories of where the new technology could help or has helped within the organization, and a discussion of how to get involved. Clearly there is a cost in undertaking a roadshow, but if the conditions are right, it can be an effective way of winning attention.

A roadshow wins attention because it creates a time-and-space for people to learn about new possibilities, it shows a much higher degree of commitment to the program than sending out an email, and it allows attendees to discuss what they learned with peers.

Strategy 1.5 Organizational Chaos

The final strategy for winning attention is organizational chaos. In all fairness, it's really a "situation" or "opportunity" that can be turned to your advantage for winning people's attention. But so we don't miss the wider benefit, if there is chaos and uncertainty happening within your organization now, it may be possible to introduce additional changes that would be rejected under normal circumstances. While I'm not suggesting that you create organizational chaos and uncertainty for the sake of it, make the most of it if your organization is experiencing chaos and uncertainty.

Make the most of it if your organization is experiencing chaos and uncertainty.

During times of chaos, changes in how people work can be implemented as part of the drive to survive. Consider the Molson Coors Brewing Company.¹⁰ It acquired 10 companies over a decade, but remained a mishmash of fiefdoms. A new CEO, on a recommendation from an employee, gave staff a new way to interact with their peers and colleagues around the world—using Yammer—as part of a multi-pronged approach to developing a new cohesive corporate culture.

The most important aspect of using the organizational chaos strategy as a driver for gaining attention is to show causality! You will need to provide a realistic link between what you are advocating and the eventual betterment of the organization and situation. It's no use proposing small and minor changes with no linkage to overall improvement. The people hearing what you have to say need to perceive the linkage. At Molson Coors, there was clear linkage between new ways of interacting and a more cohesive culture.

Organizational chaos works to win people's attention about upcoming changes because people are already in a change-ready mode. They have experienced the pain of past ways of working, and know something has to change.

- People have lower resistance to change. As a consequence of the wider stress and uncertainty of the environment, people are more willing to embrace change, if they can see a link between here and betterment.
- People know the old must go. Organizational structures that used to work, and organizational approaches that were effective in previous times, are not looked on with so much fondness. The old way of doing things has contributed to a real and current problem, and new stuff is required.

During a recent public seminar, one attendee related a situation from his organization from the late 1980s, when some major IT changes were introduced during a time of massive environmental and organizational chaos. He summarized the experience by saying, *While we've never been bold enough to do it again, I look back on that experience as one of the best change and transition situations I have ever been involved with.*

Examples and Case Studies

Here are some examples of how different organizations have approached the winning attention stage of user adoption.

- An insurance firm with offices around the world used Exemplar Stories as a strategy for spreading learning and winning the attention of people and teams not currently using the new collaboration technology (SharePoint 2010). These were discussed at a monthly internal web conference, with a representative from a business team presenting on their specific use of the technology. For example, one business team discussed how they were using a SharePoint site to capture risks and issues during their regular project meetings. As a consequence, their monthly reporting was much simpler because the core data and subsequent follow on actions had already been captured in the system.
- An international organization purchased IBM Connections and IBM Quickr. The IT staff at one office worked with the executive team to enable them to gain access to upcoming board meeting papers stored in a Quickr space from their iPads, thereby eliminating the need to print and distribute bulky reports once a week. The executives loved the new approach, and encouraged their PAs and other heads of departments to do the same.
- DNV, a global risk management firm, used a real-to-life scenario to highlight the benefits of sharing and communities. The scenario was presented in a light-hearted animated video and was released for internal use (see Figure 7-5).

Figure 7-5. A Real-to-Life Scenario



Hexagon Wrench has mastered the art of working alone, but when he is unable to finish a new design project, he discovers that there are other people in his firm who can help. As he gains their assistance, he begins to make small steps toward helping others as well.¹¹

Stage 2. Cultivating Basic Concepts

Having won attention, the intention of Stage 2 is to communicate the basic concepts of the new technology. This means helping people understand a few core concepts in order to have a reasonable discussion about how it could be applied to their work (in Stage 3).

For example:

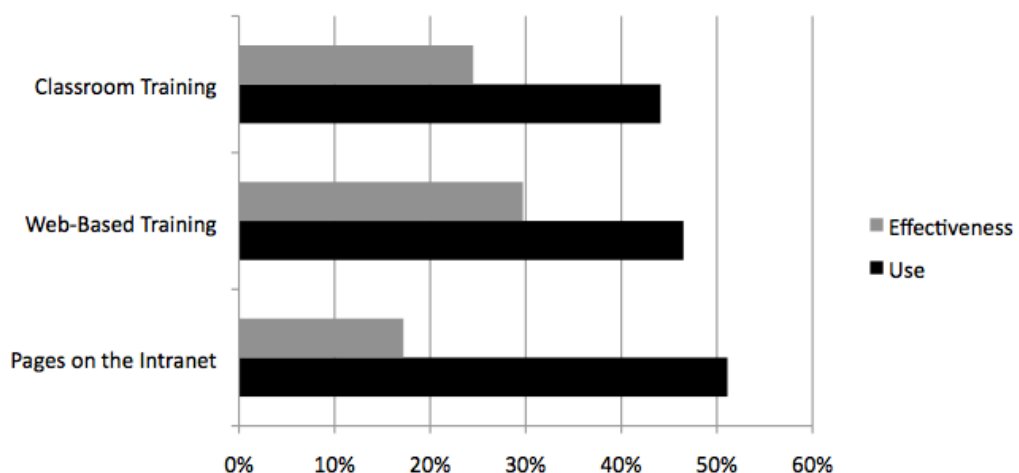
- With SharePoint, basic concepts are the site, lists and libraries, permissions, and Office integration.
- With Yammer, it's about the short message, free-form group creation through hashtags, and following people.
- With Confluence, it's editable web pages, tags for classification, on-page discussions, and email notifications.

Cultivating Basic Concepts is about helping people understand the core concepts of the new technology.

Note that you are not aiming to teach everything about the new technology, but rather just enough of the basic concepts so people can take a more active part in Stage 3. Think of it as “the 5-7 key things you need to know” in order to understand how the new technology works differently from what happens today.

The survey asked about three strategies for Cultivating Basic Concepts.

Figure 7-6. Survey Results for Strategies for Cultivating Basic Concepts



Three strategies for Cultivating Basic Concepts were queried in the User Adoption Survey. Pages on the Intranet was the most common strategy, but the least effective. The other two strategies were ranked as more effective than Pages on the Intranet.

Strategy 2.1 Classroom Training

In classroom training, multiple people are brought together into a room for classroom-style training. Basically, someone stands up the front and talks about what the new collaboration technology enables you to do, and the “students” listen and hopefully learn. There should also be some practice thrown in for good measure.

There are various design considerations with classroom training—including whether to use internal or external trainers, off-the-shelf or custom-developed material, and hands-on training or workbook only. Generally speaking, it’s better to have internal trainers with material that’s tailored to the specific attendees, as this gives them an opportunity to try things out as they are learning. Learning at the same time as work colleagues is also best.

Classroom training is best used under the following conditions:

- The material is fresh and presented in a bright and interesting manner. The greater the level of personal and work relevance, the better. In terms of presentation style, the trainer needs to enjoy what they’re doing and exhibit a passion for the topic. In other words, it’s not boring.
- Students can try things out for themselves. The more they can do inside a classroom, the better. Being able to try it out, asking questions, probing the trainer for more information, and getting assistance from their fellow students, all helps.
- Classroom training is treated as part of a larger process, not a one-time event. By itself, classroom training has little ability to reform the way people and groups work, but in conjunction with other strategies, it can be highly effective.
- It’s used for establishing a capability baseline, which can then be extended through additional user adoption strategies. Don’t take a “train, then blame” approach where once a one-time how-to session has been run, any failure is the user’s problem! That doesn’t cut it.
- It’s more effective to train people in smaller increments—train for starting—rather than attempting to train for everything. Give them something they can go back and do immediately, and do successfully, and tell them where to find more training material when they are ready to push the boundaries on what they know.

Classroom training makes good sense when you have dense concentrations of people at particular locations.

Classroom training makes a lot of sense when you have concentrations of people at particular locations. If people are spread out over many locations, then web-based training would be more relevant and cost effective.

Strategy 2.2 Web-Based Training

Web-based training involves delivering training material over the web. In practical terms, this means the training materials are generally “stored” on a web server somewhere, and can be accessed by authorized people from the web browser on their computer (this could be a recorded web seminar, or an e-learning course). However, web-based training can also be conducted “live” with a person presenting to a group of attendees.

Web-based training can be used in the following ways:

- *Introducing the New Technology.* An initial webinar to introduce the new collaboration technology to a large group of people can be an effective replacement for classroom training. The attendees hear what’s going on, and receive training on the key capabilities. The webinar is recorded and made available for subsequent viewing by people who couldn’t attend the live event.
- *Training by Feature.* Developing just-in-time, at-your-desk, training videos on how to use particular features of the new technology. For example, organizations using SharePoint should have a training video on the document management features in a SharePoint document library. It’s Fred’s first time using SharePoint for check-in and check-out, and as a result he can view a 6-minute recorded video presentation of the steps involved.
- *Training by Business Process.* Developing web-based training materials to demonstrate how a core business process is going to be done from now on. For example, gaining approval for new suppliers was previously done by sending emails and documents around, but with the recent purchase of Lotus Quickr, the process will be managed out of Quickr places. A training presentation can be offered to people when they start using the new process in Lotus Quickr.
- *Training by Collaboration Scenario.* Co-authoring of documents by multiple people is a common collaboration scenario in many firms. This used to be done by exchanging emails and attachments. With the recent purchase of PleaseReview, all co-authoring is going to take place through this medium—including the initial feedback cycle where reviewers don’t get to see the comments of others (while still contributing to the master copy of the document), and subsequent feedback cycles where comments are open to everyone. Web-based training materials describe how the new process works.

Web-based training involves delivering training material over the web to a person’s web browser. No travel is required.

Web-based training has high applicability during Stage 2, and as part of your ongoing strategy for embedding the ideas in your organization. In comparison to classroom training, web-based training is less expensive, always available, and doesn’t require travel.

Strategy 2.3 Pages on the Intranet

The Pages on the Intranet strategy involves publishing user-oriented help information to a specified location on the corporate Intranet. When people need to know how to perform a particular task, or use a particular function of the new collaboration technology, they visit the help pages. The help pages contain clear instructions on how to perform the steps involved in the task or function, meaning a user can quickly get on with the task or function without having to interrupt a work colleague.

To use the strategy, write help pages on the tasks or functions people will be doing regularly. The task-focused pages explain how to carry out one of the tasks in a business process—perhaps it's how to set up an idea creation space for an upcoming business planning event, how to start a review of the next press release with input from the external marketing consultancy firm, or how to create a collaboration space for a new team project in the Product Development Group. Task-focused pages demonstrate a function of the collaboration technology within the context of a common business process.

The function-focused pages talk about the basic capabilities of the collaboration technology, but do not discuss how those capabilities can be used in a business process. For example:

- Team projects can be run in a collaboration space. The page on the intranet would describe what a collaboration space was, and note which tools could be used inside a collaboration space (document sharing, discussion forum, risks and issues register, for example).
- Blogs can be used to share updates with team members and the wider organization. The page would talk about what a blog is, how people get notified, and include links to key internal and external blogs as exemplars.
- Document reviews finish when the lead author closes the review cycle and works through the master document to approve or reject proposed changes. The page on the intranet would talk about how to approve or reject changes.

The help pages contain clear instructions on how to perform the steps involved in the task or function.

The Pages on the Intranet strategy has wide applicability for user adoption, but it has a particular role to play when Cultivating Basic Concepts. Classroom training and web seminars can not cover all the required material, and even if they could, people would be unable to retain it. Thus Pages on the Intranet can be used for follow-on descriptive material that will both reinforce the ideas taught through the other strategies, as well as extending the learning beyond what either of those modes can do. Trainers in both the classroom and remote situations should make it part of their role to point people to the pages on the Intranet that will help them once they are back in their own work roles.

Examples and Case Studies

Here are some examples of how different organizations have approached the cultivating basic concepts stage of user adoption.

- A global biotech firm focused their adoption program for SharePoint on site owners, who were seen to be people of influence for particular teams and groups. The first two parts of their adoption approach fitted within the cultivating basic concepts stage. The central IT Business team wrote a series of wiki pages about the basic concepts in SharePoint sites (the Pages on the Intranet strategy). This was followed by two half-day onsite training sessions—held back-to-back in various offices around the world—where these basic concepts were discussed along with how to apply them for particular teams and groups (the Classroom Training strategy). Once these training sessions had been completed, further engagement was based on an expression of interest from site owners to learn more. This was provided remotely by the IT Business team instead of traveling to the different offices a second time.
- The managers at a professional services firm declared that no training would be needed with the roll-out of a new collaboration technology. They felt the staff would be able to embrace the new way of working without any training. When the new technology was made available, the internal collaboration manager discovered that the staff did need training—they didn't know what to do. In response he used the Pages on the Intranet strategy to rapidly publish help documentation on the key activities, such as uploading documents and writing blog posts.
- A government department discovered two keys to making training work. The first was to call the initial sessions "Introductions," rather than "Basics." Staff didn't want to attend a session on the basics. The second was to tailor the material to specific roles, so staff learnt only what they needed to get going in their work.

Although the managers said no training would be required, when the new technology was made available the internal collaboration manager discovered that staff didn't know what to do.

In closing, remember that people need the capability to absorb the ideas and put them to use in their work. If too much information is given at once, people won't be able to absorb what they are hearing. You can use the complementary nature of the three strategies to overcome this challenge. For example, start with a two-hour classroom training session, or a 45-minute web-based training session, and then point the participants to pre-recorded online training materials or help pages on the intranet. They get the initial learning kick-start, and know where to go for more depth or help in the days to come.

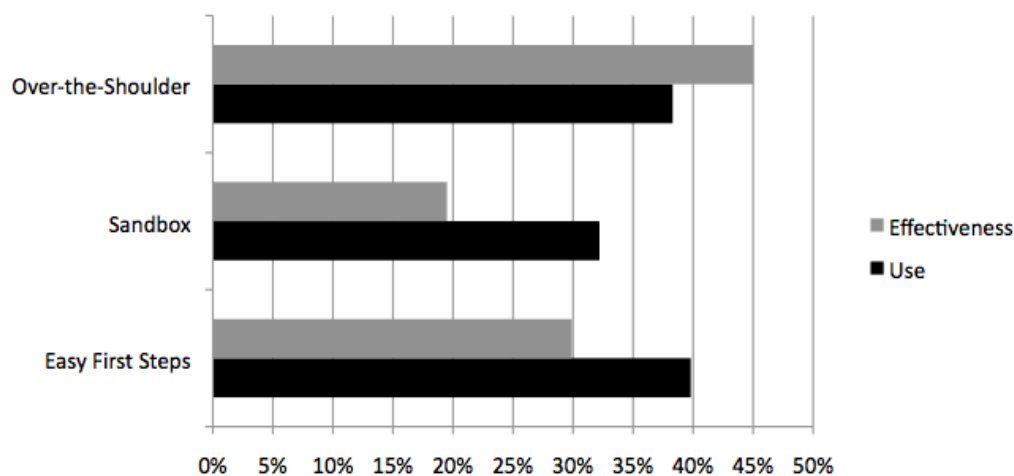
Stage 3. Enlivening Applicability

In Stage 3, the intent shifts from explaining the basic concepts to bringing the applicability of the new approach to life. During this stage, the applicability of the new technology is explored within the context of a particular team or group. Continuing the Yammer example from Stage 2, a “Facilitated Group Re-imagining” session could be set up with a group to explore how they currently keep other people up-to-date with what they’re working on, combined with an idea generation session about how Yammer could enable them to do so in a different way (and the benefits which could accrue).

The two previous stages have laid a vital foundation for the activities you will do in Stage 3. In order to explore the applicability of the new technology, people need to share some common language before an effective discussion can take place. The Stage 1 activities gift some of this, albeit at a high-level, and the Stage 2 activities complement the high-level overview with a grounding in the basic concepts of the new collaboration technology. The Enlivening Applicability stage brings both together for a particular group or team, by exploring how these make a difference for them.

The survey asked about three strategies for Enlivening Applicability.

Figure 7-7. Survey Results for Strategies for Enlivening Applicability



Three strategies for Enlivening Applicability were queried in the User Adoption Survey. Easy First Steps was the most commonly used strategy, but Over-the-Shoulder Watching was ranked as the most effective.

Let’s look at six major strategies for Enlivening Applicability..

Strategy 3.1 Facilitated Group Re-Imagining

The way a group or team carries out its work is frequently predicated on ways of working and technologies that are 10-15 years old. Even if the group has had new members join in the intervening years, they have been inducted into a particular way of working, and the overall work practice remains rooted in now outdated ideas. The work practice has not been revisited in light of new technology.

The Facilitated Group Re-Imagining strategy involves working with an intact group or team of people to discuss how they get work done today, and leading them through a process of discovery and discussion to understand how work could be done in the future with new collaboration technology capabilities. It's important this process is done with a group or team, rather than an individual, because the collaborative nature of the new technology means that multiple people have to change their work practice at the same time in order for the new technology to have an impact.

Facilitated group re-imagining leads people through a process of discovery and discussion to understand how work could be done with new collaboration technology capabilities.

Using this strategy involves the following steps:

1. *Understand the main work activities of the group.* Whether through structured focus groups, more free-range group discussions, facilitated workshops, or any other mechanism that gets the same outcome, develop an understanding of what activities the group does on a regular basis.
2. *Demonstrate alternative ways of doing the work.* In understanding how the work is done, look for the particular technologies currently being used. Once you can see what's happening, look for opportunities to achieve the same outcome with the new collaboration technology. Ideally, you will be able to demonstrate the different alternatives, and compare and contrast these.
3. *Do small experiments to explore fit.* Working with the group, set up small experiments to try out a new way of doing things. Perhaps it's one document that is co-authored using a different approach and technology. Perhaps it's one key event scheduled using new tools. Perhaps it's the tracking of risks and issues for one project. Identify particular people in the group willing to try the new way.

Let's be clear about how to be effective with this strategy. People's understanding is constrained by what they know, what they have experienced, or what they have heard from others. This extends to how they can envision doing their work—if they don't have an awareness of what could be, it's hard for them to state that they want it. Thus the strategy plays two roles: probing for understanding about today's work style, and educating the group on what's possible using new technology.

Strategy 3.2 Over-the-Shoulder Watching

Over-the-shoulder watching provides a way to see how an individual is working today, and to encourage them to explore new collaboration technology capabilities to do things in better and more efficient ways, to greatly increase effectiveness, or to overcome current pain points. By becoming immersed in someone's real work world, you are able to see what they are doing, and can tailor your advice and direction in appropriate ways. Doing over-the-shoulder watching requires a delicate balance of observing how they work and directing them to work in new ways. It's one form of coaching.

The Over-the-Shoulder Watching strategy involves a combination of two things:

1. The ability to watch someone at their work, and observe what they are doing. When watching them—sitting in their office ideally—you are looking out for the common activities they do on a regular basis, and in particular, the activities they do in conjunction with other people.
2. The permission to interrupt the person during the time you are observing their work, so you can ask for clarification on what you are observing. This will assist you in developing a deeper understanding of why they are doing particular things.

Doing over-the-shoulder watching requires a delicate balance of observing how people work and directing them to work in new ways.

Finally, note that an outsider may be required to do this work. Someone too closely tied to the way work is done today—the workarounds, the excuses, the established way of doing things—will miss things an outsider will pick up quickly.

The Over-the-Shoulder Watching strategy can be used for many types of projects, is very effective, but is very expensive! There are times, though, when it's worth paying the price:

- *When you are trying to understand the group.* An investment in over-the-shoulder watching provides a clear sense of the type of work being done in the group.
- *With opinion leaders within a team or group.* Working with opinion leaders to understand their work and give coaching may result in them taking the message to the rest of the team or group. It establishes credibility within the team.
- *With people who are hard to convince.* Personal attention and coaching may be the tip-them-over-the-edge approach that helps people who have stood against the changes to get on board. While doing over-the-shoulder watching and coaching, be sure to connect your coaching about their work with the wider organization.

In the survey, over-the-shoulder watching was the most effective user adoption strategy.

Strategy 3.3 Embedded Champion

The Embedded Champion strategy involves giving extra training and coaching to certain people who work in selected groups and teams across the business. The intent is to increase their capabilities so they have a greater depth of understanding about how to use the new collaboration technology within the context of business processes, as well as how to advocate within their group for that use. It's a bit like the executive support and sponsorship strategy, but instead of being messages and observations from the executives, it's from "Jim who sits over there in that cubicle."

Here are some ways to use the embedded champion strategy:

- *Find the opinion leaders.* Recruit energetic champions who are willing to take a stand and drive adoption of a particular use case. In your own work with the new technology, you will come across particular people who "get it" and start agitating for wider use.
- *Convert key users into champions.* Find key users in certain groups or teams and give them special coaching to become champions. Perhaps this is the person who is always calling you and asking for help in solving a problem. Or they're the person who asks all the questions in the workshops. When you find them, give them what they need to improve the performance of their group or team.
- *Provide extra training and assistance.* Local champions need a deeper level of awareness about the new technology and how it can be used effectively. Provide extra training and assistance to them—quickly share new exemplar stories with them, invite them to any onsite or online training sessions you are running, and get them involved in an online community of like-minded people. In the latter, the group will be able to share success stories and provide support to each other.
- *Share the greater vision.* Talk to the local embedded champions about the greater vision. Don't make it just about improving work practice; make it about rewiring the way the organization collaborates so it can serve its customers better. Extrapolate from immediate concerns to final outcomes.

Giving extra training and coaching to certain people who work in selected groups and teams, so they can champion the use and value of the new approach.

This strategy works for three reasons. First, the person is an ever-present reminder of the possibilities of the new technology, what's been talked about, and what's been proposed as a way forward. Second, the person is alive and present, and will talk back to doubters—quite unlike Pages on the Intranet or a recorded webinar. Finally, they will be an active voice for accountability, reminding their fellow team members that work is being done in a new way.

Strategy 3.4 Sandbox for Experimentation

A collaboration technology sandbox provides a place where people can try out the different tools and features of a new collaboration technology, in a safe environment. The technology is provided to “play with,” and is separate from the main production environment. What happens in the sandbox doesn’t cross over to the production system, except for special cases.

A sandbox provides a way to “play with” the new technology without breaking the production environment.

For example, your organization has decided to use Atlassian Confluence, an enterprise wiki. There are a whole raft of Real-to-Life Scenarios that can be developed—around co-creation of documents, drafting of presentations, planning upcoming projects, and so on—but the decision is made to see how else people could use Confluence. In other words, the collaboration team wants to create some space for local ideas to percolate and find their way into Confluence. So the team does two things:

1. It creates a production environment for Confluence, where all of the current business things will happen. It’s accessible at confluence.mycompany.com.
2. It creates a separate sandbox environment for Confluence, where testing can take place. No current business projects or activities take place here. It’s the place to try things out, not to get work done. It’s accessible at sandbox.mycompany.com.

People get an invitation to both environments. Soon work starts to happen on the production environment, while testing of ideas starts to happen in the sandbox. In order to set clear expectations, a few simple guidelines are posted in a prominent location in the sandbox. People are reminded via visual cues that this is not for critical business projects, that it’s a safe place to try things out, and that there is a 30-day lifespan for wiki pages.

Over the subsequent weeks, a group in marketing uses the sandbox to brainstorm a new campaign, a product development team shifts from tracking beta customers in Excel to a test Confluence page, and the Executive Assistants have shifted their email discussions into Confluence. All three groups have experienced the benefits of working with a wiki, and now want to make the changes permanent by shifting into the production environment.

The Sandbox for Experimentation strategy is most appropriate when the technology is a broad-based platform that could be used for many different activities. As a result, experimentation is needed to explore where and how the different options could come together for a certain team or group.

Strategy 3.5 Easy First Steps

New systems appear overwhelming to new users, even after they understand the basic concepts. Thus you need to make the first steps into the new system as easy as possible. This strategy makes a conscious decision to downplay all the possibilities of a new system —“It can do this,” “It can do that,” “It can also do this other thing!”—and instead lay out four to seven must-do activities. The strategy breaks down the perceived barriers to taking that first step.

The strategy is a conscious decision to downplay all the possibilities of a new system, and focus on four to seven must-do activities.

Here’s how to use the strategy, with IBM Connections as an example. Connections offers capabilities that can be used across a broad variety of collaboration scenarios, but this breadth can be intimidating. Following the Easy First Steps strategy would mean that a new user—Victoria—follows a narrow range of instructions on how to:

- Upload a recent picture into her Profile, if one hasn’t been automatically loaded.
- Write a few lines in her Profile about the focus of her work, and if appropriate, her non-work life.
- Invite a colleague to join her in Connections.
- Use Search to discover and join a community in Connections that holds professional interest.
- Contribute a web page to the shared bookmarking portion of Connections, and add descriptive tags so others can find the page easier.

These Easy First Steps provide the initial pull for Victoria to start using Connections, give her some real-world exposure to the different capabilities, and enable her to benefit quickly from what other people are already doing in Connections.

The Easy First Steps strategy works because it breaks the conceptualization of the system as something “out there and unknowable and so wildly complex that I’m not going to even try” into a set of defined, closed-ended activities that someone can do, and clearly see they have done. By following the easy first steps, the person gains a sense of accomplishment —“I did it!” They may also gain a boost in confidence—“Perhaps I can use this new system after all.” This lays an essential foundation for wider exploration about how the new technology can be used within the context of group and team activities.

Strategy 3.6 Build It And They Will Come

The Build It And They Will Come strategy for new collaboration technology involves a light-handed approach. The desire is for grassroots adoption and advocacy of the new technology, fueled not by directives or encouragement from IT but rather from loud and persistent advocacy from people in the business.

There are three major prerequisites to using the strategy.

1. *Reputation of Greatness.* You can use it to encourage user adoption, but you must have a reputation within the business of being amazing. This reputation is built over time from your previous feats.
2. *Rabid Fan Base.* You can use it to encourage user adoption if you have created a set of rabid fans within your organization who will actively embrace what you put out. They will champion the cause, advocate for its use, and lead the charge against the ingrained ways of doing things and the people opposed to the change.
3. *Relevant Broadly Spread Conceptualization.* You can use it to encourage user adoption if your users have clear experience with a previous generation of the same product category, either within your organization or from previous employers or their private lives, and they are able to see a clear picture of where and how they could use it now.

The desire is for grassroots adoption and advocacy of the new technology, fueled by loud and persistent advocacy from people in the business, not from directives by IT.

Those are three fairly major prerequisites! Given that these conditions are not generally met, one of two things usually happens:

- Nothing! The new system is ignored. No one uses it, because they can't see the benefit or value. This is a massive failure.
- Everything! Everyone embraces it, but in different ways, with no oversight, resulting in overlapping and conflicting ways of using the new technology. The environment becomes a mess. This is also a massive failure.

If you meet the three prerequisites above, feel free to try the Build It And They Will Come strategy. If not, don't even think about it!

Examples and Case Studies

Here are three examples of how different organizations have approached the enlivening applicability stage of user adoption.

- In the mid-1990s, BP experimented with virtual teaming approaches and technology. Five projects were set up during the experimentation phase, and all but one of those projects receive coaching on how to make use of the new technology. The only project that failed to deliver business value was the one set up with no coaching. Reflecting on the experience, Don Cohen wrote: *“The problem was not that the group couldn’t make the technology work — it was fairly simple to operate. What they lacked was an understanding of why they should bother. Remarks from the team (“I don’t see how this fits in with my work.” “The people I want to talk to are not on the network.”) were similar to those made initially by other teams. In part because there was no one to help the group explore the value of the system and overcome their skepticism, their VT network declined and eventually fell silent.”*¹²
- The regional offices of a large global organization were implementing new capabilities for handling documents, and it was felt that there was no time for classroom training. They tried three alternative approaches: a written document, video training, and over-the-shoulder coaching. Users took four hours with the written document to understand what they had to do, two hours with video training, and only 10 minutes with over-the-shoulder coaching. Talk about differences in effectiveness!
- One firm uses the Facilitated Group Re-Imagining strategy with teams that have unique requirements. Sitting down with the team and discussing how work is done today provides a mechanism for beginning to understand the current approach, and to highlight common pains and needs. As these are identified, new possibilities for working together are explored.

Users took four hours with the written document to understand what they had to do, two hours with video training, and only 10 minutes with over-the-shoulder coaching.

In closing, if you are still at an early place in your adoption efforts, try some of these different strategies. Some will work better than others in your organization.

Stage 4. Making It Real

The final stage is about making the new collaboration technology real and relevant to people and groups. While the previous three stages have discussed what could be, stage 4 is where it actually happens. For a group that decides to use Yammer, this is the stage where alternative ways of keeping other people up-to-date are physically removed (“Zero Other Options”) or socially frowned on (“Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns”).

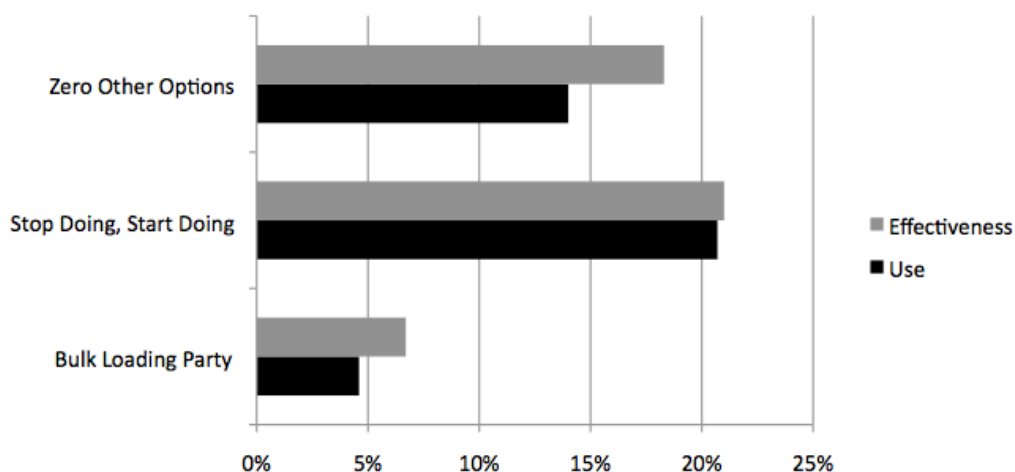
How do people know that the new collaboration technology and approach is “real”?
Answer: The new approach has become the “new standard” way of doing things. In practice, this means:

- Business gets done in the new system.
- Alternative systems are removed.
- Other people expect you to use it.
- The new system becomes invisible. It’s the “new now” way of working.
- The new system is integrated with other systems.

The new approach becomes the “new standard” way of doing things—it’s real.

The survey asked about three strategies for Making It Real. Let’s look at three strategies in more depth, along with one other major strategy.

Figure 7-8. Survey Results for Strategies for Making It Real



Three strategies for Making It Real were queried in the User Adoption Survey. Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns was the most common, and the most effective. All three strategies were rated more effective than usage would suggest.

Strategy 4.1 Zero Other Options

The Zero Other Options strategy requires the removal of other options for collaboration. It's SharePoint, or nothing. The plan is in Central Desktop, or it doesn't exist. Documents are reviewed via PleaseReview, or they don't get reviewed. This means that people have one of two choices regarding the new system—use it and get on with work, or don't and fall behind. It's not a matter of being unkind. It's a matter of "this is how we work now."

Use the Zero Other Options strategy by turning off, making inaccessible, or marking as read-only previous systems through which collaborative work was done. The expectation is that all work is now to be done within the new system, and under no circumstances is the old system to be used for current work. Note how the technology decision and social expectations come together in the following examples:

- Key discussion points and decisions from meetings are published on the Socialtext wiki, and people are expected to have an RSS alert set up to get them. When the project manager is asked to email the meeting minutes directly, they reply, "It's in the wiki; go and get it from there."
- Once a group has migrated their current documents off the file server into Lotus Quickr, their access rights to the file server are changed. They retain the right to read and delete documents off the file server, but they can't create or save new documents to the file server.
- Updates on projects that are broadcast by email receive replies from multiple people saying "Please post this to the team blog."

Don't use the Zero Other Options strategy at the start of the user adoption process! It's too heavy-handed, and will only earn you dislike, active efforts to undermine what you are doing, and an executive rebuff to go with it! An attendee at one of my public seminars described their use of the strategy in this way:

Our engagement approach is to work with a specific group within our organization for three months. We learn about their work, and explore ways of improving their work through the new collaboration technology. During the initial two months we develop a joint understanding of where and how improvements can be introduced, and we build a solution to address their requirements. It is agreed at the beginning of the process, however, that at the three-month mark, they will no longer be able to use their current file shares. We turn them off at the end of our engagement with them.

The Zero Other Options strategy works because it makes the new system the place where work is done. Alternative, historic systems are no longer available for current work, nor are they treated as equally valid places to get work done. It's the new system, or nothing. More importantly, at a social level, people see their colleagues getting work done in the new system, and if they want to get their work done, they will need to as well.

Strategy 4.2 Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns

Patterns are frequently repeated collaborative activities undertaken within a particular group or team. The pattern could be how projects are managed (assigning tasks on a whiteboard in a meeting room), how documents are collaboratively authored (a Word document sent around by email), or how people are kept up-to-date with what's going on (frequent email blasts).

The Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns strategy involves discovering the nature of the collaborative patterns being used by an intact team or group, and defining what has to stop, and what has to start in the pattern. The intent is that instead of talking at an abstract level about “collaborating more” or “building better communities of practice,” the language is broken down into specific activities that people perform today and an agreement is reached about how to perform these same activities in the new system. The purpose of the strategy isn't normative—to force a team or group to use a particular pattern if they have no need for it—but rather to be directive if they are using the pattern.

Let's consider a team within an organization. They are in the product development department, and are working on an upcoming and as-yet-not-disclosed new product. The organization is in the high-tech sector, so it's a physical product that will be shipped to multiple locations around the world on release, so it can be stocked in both company-owned and third party retail stores.

Rather than talking at an abstract level about “collaborating more,” the language is broken down into specific activities that people perform today and an agreement is reached about how to perform these same activities in the new system.

The product development team is geographically distributed, but not too widely spread, so they have three to four hours a day when everyone is in their respective offices during the same slice of time. Until now they have been using a collaborative workspace service to coordinate their work, but are finding it too static and “dead” to enable them to keep up with what's going on. The decision is made to use Yammer as the new cornerstone of working together.

To make Yammer real within the group, it was decided to use the Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns strategy. With the help of the business analyst, the group has come to an agreement about the key collaborative patterns it embraces today, and how these patterns will be done using Yammer. The analysis and decisions are shown in Figure 7-9.

To support the team in using the new patterns, five two-minute videos were recorded and published on the intranet. Each video featured a team member starting down the path of

the Stop Doing pattern, and then had them switching to the Start Doing pattern. To give everyone access to the videos, each was the subject of a Yammer post, with the hashtag #newpatterns. Everyone in the group was encouraged to subscribe to the #newpatterns hashtag, so they could easily find the videos whenever they needed a reminder about how to enact their team's common patterns in Yammer.

Figure 7-9. Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns in Yammer

Pattern	Stop Doing	Start Doing
Finding expertise	Search profiles in the team workspace	Search Yammer for key phrases
Advising about new content	Post into team workspace; leave people to find out via alerts	Quick post on Yammer, with link to document or content
Requesting feedback on ideas	New discussion thread in workspace	New discussion with a particular hashtag
Sharing web links	Link and classification in team workspace	Link and hashtag shared via Yammer
Brainstorming solutions	Discussion thread in workspace	Brainstorm using a particular hashtag

After defining the key patterns used for collaborating with others today, the product development team decided how they were going to transition those patterns into Yammer.

When the Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns strategy is used with a particular group or team, the strategy works because it helps with resetting everyone's expectations about how the group's work will get done. Since everyone has been involved in setting the new ways to perform tasks, tentative starts turn into better ways of collaborating using the new tools. More than that, it gives everyone a new level at which to hold others accountable—in a nice way of course! For example, when Justin sees Lauren start a new discussion in the team workspace, he can remind her that new discussions are now being started in Yammer. Perhaps he even suggests a hashtag for it. Justin's polite pushback and coaching reminds Lauren of the stop doing, start doing pattern.

Don't "do" the Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns strategy to a group—do it with them.

The main point here is not to "do" the Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns strategy to a group or team, but to facilitate the process of helping them see the patterns they are using today, and guiding them to understand the options they have for doing things differently with the new tools.

Strategy 4.3 Bulk Loading Party

How do you get the team or group to actually make the transition from the old way of doing work to the new way? One gravitational pull to overcome is the existence of their current documentation and project plans in the “old system.” If it stays there, it will keep pulling them back into the “old system.” Thus the challenge is how to get enough material into the system to make it valuable.

A bulk loading party brings a group of users together for three to four days to transfer and migrate as much information as possible from the old system (and way of doing things) into the new system (and way of

The challenge is how to get enough material into the system to make it valuable.

doing things). The benefit of this strategy is that people gain an in-depth understanding of how to use the new system, and they don’t have to straddle two systems and approaches at once. For example, organizational updates will now be done on a new blog, thereby replacing distribution by email. The last 12 months worth of email updates are posted into the blog, denoting the original date of distribution, so the new blog isn’t blank and empty.

Here’s how to use the Bulk Loading Party strategy with a particular group:

1. Set a date and confirm a location. You’ll need a room big enough to hold everyone in the group, and ideally one or two data projectors at the front of the room. If you can use an existing training room, people won’t have to bring their own laptops.
2. Support distributed group members. If the group includes remote group members, provide a way for them to be involved.
3. Set the vision for the day or days. For example, it could be the migration of all documents and discussion threads from the old system into the new system.
4. Review the key steps involved in moving documents and data from the old system to the new one. Do a quick demonstration.
5. Provide shortcuts to streamline the actions people have to undertake when migrating documents and data.
6. Be available throughout the day for coaching and direction.
7. Do fun stuff. Have food available—nibbles, chocolate fish, muffins, carrot sticks—whatever would be appropriate. Set up friendly competitions. Have lunch sitting on the floor. Make the day memorable by doing out-of-the-ordinary activities.

The strategy works best as a particular team or group starts using the new system. It allows them to migrate their documents and ways of thinking to the new approach.

Strategy 4.4 Internal User Group

A “user group” is a self-organizing or lightly-organized collection of individuals who share a common usage of a particular thing. It is often used in the context of computer software—for example, the local Atlassian Confluence User Group, the SharePoint User Group, or the Yammer User Group. Such user groups provide ongoing education in the use of the particular technology, with a special focus on its application to business processes and challenges. An internal user group builds off the same idea and results in the creation of such a group inside your organization. Participation is voluntary, and the group has a focus on continuing education.

An Internal User Group spreads good ideas on how the new collaboration technology can be used appropriately within your organization.

Use the Internal User Group strategy to spread good ideas on the intersection between the new collaboration technology and its appropriate usage within your organization. In your travels between different groups and teams, you will come across people doing interesting things. They have applied the collaboration technology in a special way. They have explored some advanced concepts and found a particular benefit from doing so. They faced a difficult challenge, and used the new technology in a certain way to resolve it. Topics of this nature could be shared more broadly across the organization, so other people learn from what their peers and colleagues are doing.

There are two general ways of establishing an internal user group:

1. *Center it on events.* Hold a user group meeting of an hour or so once a month at which someone talks about what they are doing. The discussion after the presentation is usually limited to the people who attended the meeting. The event approach works best when people are co-located and attend regularly.
2. *Center it on sharing.* Point-in-time events are deemphasized in favor of continuous sharing and interaction. Someone has a story to tell—and they tell it. Others can read or listen to the story, comment on it, and discuss their reaction and further ideas. This is a better approach when staff are geographically distributed.

User groups need a moderator. Somebody has to take responsibility in the early days for inviting people to talk about what they’re doing, organizing the events, taking an active part in the discussions, reaching out to others and asking them to share their feedback on ideas, and so on. The moderator’s work is all part of making the internal user group real.

The Internal User Group strategy can be used when you have a sufficient number of people in your organization, enough to provide a diversity of experiences and new ideas to stimulate creative thinking and a willingness to push the boundaries.

Examples and Case Studies

Here are some examples of how different organizations have approached the making it real stage of user adoption.

- A research firm had been using SharePoint for a number of years, and had good usage across many teams and groups. One team, however, was very reluctant to get involved, but this changed quickly when a new team leader was introduced. To help the team rapidly embrace the new system, a bulk loading party was held over a one-day period. The team members got together in a training room and migrated the current documents off their file share into a new SharePoint site—there was some coaching provided at the beginning of the day, and a fun atmosphere was maintained through food, drink, and a light competitive spirit. By the end of the day they had migrated almost everything they needed to start using the new system, and what hadn't been migrated during the day was shifted across pretty quickly in the days that followed. As a consequence of the bulk loading party and subsequent usage of the system, the team transformed from being one of the most reticent to being on the vanguard of wider applicability across the firm.
- The IT group at a government agency made use of the Zero Other Options strategy in their work. At the beginning of a six-week adoption program with a specific team, the team would be told that the old system would be taken off-line at the conclusion of the six-weeks. During the six-week adoption program, the IT group worked with the target team—exploring opportunities, developing new ways of working, and providing training and support. When they left at the end of the six weeks, the old system was turned off.

During the six-week adoption program, the IT group worked with the target team—exploring opportunities, developing new ways of working, and providing training and support. When they left, the old system was turned off.
- A global software firm had been using a particular collaboration technology for a number of years. The early approaches to adoption centered on exemplar stories and real-to-life scenarios, followed by a few years focused on various training efforts and the development of local champions. As the technology became more and more ingrained in the way the firm worked, an internal user group was established to provide a forum for business users to discuss how they were using the technology to achieve their goals.

These three examples illustrate the big point of Stage 4: the new system has become the “new now” way of working. It can't retain its new status forever.

Strategies for User Adoption: Closing Comments

Now we are at the end of Stage 4, does this mean we are finished? Unfortunately, no! You have worked with one or two groups, and you need to keep going. For example:

- *Look out for new Exemplar Stories.* Real stories from your organization about how other groups and teams are getting value from the new collaboration technology are very effective in getting new teams onboard. Capture the stories while you can! In addition, tell your executive supporters about what's happening, so they feel comfortable about the active role they are taking in advocating for the continued use of the new system.
- *Work with new teams.* When new teams are formed to take on new projects or as part of an organizational restructuring, work with them to explore how the new collaboration technology can be made real for them. Perhaps there are some people in the new team who have had previous experience in using the new technology. If they have had a positive experience, use their experience to the benefit of the new team.
- *Induct new staff.* When new staff join your organization, provide induction training on the new collaboration technology. Since they are coming into an established way of doing things, your efforts should focus on helping them understand how your organization gets work done.

The purpose of profiling all these strategies wasn't to suggest you should do them all. Rather, it was to provide a practical grounding across a range of potential strategies so you can choose strategies that are appropriate to the teams and groups in your organization.

Finally, remember that the purpose of profiling so many strategies wasn't to suggest you should do them all. The purpose was to provide a practical grounding across a range of potential strategies so you can choose strategies that are appropriate to the teams and groups in your organization.

Creating Your User Adoption Approach

With the solid grounding on user adoption from this chapter, let's conclude our discussion by looking at how to create a user adoption approach at your organization. This section talks about three tools you can use.

Tool 1. The User Adoption Jigsaw

I want you to visualize a jigsaw. It's not a complex jigsaw—it's actually a very basic jigsaw with just four pieces laid out in a row. The four pieces correspond to the four stages in the user adoption model.

Figure 7-10. User Adoption Jigsaw



The User Adoption Jigsaw provides an intuitive way to plan your User Adoption Approach. Each piece corresponds with one stage in the User Adoption model.

Here's the big idea. For each stage of the model, make one main strategy your heavyweight. For example, you might choose the following strategies for each of the four stages of the model:

- *For Stage 1 (Winning Attention), Exemplar Stories.* Some people in your organization have already been using the new collaboration technology, and have some great success stories to share. Exemplar Stories is your Stage 1 heavyweight strategy.
- *For Stage 2 (Cultivating Basic Concepts), Web-Based Training.* You work in a large organization, and are blessed to have great content creators on staff who can write excellent content and prepare screen movies about the new collaboration

technology for delivery over the web. Also, you want to keep your budget for face-to-face engagements in the third stage.

- *For Stage 3 (Enlivening Applicability), Facilitated Group Re-imagining.* You have a pretty good relationship with various groups in the business, and have already fielded some enquiries about group discussions and planning.
- *For Stage 4 (Making It Real), Zero Other Options.* Once you have worked through how a particular group can revamp its way of working, you will move to restrict access to previous tools that enabled the previous way of working.

What you have before you is now a draft first edition of your user adoption approach. You have selected a main strategy for each stage of the model, taking into consideration the wider factors in your organization (for

example, culture, budget, and geography), the directions in this chapter about the relative effectiveness of each strategy, and financial considerations for implementation. Different strategies have different cost profiles—that should be very clear!

The User Adoption Jigsaw helps you to create a first edition of your user adoption approach.

The reason for taking the “one main strategy for each stage” approach is to give you a focusing device. You don’t want to become a headless chicken running here and there with no forethought! Make a deliberate choice about a main strategy for each stage, and then run with it. If it isn’t working, by all means go back and re-evaluate why you chose the strategy you did. Perhaps the Web-Based Training in Stage 2 isn’t as effective as you thought it would be. Take the feedback from your early attempts, and see if the strategy can be saved. Perhaps it’s a matter of wording the text differently. Perhaps it’s about using better screen recordings.

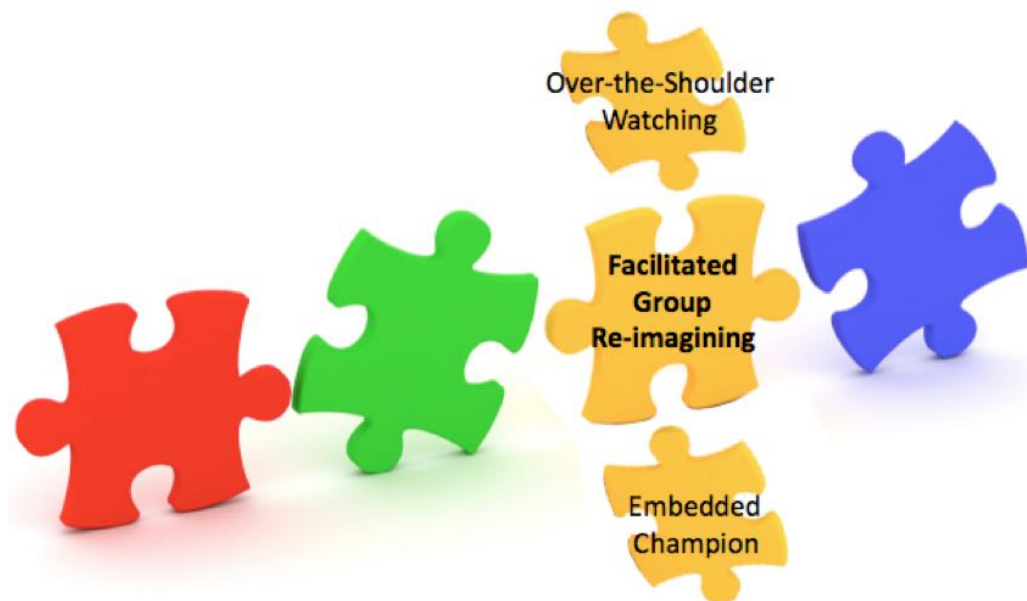
Adding More Pieces to the Jigsaw

It’s the user adoption “jigsaw” for another reason—it can be extended. For example, you may discover that one strategy is insufficient to achieve the intent of a particular stage—some classroom training is actually required in Stage 2, and Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns need to be added to Stage 4. You can do it—there is no problem with adding more! The jigsaw allows you to build up or down on a particular main strategy. Just don’t do too many strategies and thus lose your ability to focus resources and effort on the heavyweights.

Let’s take an example. Gillian is in charge of user adoption for IBM Connections at her firm—all of the pre-work has been done to develop a business vision for where and how IBM Connections will add value to the firm. It has been installed by the IT department, and some early Exemplar Stories have been captured. In planning her approach, though, Gillian is concerned that the Facilitated Group Re-Imagining strategy won’t be sufficient in Stage 3

to bring the changes she is hoping for. So Gillian adds two strategies to her jigsaw (see Figure 7-11). The Over-the-Shoulder Watching strategy is added so she can gain a better sense of the type of work people do, in advance of the workshops. By doing this, Gillian is hoping that during her over-the-shoulder watching sessions, she will be able to ask pertinent questions about the way work is done today, and explore the openness of specific team members to using IBM Connections as part of the new way of doing things.

Figure 7-11. Extending Stage 3 of the Jigsaw



The User Adoption Jigsaw can be extended up or down to add complementary strategies to the main strategy for an appropriate stage. Just don't try and add everything!

Gillian also adds the Embedded Champion strategy. She knows that her group does not have sufficient resources to be all things to all people, so part of her challenge is to cultivate a network of supportive people across the organization. The embedded champion strategy works well for this, and Gillian makes a note to look out for key people in each group to approach about receiving special training and joining the champions community she has set up in IBM Connections. If she can't find anyone in a particular group, her back up plan is to ask for a volunteer.

It Takes Time to Complete the Jigsaw

Selecting the jigsaw pieces for your User Adoption Approach may take days or weeks to finalize, but putting the jigsaw into practice across your organization will take months or years. The timeframe hinges on two main factors: the magnitude of the change that's being introduced, and the size of your organization. Let's unpack these thoughts.

Selecting the pieces—the act of selection—could be done within a minute if you were so inclined. Draw a circle on your desk, throw all the jigsaw pieces into the air, and whatever lands inside the circle is your approach. It definitely has the benefit of speed, but is unlikely to be effective!

You can select the jigsaw pieces quickly, but putting them into practice will take months or years.

Therefore, in light of a greater need for effectiveness, take your time in selecting the jigsaw pieces for each stage. Don't take forever, but equally don't do it using the "circle-throw-and-drop" approach. Expect the process of working out your approach to take days or weeks—reading, thinking, discussing with others, and so on.

The bigger timeframe—the months and years—is what's involved in implementing your User Adoption Approach across your entire organization. While you will start with a first edition, there will be mid-course corrections and feedback that can be embraced to enhance the effectiveness of your work—as a suggestion, go back and read the discussion in Chapter 5 ("Is the Process Linear?"). Thus for a new technology that fundamentally re-wires the way thousands of people work together, plan for upwards of 18-36 months work. For new technology requiring a smaller degree of change, or fewer people, plan for a 6-18 month timeframe.

The Danger of Dropping the Ball

A warning. The biggest danger on starting to implement your User Adoption Approach is to get all excited during Stage 1—signing up executives to support the initiative through words and actions, diligently searching out the Exemplar Stories from people across your organization, and crafting a few Real-to-Life Scenarios to help particular groups expand their thinking about "what's possible." You blow your trumpet loud and long over everything the new approach and technology will bring to your organization. Much appears to be happening. And then you get busy.

- People start calling for more information, and asking how they can get involved.
- Groups want facilitated workshops to help them understand the possibilities.
- Executives demand more evidence on the effectiveness of what's being proposed.

And you drop the ball. The momentum peters out. The jigsaw is put to one side, so you can focus on immediate concerns. While some things happen with a small number of groups, the wider impetus is lost and the benefits of the new technology and approach are limited to a small percentage of the organization. While there is no silver bullet to prevent this from happening, the next two tools can help minimize the risk.

Tool 2. Write Out Your User Adoption Approach

Less than a quarter of respondents to the User Adoption Strategies survey had written down their approach to user adoption! That is quite startling given the financial investment required to implement a new collaboration technology! When the respondents were asked about what they wished they had done differently, having a clearer strategy or plan was the number one reaction!

I wish we had started out with a strategy—what we have done has worked fairly well having just evolved naturally, but we are in a position now where managing the demand for new features and functionality is becoming a challenge. We are the victims of our own success I suppose!

Create a formal user adoption plan; offer more options for learning about SharePoint; most importantly, create an internal SharePoint users' group from the beginning.

I would have got more support from executives and planned a strategy. I still have time to work this out, but we need more resources both in staff and financial backing.

If we started again, I would double the funding and effort, rather than the training and communications coming haphazardly or informally. This would be about creating a more coherent message with a running theme that users could relate to and latch on to and follow. Try not to do too much at once, but keep the frequency and relevance of messages high.

There are three main benefits to having a written plan:

1. *It Makes You Think.* The process of writing down your thoughts shows you have thought through the user adoption challenge, and have developed an approach to dealing with it. Deliberate intent is required to write a plan.
2. *It Gives You Something to Share.* You have something to show to others, as a communication device, and as a tool to encourage shared thinking and dialogue. Given the breadth of use cases to which new collaboration technologies can be applied, this would be a good thing.
3. *It Involves Other People.* It demonstrates that more than one person is involved; it's not a lone ranger approach. As we explore next the dynamic around the role of influential people in the user adoption process, having more people involved upfront is a good thing.

By advocating that you write down your user adoption approach, I am not suggesting a long and wordy document that merely takes up shelf space. One page will do, especially for smaller organizations. The one page strategy should contain the written summary of what will happen during the user adoption process—the various strategies you will follow.

Tool 3. Appoint a User Adoption Analyst

One answer to counteract the risk of dropping the ball is to appoint a User Adoption Analyst to the project team. This person could be full-time for large projects, or someone whose user adoption responsibilities could complement their other activities. In order for the User Adoption Analyst's work to be effective, though, it is vital that they have some clout within the project to ensure user adoption challenges have been adequately planned and addressed. The User Adoption Analyst has formal responsibility on the Project Team to plan the User Adoption Approach, and ensure it is adequately implemented.

The User Adoption Analyst has formal responsibility on the Project Team to plan the User Adoption Approach, and ensure it is adequately implemented.

Let's explore the job description for the User Adoption Analyst.

- *Planning the Approach.* The analyst has lead responsibility for crafting the User Adoption Approach for the project.
- *Owning the User Adoption Approach.* The resulting approach is ultimately their responsibility to implement, in line with the work of the wider project team.
- *Advocating for the User.* It's the analyst's role to speak up for the user in project meetings, and constantly remind the other members of the team that the project's success is predicated on achieving good adoption. Driving home the message that "adoption is a process, not an event" will be key for the User Adoption Analyst.
- *Watching Out for Adoption Pitfalls.* When ideas proposed during project team meetings will have negative consequences for user adoption—new features that will be complex to use, late-course technology changes, or even dropping the user adoption piece all together—it's their formal responsibility to speak up and warn the other project team members of the dangers.
- *Keeping In Touch with Other User Adoption Analysts.* Organizations with many change programs under way will need multiple User Adoption Analysts—at least one on each major project. The people working in these roles will want to get together in-person or through collaboration technology to compare notes and share good ideas. Improving the adoption of new technology and ways of working across the organization can become an aspect of competitive advantage.

The role of User Adoption Analyst is a very clear way to make the user adoption challenge real to the organization. Having someone take responsibility for user adoption in major programs is a critical step forward to finally addressing the lack of adoption for collaboration technologies.

What To Do When Nothing Works

Perhaps you have started on your user adoption approach, and it's not going all that great! Consider the following comment from the User Adoption Survey:

Very little is working. The collaboration tool got in the way and people were reluctant to participate.

If this happens to you, it's time to shift into detective mode. Why did the tool "get in the way?" Interview the people who were involved, and explore the reasons why the tool was less than effective. Ask why they were reluctant to participate, and what would need to change for them to do so in the future. Don't leave it as a failure! Find out what was going on, and make plans for overcoming these problems in the next round.

Ask why they were reluctant to participate, and what would need to change for them to do so in the future. Don't leave it as a failure!

Another respondent to the survey wrote:

Nothing has yet worked well—we've tried classroom training and Pages on the intranet so far.

Classroom training and Pages on the Intranet are both from Stage 2 of the model, so in the situation of this respondent, perhaps nothing had been done to win people's attention first. Or, from the sound of it, nothing had been done afterwards to Enliven Applicability and Make It Real. There are strategies for both of these stages in this book—go back and work on your user adoption jigsaw!

Finally, a common observation is that younger people are more willing to embrace new ways of working than older people. That may be true in your particular context, but it's no excuse for writing off the older generation. Perhaps their push-back and lack of support has more to do with their reaction against the arrogant and rude younger people who have called them "out-of-date" and "so-last-year" whenever new approaches have been advocated. Or they haven't been treated with respect. Or they haven't had their learning and change needs adequately taken into consideration.

So, don't write off older people just because they are less inclined to jump quickly into the action with their full support. You'll need to win their attention and support—it may just take longer than younger people in the second wave. Note that there are some cases where the most active participants in new approaches to work are among the older generation—they see the value, they see a path for them to make a contribution, and they know how to use the technology. Due to their greater years of experience and their ability to coach and inspire, they can make a far greater contribution than many of the "younger" people in the same organization.

Summary

In this penultimate chapter of the core roadmap approach, we have focused on the user adoption challenge. User adoption is the process of encouraging people, teams, and groups to change the way they work, both in approach and in their use of specific technology. If nothing is done about adoption, then usually nothing happens—the initiative fails due to lack of interest. It is for this reason that intentional energy must be applied to the adoption process, and we have considered both a framework for user adoption and a number of strategies to guide our efforts to this end.

If nothing is done about adoption, then usually nothing happens—the initiative fails due to lack of interest.

For a more in-depth treatment of the user adoption challenge, see my other book, *User Adoption Strategies: Shifting Second Wave People to New Collaboration Technology*.

In the next and ultimate chapter of the roadmap approach, we look at the ongoing quest for increasing value from collaboration.

¹ Michael is the Vice-President, Professional Services and Customer Success at Socialtext (www.socialtext.com). This quote is drawn from the Socialtext white paper *Six Steps to Drive Social Software Adoption*, available at www.socialtext.com/products/wp_implementation.php.

² For more about *User Adoption Strategies*, see www.michaelsampson.net/useradoption.html. This chapter draws heavily on the book, and includes all of the major strategies presented in *User Adoption Strategies*. But while *User Adoption Strategies* offers 3-5 pages of discussion per chapter, this book limits each to only one page.

³ There are many data points about the poor adoption record of SharePoint, but the most recent one I've seen is from the Open Text/Global360 SharePoint survey from Fall 2011. The results pointed to user adoption being the #1 issue. See currents.michaelsampson.net/2011/09/sharepoint-useradoption.html.

⁴ Socialtext's white paper on user adoption is available for download at www.socialtext.com/products/wp_implementation.php. Registration is required. The paper proposes six steps to drive social software adoption, including (1) encourage a range of use cases, (2) recruit energetic champions, and (4) focus on repeated activities.

⁵ NewsGator's white paper on user adoption is available for download at www.newsgator.com/webinars/2009/roadmapsocialcomp.aspx. Registration is required. Like Socialtext's white paper, NewsGator's proposes six key steps within an adoption roadmap, including (1) identify business problems and goals, (2) define use cases to help solve business problems, and (5) identify obstacles to participation.

⁶ The UC View article on user adoption for IBM Connections can be accessed via www.michaelsampson.net/ucview.html. You have to be a subscriber to the UC View to access this.

⁷ With Business Objects no longer being a standalone vendor, the white paper isn't available directly anymore. If you want to track down the white paper, search for *Achieving User Adoption: How to Unlock the Full Value of a Business Intelligence Implementation*.

⁸ See Chapter 3 in *User Adoption Strategies* for a fuller treatment of these change models.

⁹ Susan Hanley, "A Change Will Do You Good: Lessons from Change Management for SharePoint Solution Architects," Network World, October 2009. See www.networkworld.com/community/node/43459. While Susan's example specifically mentions SharePoint, the strategy works more broadly and with other tools too.

¹⁰ Douglas MacMillan, "How Four Rookie CEOs Handled the Great Recession," BusinessWeek, February 18, 2010. See www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/10_09/b4168032766715.htm. My summary of the Molson Coors story in the article is at currents.michaelsampson.net/2010/03/ipdt-molsoncoors.html.

¹¹ To watch the video of Hexagon Wrench, see "Explaining Sharing and Communities Inside the Enterprise," at currents.michaelsampson.net/2011/11/dnv.html.

¹² See the discussion and link to Don's paper at "Benefit of Virtual Teams - the BP Experience (from mid-1990s)," June 2011, at currents.michaelsampson.net/2011/06/bp1990s.html.

Chapter 8.

Pursue Increasing Value

“If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.”

George Bernard Shaw

We have arrived at the last stage of the roadmap to success with collaboration at work: continuing the pursuit of value. Now that you have conquered the fundamentals, and the ball is rolling, the objective of this final stage is to keep things moving in the right direction. To tilt the field, as it were, to enable the attainment of greater success in the future. You have made a good start—now keep going.

In this chapter, you will:

- Establish the game plan for the next stage of your collaboration journey.
- Learn how to extend the value you have already achieved into new areas.
- Be reminded to keep looking for new approaches to improving value from collaboration at work.
- Continue with building a reputation of greatness in delivering business value.

The Pursuit of Value

Your pursuit of value started in the second stage of the roadmap journey—outlining the vision (Chapter 3)—which linked with the six core value opportunities of collaboration:

1. Improve process efficiency.
2. Increase process effectiveness.
3. Increase organizational effectiveness.
4. Encourage innovation.
5. Improve communication.
6. Deepen customer intimacy.

In selecting your initial vision, you took one or more of these value propositions, and made it the core focus of your work. Now flush with your initial success comes the need to keep going—to build on your success, to apply it more widely, and to deepen what you have been doing. This is the focus of the final stage of the roadmap journey—pursuing increasing value. Go back and look at the list of opportunities you drafted at the conclusion of Chapter 3; it's very likely that now is the right time to pursue some of those.

A Framework for Pursuing Increasing Value

Increasing value is achieved by taking the learnings, approaches, benefits and wins of your initial work, and applying them more broadly. The intent is to create an environment where pursuing value from collaboration becomes a standard part of day-to-day work. In computer speak, it becomes the new “operating system” of the organization.

There are four strategies for pursuing increasing value (see Figure 8-1):

1. *Keep focused on the human practices of collaboration.* Reinforce the perspective that collaboration is about people working together, and that particular people and business disciplines are needed to make collaboration work. Help everyone to keep this in focus and avoid becoming enamored by the technology.
2. *Work with new groups and spread the learning.* Lessons you have learnt with the initial groups can be spread to new groups, assuming they have similar needs.

The intent is to create an environment where pursuing value from collaboration becomes a standard part of day-to-day work.

Equally, new groups may now be more willing to entertain your ideas and embark on an engagement journey now you have proven the approach and value.

3. *Extend what you're doing into new processes.* Collaborative approaches to work that have proven themselves in particular processes can be applied to new areas. In the same way, thinking about new approaches to work that weren't green-lighted earlier in the journey can be re-opened for consideration.
4. *Learn about new opportunities and possibilities.* Other firms are on a collaboration journey too. By scanning articles in industry publications, key blogs, and conference presentations, you can learn from their work. You might even be able to apply their best ideas without having to go through the entire process yourself.

Figure 8-1. A Framework for Pursuing Increasing Value



Pursuing increasing value means that initial success is a new starting line, not the finish. The four strategies above create a focus point for extending the reach of collaborative initiatives into new and untapped areas, driven by an overarching intent to do business better.

Let's consider each strategy in more depth.

Strategy 1. Keep Focused on the Human Practices of Collaboration

The most critical strategy to the pursuit of increasing value is to remember and reinforce that effective collaborative practices start with people, not technology. The technology merely creates a conduit for people to work with other people—and what people believe about other people will come across in their technology-enabled interactions. If they're mistrustful of them, that will come across as an unwillingness to say anything meaningful. If they believe others are not committed to the initiative, they'll drag their feet on the activities they're responsible for.

Here's four approaches for keeping the human practices of collaboration in focus.

Face-to-Face Interaction Rapidly Creates Trust and Collaborative Willingness

The near-universal recommendation from academics across many disciplines that touch on human collaboration is that face-to-face interaction rapidly creates trust and collaborative willingness. It's also a common theme from practitioners and real-world experience, suggesting a degree of alignment between theory and practice! It's impossible for all teams to work face-to-face all the time given the way work is designed today, but it should be possible for your important teams and groups to spend some time together.

At the beginning a new team project, allocate the budget and fly people to the same office for an initial three-day in-person working session. Having a rapid way of learning about working styles, negotiating communication approaches, and working shoulder-to-shoulder creates a baseline of trust and willingness that will pay dividends over the life of the project. During the project, if two people should work together face-to-face, do it.

The same dynamic applies to collaborative groups—if there are people who are creating value for the organization through their online activities—or who could if they'd just work together, create an opportunity for them to meet. Perhaps it's by arranging for them to attend an industry conference together. Or work on a joint project. Or have an internal working group session to discuss recent online activity and how to spread the learning.

Play the Long Game

If people are reluctant to use the new tool, rather than getting angry and lambasting the *"dumb users who just don't get it,"* ask why they should use it. Don't throw a tizzy if people don't do what you want them to do immediately. It may take them a while—weeks definitely, months likely, and years possibly. You'll need gumption and grit to see it out. Some people may hold out "forever"—or at least until they leave the organization. One of my clients, with responsibility for internal collaboration, tried to engage with a particular team but the team leader always decried any involvement. When that person left, however, the new team leader was keen to be involved, and that particular team was then quickly brought up-to-speed. The team has also changed from being the team dragging their feet to the one setting the pace.

Emphasize Effective Practice

You will recall our discussion in Chapter 2 about the *Managing Meetings* collaboration scenario (see pages 84-85). We talked about four common ways that meetings fail today, and how to mitigate each one. For the fourth failing, I wrote:

Meetings that drag on for too long because some people dominate the discussion while others zone out can also be mitigated by practice and technology. The practices include approaches such as better meeting facilitation (by an external person if required), the calling of shorter meetings, the removal of chairs from the meeting room so everyone has to stand up, the banning of laptops and smartphones except for the person taking minutes, and so on.

Technology can also play a role: if the discussion is actively captured using dialogue mapping, people who keep harping on about the same topic can be prevented from doing so.

Put due effort into improving the human practices of how meetings are imagined, configured, and executed.

It's much easier to introduce new technology than change underlying meeting practices.

The latter involves coaching, trial-and-error, mis-steps, and the long-hoped-for forward leaps. But it's the change of practice in how meetings are imagined, configured, and executed that makes the difference. To reap the greatest benefits, you have to put due effort into the practices.

Address Collaboration Missteps

Your organization puts in a new collaboration product to support cross-departmental collaboration, which has been a real shortcoming until now. Things take off and proceed nicely for a few weeks, and then an HR advisor writes a horrible comment about "*the incompetent clowns in engineering*," throwing cold water on the initial momentum. People pull back, and activity in the system drops off. What do you do about it?

Go and talk to the HR advisor, preferably in person and over coffee (or tea). Talk about what happened and what led to the outburst. Why do they think the engineers are "incompetent clowns"? How could they have handled the situation differently? Then talk to the engineering staff involved, and get their side of the story—perhaps they were being "clowns" and the HR advisor was merely speaking the truth. If you can broker a meeting with both parties in the room, ideally leading to an apology being extended from one party and accepted by the other, you will have dealt with it at the human level. But now you need to deal with it at a systemic level. Add a comment to the initial thread, talking about collaboration between people. Write about the subsequent discussions, and the new peace that was brokered. Suggest how to handle major disagreements in the future—getting a colleague involved, requesting a face-to-face meeting, or asking for input and direction from your manager.

Strategy 2. Work with New Teams and Groups to Spread the Learning

Take the wins you have gained with your initial teams and groups to new teams and groups. Tell the new teams what happened with the first teams, and if they have an appetite for embracing the new disciplines, you will be able to spread the learning across your organization. Overall value is determined by the scale and scope of the initiatives you introduce—how broadly they reach across your organization and impact the way the majority of people work on a day-to-day basis. Your success with the initial teams and groups provides an excellent starting line for thinking about value more broadly.

Let's look at four approaches to spreading the learning.

Tell the new teams what happened with the first teams, and if they have an appetite for embracing the new disciplines, you will be able to spread the learning across your organization.

Engage with Similar Teams and Groups

If the initial focus of your collaboration journey was to improve the work of a particular team or group, and you have now done that, look around for teams and groups that are likely to have similar needs. For example:

- If you helped a new product development team streamline the way they managed their collaboration on a new product, look for other new product development teams. In even small- and medium-sized organizations, let alone large ones, multiple products are often under development at the same time. Schedule some time to talk about what you did to help the first team, and the results they gained.
- If you worked with a certain sales team on the challenges of document co-authoring, look around for other sales teams—both in the same country and in other regions. The development of proposals is a common activity for sales teams, and if the results stack up, other teams stand to benefit from embracing the new approach to proposal co-creation.
- If you created a new approach to the open sharing of ideas in one geographically-distributed division, look at the other divisions you could work with. Start talking about what you did to help the first division, and the results they obtained. The leaders in the other divisions may want something similar in their division.

Initial success with teams and groups that can be easily transferred to other teams and groups with a similar profile provides a quick way of increasing value.

Engage with Different Teams and Groups

Teams and groups you haven't worked with before may have ideas for improvements you haven't previously considered. While you may have proven the applicability of collaboration technology in new product development, document co-authoring, and ideation, there are many things you haven't seen. Engaging with teams and groups that have different requirements will bring these to light, and because of your proven track-record, there should be a greater willingness to explore new technology and approaches.

Re-Engage with Teams and Groups that were Reluctant to Participate

During the initial engagement phase of your work—which we talked about in Chapter 6 (*Make Every Effort to Engage the Business*)—some teams and groups would have been reluctant to participate in what you were advocating. Perhaps they were too busy on projects with hard deadlines—it is hard to contemplate change during extremely busy times. Perhaps they didn't want to be the first to change, to pay the first-mover cost—the team leader wanted a different team to prove the approach. Or they didn't see the value, because the initial ideas didn't resonate with their work. For whatever reason, they were reluctant to take part.

Now is the time to go back and talk to them. Re-open the conversation. See if now is a better time to explore new ways of working. Teams often have recurring busy periods during a year—like accountants at tax time, or product management groups leading up

to the annual conference—maybe now is a quieter time. For those that didn't want to pay the first-mover premium, they no longer have to. You have evidence that the approach works inside your organization, and people like them they can talk to. And for those who could not see the value, you now have something to show and demonstrate. You may find a greater receptivity to participate.

Re-open the conversation.

See if now is a better time to explore new ways of working.

Re-Engage with Teams and Groups with Out-of-Scope Requirements

The final approach is to go back to those who initially had out-of-scope requirements. Not everyone can be supported in the initial stages of a collaboration journey, and some teams and groups with extremely valid requirements may have had to wait.

As with those who were reluctant to participate, now is the time to re-open the conversation. Request an update on their work and the challenges and opportunities they see. The particular problem they were facing earlier may have gone away of its own accord. Perhaps they have installed their own new collaboration system. Perhaps the problem remains, has intensified, and is now something you can help them address. Gaining an accurate understanding of the current status is the starting point.

Strategy 3. Extend What You're Doing Into New Processes

Collaborative approaches have demonstrated value in the initial processes on which you focused—you have created well-regarded wins and people are clamoring for similar value in related areas. While there is always a place for plugging away at the core value opportunity, pursuing increasing value can also mean replicating your success in new areas. This allows multiple centers of value to flourish across your organization.

Replicating initial success in new areas allows multiple centers of value to flourish across your organization.

Here's some ideas for extending what you're doing into new processes.

The World Has Changed—What are the Current Collaboration Challenges?

If a couple of years have passed since beginning your collaboration journey, it's worth re-evaluating the currency of the overall initiative. Perhaps the world has moved on, creating a major change in the external environment that has significant flow-on effects for internal operations. Or maybe it's the internal environment that has changed—a new business model, a new cost consciousness, or a raft of new acquisitions. Any of these creates new opportunities for using collaboration approaches and technology to improve the way work is done. For example, on the acquisitions opportunity, creating a new cohesive and integrated culture is often necessary to reap the full benefits of an acquisition. What can you do, in line with this new opportunity, to bring people together?

You've Done Collaborative Teams, Now Address Collaborative Groups

Productive and effective teams are the bedrock of your organization, and let's assume you have focused exclusively on improving their collaborative capabilities. You have been able to work directly with dozens of teams, and through your internal blog have encouraged and influenced hundreds more. While numerous opportunities remain for further improvement, you have come to realize the next big opportunity lies with groups. Creating a means of bringing like-minded people together to share insights and ideas offers the next horizon of value.

Start the roadmap journey again with a couple of selected groups. Review the technology that's available—and ascertain whether that's sufficient or more is needed. Brainstorm vision, and what improvement could look like for these groups. Map out the non-technology success factors—leading off with a group moderator to stimulate participation. Determine your initial governance approach for collaborative groups, noting that while some themes will be similar to collaborative teams, there will be nuances too. Create an engagement model for working with groups, and make a plan for encouraging adoption.

You've Earned Your Stripes, Now Change the World

Few CEOs are willing to give permission for an “anything goes” approach to collaboration. Most prefer a more step-by-step approach, where success with initial small steps proves the competence of the people involved, builds trust, and opens the door to bolder initiatives in the future. If you’re there, now could be the time to change the world.

For example, perhaps your original vision was collaborative ideation with customers (*Core Value 4*, from *Chapter 3*)—opening the door to a rapid influx of creative and possibility-laden ideas. But given that you were a relative newcomer in your organization, senior executives were not happy with starting with such a bold initiative. You were asked to work with a few collaborative teams instead, to make them more successful. If you’ve done that, polish off your original thinking for collaborative ideation, update it to include any recent organizational challenges that would have benefitted from collaborative ideation, and take your vision back to the executives. Now might be the right moment.

Alternatively, perhaps your original vision was to create a new way to bring people together across divisional and departmental lines. Your grand vision imagined that people would be willing to build relationships, share ideas, and provide feedback and input to people outside their own business units. But this was considered too risky—“an unproven idea for an organization of our scope” as one executive argued—and it was rejected. You were asked instead to work within current divisional and department lines to make the collaboration within those more productive. You’ve achieved that and there is clear recognition that you have both vision and execution prowess. Now’s the time to go back and make another swing for cross-divisional and cross-departmental collaboration. You’ve earned your stripes, now change the world!

A Comment on Products Versus Platforms

Depending on whether you have a technology “product” or “platform” is likely to have an impact on how far you can extend your work into new areas. “Products” are designed to do a specific thing well, while a “platform” is designed with more general concepts in mind. For example, Microsoft SharePoint is a “platform” on which multiple applications can be created—for collaborative teams, groups, and organizations definitely, but also beyond that into document management, process workflows, and even forms-based data capture.

It’s during the second- and third-phase of “extending” that the power of a platform comes into its own: you neither have to throw out what you have done previously in a product and start again in a platform offering, nor do you lose your initial momentum by having to re-train users and administrators. What they had previously continues to work, in addition to a range of new things.

The net impact of the product versus platform issue is that products usually have more constraints than platforms (although platforms are more expensive). Keep it in mind as you look to extend your work into new areas—the technology may not support it.

Strategy 4. Learn About New Opportunities and Possibilities

Learning about new opportunities and possibilities is the fourth strategy for pursuing increasing value. You have a sense of what can be done, but it's almost guaranteed that other people have ideas and proven approaches you haven't even considered yet. Learn what you can from them—and gain insight for the pursuit of value at your firm.

There are many ways to learn about new opportunities and possibilities, and while you could spend a lot of time doing so, there are ways that are time-efficient too. Here's six key ways.

You have a sense of what can be done, but it's almost guaranteed that other people have ideas and proven approaches you haven't even considered yet.

Read Case Studies from Vendors

Read the published case studies from your vendor about what other customers are doing with the technology you are using. If they are in the same industry you will be able to see how other firms are approaching similar challenges. If they are in a different industry, the direct applicability of the lessons may be lower, but they could spark a train of thinking that leads to a new insight for your firm. Sometimes vendors will even publish a press release detailing a new customer win and outlining what they hope to achieve. There are many reasons for doing a joint press release—not the least being sticking out their proverbial tongue at competitors—but the press release can contain a kernel of truth and insight. If you know the firm, or someone at the firm, reach out and ask for the real story.

Attend Product-Focused Conferences

Attend an annual conference that's focused on the product used in your firm. If you use SharePoint, go to one of the many SharePoint conferences held each year. If you use IBM Connections, attend Lotusphere or one of the worldwide regional events. If you use Jive, go to the annual JiveWorld conference. And so on. Vendors host product-focused conferences to bring interested customers and business partners together, and thus there is an opportunity to learn from others—especially if there is a customer track featuring case studies. Finally, if you can stomach it and have extra budget, go to a conference that's not about your product. Listen for the activities and scenarios that people using a different product choose to address—and you might just learn something in the process.

Attend Theme-Focused Conferences

While product-focused conferences will give you quick insight into what other firms are doing with a particular product, theme-focused conferences de-emphasize the particulars of the product and focus on a higher theme. Customer organizations using a multitude of products are there. If there is a vendor demonstration hall, multiple vendors will be showing off their wares. Attending a conference such as the Enterprise 2.0 Conference,

KMWorld, or an intranet conference gives a much wider perspective. There's a lot of value to be gained in attending.

Talk with Practitioners About Their Work

Other firms in your city will be using the same product to carry out their work. That means there are people like you nearby who are facing the same challenges, thinking about the same topics, and desiring similar improvements. See if you can find them—there could be a collaboration or intranet-focused group in your city. Perhaps someone from another firm is speaking at an upcoming collaboration conference, and while you can't attend the conference, you can learn their name and make contact.

There are people like you at other nearby firms who are facing the same challenges, thinking about the same topics, and desiring similar improvements. Find them.

Use Online Communities to Connect with Similar People

There's a place for spending time and money to attend an annual conference to learn about what other firms are doing. But equally there's a place for learning during the day-to-day rhythms of work, and various online communities provide ways of achieving this. LinkedIn offers communities about particular products and overall themes that are free to join. Take part. Ask questions. Share a comment on someone else's questions. There are blogs that focus on the use of your product—both from your vendor as well as from other passionate individuals. Find the good ones and spend a few minutes reading them each day. Particular hashtags on Twitter provide another way of seeing what's being said about your product and its use inside organizations.

Write Up Your Work for an Industry Publication

Take some time to reflect on what you have done in your firm and write up your own case study. You will probably have to get permission at least from your legal or marketing department to publish it in an industry publication, but assuming you can do so, share your own journey. Tell the world what you have been doing. Talk about the wins. Talk about the mis-steps. Talk about what's coming up next. Share some collaboration goodness around. You might be surprised by the people who contact you wanting to talk further—about your journey and theirs—which will help in the pursuit of increasing value.

In summary, finding out what other firms are doing with the same or different product will give insight into possible avenues of future value for your firm—others have derived value from them; perhaps you will to. Use these ideas as a springboard for thought about what you could do at your firm.

Summary

Achieving the initial value you were seeking at your firm is a great achievement—well done! While it does provide a short window to reflect on what's been, more importantly it provides the impetus for thinking about what comes next. The pursuit of value is a never-ending journey, and in this chapter we have looked at four major strategies for doing so in the collaboration arena.

Chapter 9.

Your Collaboration Journey

“Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

You and I have walked a significant journey together—learning about collaboration at work, how to make it work, and what making it work means. The purpose of this final chapter is to briefly review our journey together, and to preview what comes next once you put the book down and resume your collaboration journey.

In this chapter, you will:

- Review the main ideas in *Collaboration Roadmap*.
- Discover six additional resources to help you in your journey—including attending the Collaboration Roadmap Public Seminar.
- Learn how I consult with organizations directly, through in-house workshops and consulting services.
- Be invited to discuss your collaboration journey with me.

A Brief Recap of Our Journey

The fundamental purpose of this book was to paint a wider vision about how to approach collaboration and collaboration technology at work. Merely offering great technology to the business is not enough—much more is required. This book has delved into what else is required, and has concentrated on value, governance, engagement and user adoption.

I have made the following points in *Collaboration Roadmap*:

- Knowing how the technology can support collaborative work activities is a critical underpinning for engaging with business people. In Chapter 2 (*Really Understand the Technology*), we looked at three topics in this regard. First, how to make an effective decision about the technology—what to purchase, and what to avoid. Second, what to look for in the technology itself. Third, how to know that new technology is actually required, and when current technology can still be used.
- It's important to have a clear understanding of how collaboration will improve business value and enable the business people at your firm to do things in better ways. I made the case that the appropriate use of the technology is what's critical to success, not the mere presence of the technology. This was the focus of Chapter 3 (*Outline the Vision*) and Chapter 4 (*Accept Technology is a Small Factor in Success*).

It's important to have a clear understanding of how collaboration will improve business value.
- With so much flexibility in collaboration technology products, how you govern what you do with the technology is critical. Chapter 5 (*Determine Your Governance Approach*) was an exploration of this whole area of governance—what it is, how to structure a governance team, how to make decisions on the governance, and key themes or topics to investigate when governing collaboration. It's a big area, and the decisions you make about governance determine what the technology becomes to your organization.
- Technology that's unused is a waste of time and money—it's vital that you take the technology to the business people you are supporting. This encompasses two interrelated requirements—engaging with representative teams and groups to understand how new technology and approaches can enhance their work, and secondly, putting in place appropriate strategies for user adoption. These two themes were the focus of Chapter 6 (*Make Every Effort to Engage the Business*) and Chapter 7 (*Apply Intentional Effort to Adoption*). A much deeper treatment of user adoption is available in my book, *User Adoption Strategies: Shifting Second Wave People to New Collaboration Technology*.

- Delivering the initial value from new collaboration technology is important, but it's only the start. Chapter 8 (*Pursue Increasing Value*) rounded out the roadmap with a reminder that you have to keep going—looking for more areas of improvement, helping the teams and groups hold onto the value they have experienced, and looking for new opportunities to move to the next level.

With this quick summary in mind, looking back on everything we have discussed, what's your evaluation of your collaboration journey? Using Figure 9-1:

- In the "Where Are We Now?" column, mark your current place for each of the roadmap components. The scale means "1" (very poor), "2" (poor), "3" (average), "4" (good), and "5" (very good).
- In the "Where Do We Need to Be?" column, mark your desired state for the future? For example, if you are on "2" currently for Outline the Vision, where do you want to be in 12-18 months? Use the same scale as above.
- In the "What's Most Important?" column, mark your top three priorities.

Figure 9-1. Collaboration Roadmap Assessment: Rate Your Journey

Roadmap	Where Are We Now?	Where Do We Need to Be?	What's Most Important?
Really Understand the Technology	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
Outline the Vision	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
Accept Technology is a Small Factor in Success	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
Determine Your Governance Approach	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
Make Every Effort to Engage the Business	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
Apply Intentional Energy to Adoption	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
Pursue Increasing Value	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	

What are you going to do to address the three priorities you have identified?

Six Additional Resources for Your Journey

We have walked a long journey together during the pages of this book; now you have a lot to do! In this section, I talk about six additional resources I have available to help you on your collaboration journey. Let's look at each of these six resources in turn:

1. My blog, other books, and research reports.
2. The Collaboration Roadmap newsletter.
3. The one-day Collaboration Roadmap Public Seminar.
4. The two-day Collaboration Roadmap In-House Workshop—for your organization.
5. Consulting services on making collaboration work.
6. A conversation by phone about your journey.

Resource 1. Read my Blog, Books, and Reports

I have written a lot over the past decade, covering many different areas related to collaboration. It may be that some things I've worked on previously will help you—in addition to what you've found in this book.

Check out the following resources:

- I write a blog on collaboration, with a focus on strategy, governance, and user adoption. Feel free to visit my blog at currents.michaelsampson.net, or subscribe for automatic updates via RSS.
- I write a monthly newsletter on effective collaboration, called *Making Collaboration Work*. See michaelsampson.net/getnewsletter.html.
- I have written other books on collaboration and collaboration strategy—a couple dedicated to SharePoint, and another focused on user adoption for collaboration tools and approaches. See michaelsampson.net/books.html for the current list.
- I have created a list of blog posts, articles, research reports, and books about collaboration and related topics. At the time of writing, these resource centers are on Collaboration Strategy, Governing Collaboration, User Adoption, SharePoint for Collaboration, and The Practice of Collaboration. Learn more at michaelsampson.net/resourcecenters.html.

It's all there for the taking. If you can't find what you are looking for, please contact me via my web site at michaelsampson.net/contact.html.

Resource 2. Register for the Collaboration Roadmap Newsletter

There's a lot of great material in this book, but it's not the final word. Much more needs to be said, and the Collaboration Roadmap newsletter is one way of doing that. The newsletter will bring you updates about:

- New case studies and examples of people taking the ideas in this book and applying them for great results.
- Any additional chapters that are written for Collaboration Roadmap and made available for download.
- The dates of upcoming webinars with people who are working with the Collaboration Roadmap material. This will help you by hearing from people in the field who are working on similar issues to you.
- Upcoming public seminars—dates and locations—on the Collaboration Roadmap material, to help you in your work.

The Collaboration Roadmap newsletter will be distributed about six times a year. Register online for the newsletter, at michaelsampson.net/collaborationroadmap-newsletter.html.

Resource 3. Attend the Public Seminar

There's a time and a place for merely reading the contents of this book, grabbing the opportunity to make a difference with both hands, and running with it. If that's you, go well ... and I wish you all my best.

There is equally a time and a place where hearing this material directly from me will add greatly to your ability to implement the ideas I have written about in this book. If that's you, then let me tell you about the Collaboration Roadmap Public Seminar.

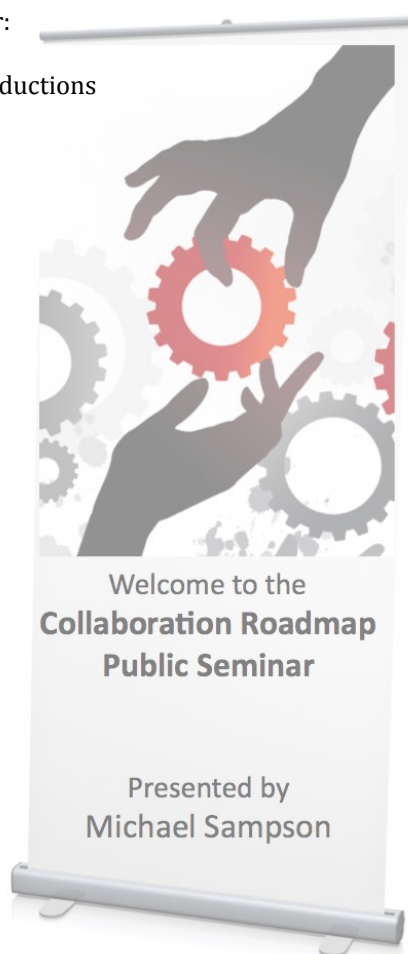
The Public Seminar is a one-day event. It gives you an opportunity to step aside from the busyness of your day-to-day work, and meet with 15-25 other people from your city who are interested in making collaboration work. During the course of our day together, I work through the Collaboration Roadmap material (as presented in this book), and you will have many opportunities to discuss, debate and localize what you are hearing through conversations with myself and the other attendees. Given that people from multiple firms attend each seminar, you get to hear what other people are doing too.

Taino attended one of my seminars in Australia in late 2010, and had this to say:

I found Michael's seminar to be both informative and inspiring. Not only was it refreshing to know that our struggles with governance and engagement are common, but also to have some practical and achievable strategies to set ourselves up for success. Thank you Michael, your teachings are gold!

Here's the standard agenda for the public seminar:

09.00am	Opening Comments and Introductions
09.30am	Setting the Scene
10.00am	Technology for Collaboration
11.00am	Morning Break
11.20am	The Vision of Collaboration
11.40am	The Road to Success
12.00pm	Governing Collaboration
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Business Engagement
2.45pm	User Adoption Strategies
3.30pm	Afternoon Break
3.50pm	The Pursuit of Value
4.20pm	Open Discussion
4.50pm	Closing Comments
5.00pm	End of Workshop



See michaelsampson.net/collaborationroadmap-seminar.html to learn more about the Collaboration Roadmap Public Seminar. If you subscribe to the newsletter (or my blog), I will tell you when and where I will be presenting seminars.

Resource 4. Host the In-House Workshop

As Taino said above, it can be very useful to hear the Collaboration Roadmap material from me and learn what others are doing through the Public Seminar, but on the other hand, there's a lot of value in having a more focused session just for your organization. That's the role of the In-House Workshop.

The Collaboration Roadmap In-House Workshop is an intensive two-day session around the material in this book. There's a reason I offer it: people get a lot of value from working through this material in the context of their work and in conjunction with other people from their organization. It provides a forum to quickly get everyone to a similar starting place and to help with creating a shared strategy for user adoption.

Here's the outline of the workshop:

- A series of presentations, delivered by me, on each of the topics in *Collaboration Roadmap*, along with the most up-to-date case studies.
- Discussion and debate about the various ideas. The purpose of this is to give you and your colleagues a chance to reflect on the ideas within your context.
- Individual and group exercises to apply the ideas that resonate to your firm, and work out how to implement them.

People get a lot of value from working through this material in the context of their work and in conjunction with other people from their organization.

Unlike the Public Seminar, the In-house Workshop allows more flexibility. Discussions can be tailored to particular themes, and activities included that are directly relevant to the organization. In terms of themes, this could mean a longer session looking at the capabilities of Jive's software for collaboration—because that's what the organization is using or thinking of using—instead of talking about collaboration software more generally. In terms of activities, that could involve me leading a focus group with one or two business teams during the course of the two-day workshop. This gives workshop attendees an opportunity to watch how I engage with the business—seeing workshop concepts in practice—and it can also serve as a kick-start to uncovering key areas for focus with business teams. Many of my clients have found that having an external person involved in this way gives credibility and visibility to efforts around collaboration that they can't get by themselves.

The most current information about the Collaboration Roadmap In-House Workshop is at michaelsampson.net/collaborationroadmap-workshop.html.

Resource 5. Engage Michael for Consulting on Collaboration

As a Collaboration Strategist, I advise end user organizations on making collaboration work. This means I bring expertise and facilitation skills to bear on specific collaboration challenges for clients. The common elements of these are an external viewpoint, the development of capability among internal staff, and review or development of the collaboration strategy.

Here's the type of consulting projects I have worked on during recent years:

- External review of the intranet at a central government department in New Zealand, with recommendations on improvement. The project also involved writing position papers assessing the applicability of various knowledge management and collaboration strategies for the department.
- External input into the collaboration and SharePoint strategy for a law firm, both through position papers and by "holding court" at their premises. For the latter, we meet for a day once a year to discuss and explore their current challenges and issues. I offered my perspective as an interested but removed outsider.
- Strategic audit of the intranet and collaboration strategy at a high-tech organization, and their use of Jive to support different forms of collaboration.
- Facilitation of capability development in the area of user adoption strategies for new collaboration tools and approaches at a risk management firm in Europe, along with drafting the initial strategy.
- External input into the collaboration strategy and decision approach for a new collaboration technology platform for a global professional services firm.
- Development of scenarios for new ways of working based on the availability of new collaboration technology, as input into the collaboration strategy for a global strategy consulting firm.

If one of your projects would benefit from my direct involvement, let's schedule a discussion. It's always a delight to work directly with people around the world, and see them make significant improvements as a result of joint work.

**How can I help you
achieve success with
collaboration?**

For a longer list of recent consulting projects, see michaelsampson.net/clients.html. To discuss how you can engage me to assist with your collaboration projects, please contact me via michaelsampson.net/contact.html.

Resource 6. Let's Discuss Your Journey

I'd love to learn about your collaboration journey, and how the ideas in *Collaboration Roadmap* are helping you. For example:

- How are you planning on using collaboration to support improvements in the way business is done at your firm?
- What capabilities in the technology are you using to support the collaborative work of the people at your firm?
- What decision strategy did you follow when selecting collaboration technology?
- What are you doing to make governance work well at your firm? What governance decisions have you made?
- Which business engagement and user adoption strategies have you followed? What's worked well and what's floundered? If your initiatives have floundered, what are you doing to get things back on track?

If you are open to the idea, then maybe your story can become part of a featured case study in the Collaboration Roadmap newsletter.

If you are open to the idea, then maybe your story can become part of a featured case study in the Collaboration Roadmap newsletter, thereby providing an avenue for others to learn from your good (and not-so-good) experiences. Let's spread around what we are learning in regards to making collaboration work, and help others minimize the pain they have to go through.

The best way to set up a time to talk is to contact me through my web site, using michaelsampson.net/contact.html.

Go and Do Great Work

Thank you for the privilege of sharing the thoughts in this book with you. I wish you every success in your collaboration journey, and look forward to meeting you in person.

Now it's your turn to take the next step.

Go and do great work!

Appendix 1.

Collaboration Theory

“*Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision; the ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.*”

Andrew Carnegie

Let's go back to first principles. What are we talking about when using the term “collaboration”? In my workshops and seminars, I start with this definition:

People working with other people towards a common outcome.

That's a pretty broad definition, and while it signals the game we are playing, it doesn't detail the moves required. Therefore, in order to lay an appropriate foundation for our collaboration journey, let's survey some of the contours of collaboration so we know more about the landscape.

In this appendix, you will:

- Look at three pre-conditions for collaboration.
- Consider the difference between communication and collaboration.
- Discover five types of work, including three that can be classified as collaborative.
- Explore the downsides of collaboration, and how to mitigate these.
- Gain a working definition of the word “collaboration” to inform your journey.

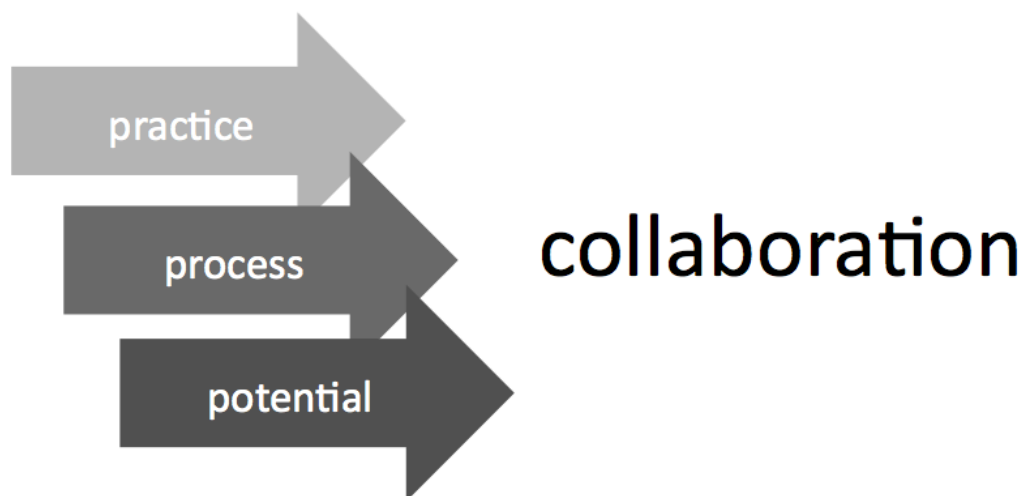
Collaboration is a Means to an End

The most critical starting point is to acknowledge that collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Broadly speaking, it's one strategy that can be intentionally embraced to contribute toward specific end goals. Those goals could be “big” corporate goals like improved business performance, improved market receptivity to new products, or improved competitive positioning. They could also be “smaller” people-centric goals of improved team satisfaction, better utilization of staff knowledge, or the ability to identify and engage with experts regardless of their current location. Nonetheless, collaboration is not the end goal. This appendix explores the nature of collaboration as a means to an end.

Collaboration Has Three Pre-Conditions

Being successful in using the strategy of collaboration requires three pre-conditions—practice, process, and potential. Without these, the likelihood of success with collaboration is severely diminished.

Figure A-1. The Three Pre-Conditions of Collaboration



Collaboration needs three pre-conditions to work—human practices, agreed processes, and a greater potential benefit compared to working alone. The combination of all three lays the foundation for collaboration success.

Pre-Condition 1. Practice

Practice, the first pre-condition, is the human practices of collaboration. In order for people to work with other people, there needs to be a fundamental set of collaborative practices at play. Essential practices of collaboration are:

- Promoting interdependence as the way of working together.
- Respecting the individual and their point of view.
- Allowing productive friction and disagreements to push the team to explore new boundaries of possibilities.
- Committing to working difficult issues through to completion.
- Trusting that each person is working towards the best outcome for the group.
- Informing team members about your current status and roadblocks.
- Communicating to draw other people out, rather than shutting them down, especially during major disagreements.
- Evidencing openness to the ideas of other people.

Without the human practices of collaboration, collaboration cannot flourish.

Without these human practices, collaboration cannot flourish.

Pre-Condition 2. Process

Process, the second pre-condition, is about the processes or patterns through which people work together. There are many processes or patterns that can be used when people work together, and some processes or patterns are more collaborative than others. For example, making decisions is part of working on a project or working together more generally. There are collaborative ways of making the decision—brainstorming, idea ranking, and voting—and non-collaborative ways of making the decision—like the dictatorial “*my way or the highway!*” Other processes include communicating ideas, creating shared artifacts, and gaining feedback on ideas. For each of these processes there are collaborative patterns and non-collaborative patterns. Shared understanding of, agreement on, and commitment to using particular processes and patterns are the second key element of collaboration.

Pre-Condition 3. Potential

Potential, the third pre-condition for collaboration, means that by working with other people and groups, something greater can happen than if the participants worked separately. The potential could be greater revenue for the firm, easier resolution of a problem in a key process, or a new opportunity to embrace.

For example, if Group A in an organization can earn \$1 million by working by itself, and Group B can earn \$2 million working by itself, the net value to the organization of both groups working independently is \$3 million. If they work together and earn \$2 million in total, that's negative potential—not a good thing. However, if they work together and earn \$5 million, the collaboration potential is an extra \$2 million.

Collaboration potential means that by working with other people and groups, something greater can happen than if the participants work separately.

Four other examples of the potential of collaboration are:

- An automotive firm produces multiple types of cars, and the organizational structure is such that each type of car is aligned with a particular division. One division produces family cars. Another division produces sports cars. A third division produces off-road cars. But looking across the organization, there are common components shared by all cars, and by working together, significant reductions in development cost, market risk, and after-sales support can be achieved by creating common platform elements.
- In a government agency a number of employees may have a similar job function in different regions, but they work independently. Each employee individually makes the best decisions on purchasing new equipment, based on what they know and can see. However, each type of equipment has different life cycles and cost implications, but this data is never collated and shared. But if it was, these employees could work together to make higher quality decisions based on all the available data, and the net costs to the agency would be optimized.¹
- In a publishing house, different business units focus on publishing different types of books and magazines to their respective audiences. With the rise of digital reading devices—the Amazon Kindle, the Apple iPad, and the Sony Kibo—each division is exploring how to translate their historical success in the print medium into the new world of digital publishing. Each division undertakes their own respective research onto what will work, each division works on developing competency to create attractive digital editions, and each division separately establishes business relationships with the digital publishing channels. That's a

lot of duplicated cost in one organization—cost that could have been reduced by working across divisions to jointly embrace digital publishing.

- The Star Alliance in the air travel sector is a great example of collaboration potential. Before the Star Alliance was created, each airline had its own frequent flyer program and had to maintain separate lounges in airports around the world. This quickly becomes expensive, especially for high-cost airports such as London Heathrow, Los Angeles, and JFK. By collaborating on multiple fronts, including the creation of shared lounges for high-value flyers, the airlines individually could reduce their cost footprint, while simultaneously increasing the value offered to travelers—a true win-win situation for passengers and airlines.²

In summary, there needs to be an awareness of the greater value that can be achieved by working together.

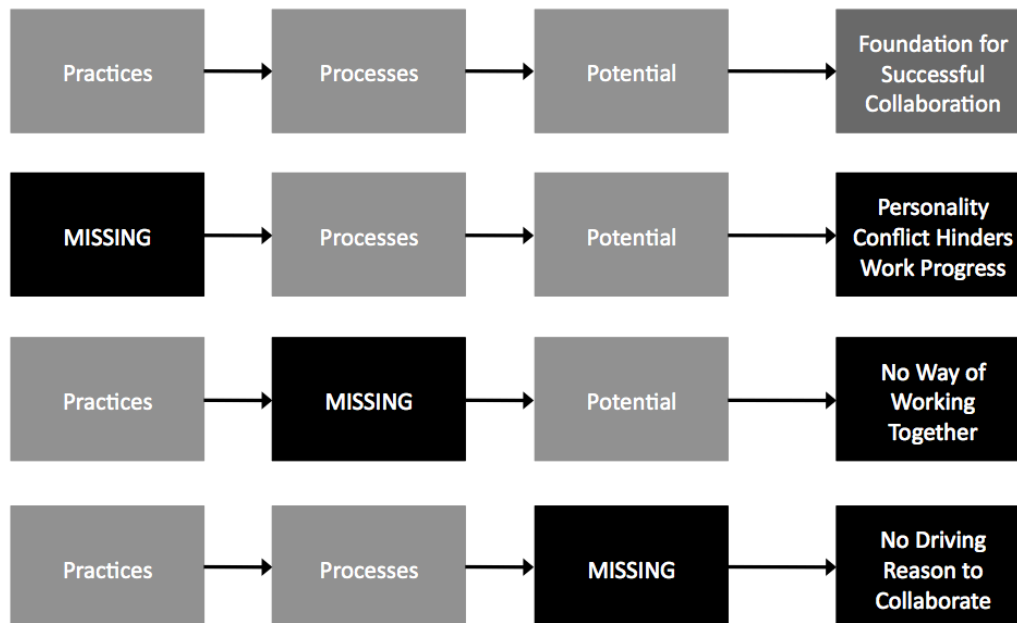
Missing Pre-Conditions

What happens if one or more of the pre-conditions don't exist for a given collaborative endeavor? Invariably, the collaboration fails:

- When the human practices of working together are lacking, people irritate each other and can't get beyond their personal conflicts to settle into a productive way of working together.
- When there is no agreement about the processes for working together, the work suffers at the hand of methodological arguments.
- When potential is lacking, there's no driving reason to collaborate in the first place. It's merely a nice sounding idea, rather than anything of substance.

What happens if one or more of the pre-conditions don't exist for a given collaborative endeavor? Invariably, the collaboration fails.

Figure A-2. The Consequences of Missing Pre-Conditions



The three pre-conditions for collaboration are required into order to create a foundation for success. When any one of the three pre-conditions is missing, collaboration failure is much more likely.

Collaboration is More Than Just Communication

Collaboration is frequently confused with communication. In both instances we are describing a situation involving two or more people, but whereas communication is one element of collaboration, and often the most visible evidence that collaboration is taking place, the terms are not synonymous. Let's look at communication as the starting point.

Communication—How We Discuss and Decide What To Do

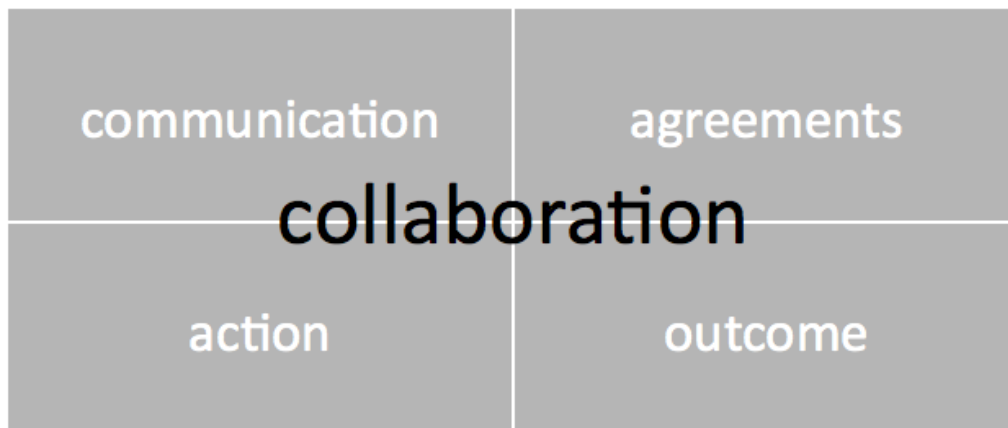
Communication is one element of collaboration. However it is essential that communication is more than static, one-way pushing of information at other people. In fact, if communication is only going one way, that's pretty good evidence no collaboration is taking place.

Particular aspects of communication used in collaboration are:

- *Conversing.* Interaction and discussion between two or more people. The conversation will often be verbal and face-to-face, or verbal over a phone or another telephony service. However, it doesn't have to be verbal as such. Conversation also happens in text-mediated forms, such as email messages, discussion threads, a blog, or a micro-blogging service such as Yammer.
- *Exchanging Ideas.* Through conversation ideas are exchanged and shared. One person mentions an idea related to the outcome-orientation of the group, and other people hear the comment. Another person adds their thoughts to the idea, and the first person responds. Then a third person jumps into the conversation and adds their ideas, challenges something the second person has said, and agrees with an aspect of what was originally said. Overall, ideas are exchanged, shared, debated, and discussed.
- *Discussing Options.* The group communicates about options for achieving what they are working on. This is made up of naming different options, and raising as many pros and cons for each option as they can think of. Through this process of comparative evaluation, one or more options should increase in favor among the group members, while other options decline in favor. In theory, but not always in practice, the uneven distribution of information about different options among group members will be mitigated through discussion.
- *Exploring Meaning.* Meaning is explored through communication, especially the importance or relevance of information to a group. New information coming to the attention of a group will have an impact that ranges from marginal to profound, and while the impact itself is independent of and separate to their conversation, through conversation the group explores the potential impact and thus meaning. If the information had the potential to be profound and transformative but the group saw it as only marginal and dismissed it, then the group has not come to the right conclusion on the importance of the information.
- *Reflecting.* Reflection is a feedback mechanism through which group members talk about past decisions and evaluate what actually happened. Perhaps the wrong decision was made in the first place. Perhaps the right decision was made but the execution strategy was faulty. Perhaps the environment changed and the decision was not revisited. Or perhaps the decision, execution strategy, and environment stayed in alignment with the initial conditions, and all went well. Reflection is about making the past explicit, and developing a shared sense of how the group has performed in past decision making efforts so as to improve where necessary in the future.

Communication is absolutely essential to collaboration, but three additional elements are needed for collaboration to occur: agreements, action, and outcome.

Figure A-3. Four Elements of Collaboration



Collaboration is the combination of communication, agreements, action, and an outcome-focus. Communication is a central collaborative process, but collaboration is much greater than just communication. Shared agreements about how to work together are also important, along with action (“doing stuff”) and an outcome-orientation (“doing stuff in order that”).

Agreements—How We Stabilize Performance

The second main element of collaboration is agreements, meaning the ongoing expectations that group members have of each other. Agreements cover behavior (“*what style of interaction will we follow in team meetings?*”), task allocation (“*who is doing what part of the project?*”), and technology use (“*how will we coordinate and communicate when we are not meeting face-to-face?*”). Agreements can be formed based on a variety of inputs, such as the reason particular people are on the group or team, expectations communicated to the team from the sponsors (the outcome-orientation), and common shared experiences in working on other groups or teams within the same organization.

For short-term groups, agreements form implicitly—they come about as people start communicating in the group, everyone sees who speaks up and who remains quiet on particular topics, and for face-to-face groups, by the way people dress, talk, and maintain eye contact with others. Under time pressure, initial experiences quickly solidify into ongoing expectations. For example, if Jane was quick to volunteer to do the research component of the project, the group is likely to look to Jane for all future research components, because “*that’s what Jane does.*” If the group works together for long enough, Jane will do all future research components without even being asked to.³ It will become an implicit responsibility.

For groups that know in advance of starting their joint work that the project is for the longer term, a more explicit approach to establishing agreements is usually taken.

Agreements can be reached through devoting time to discussion about who should be doing what and how the group will work together. Or they can be written down in a document or wiki page so that common expectations are set.

Agreements are always open to renegotiation—it's always possible in theory to go back and agree to work together differently—but in practice it's more difficult. Once the group has established a way of working together, and it has stabilized to produce good performance outcomes, there's a reticence to make changes in case the new state is worse than the current one. However, if the group is failing to achieve its performance outcomes, there will be a greater willingness, if not a greater mandate and compulsion from outside forces, to reexamine why the team is not performing as it should be.

In closing, we could say that agreements are the way that interdependence between group members is shown. If you want to assess the level of interdependence between group members, look at the agreements that specify who is going to do specific parts of the work.

Action—When We Do Stuff

The third element of collaboration is action, or actually getting the work done. All the communication in the world isn't going to lead to any benefit unless the group takes action. What the group communicates about informs the action that needs to take place. What gets decided about who does what—via the agreements—guides who specifically takes what actions.

Collaborative action comes in two main forms, but both share the fact that they are jointly agreed. One form is “jointly agreed and jointly executed,” whereby multiple people in the group work at the same time—although not necessarily in the same place—on the same work product. Examples include designers working on a new product design via screen sharing, marketing staff brainstorming a new event around a whiteboard, and a legal team reviewing and editing a document line-by-line around a table. In all cases the particular task is done with other people at the same time, but it's part of a bigger collaborative process.

The second form of action is “jointly agreed and individually executed.” In this form a team member goes off and works alone on a particular task, but it is clearly related to the bigger project. When completed, the individual team member brings it back to the wider team for integration into the overall deliverables. Examples include a designer working alone to design a new component that will be part of a bigger product, an event specialist creating the first draft of an upcoming event, and a lawyer reviewing and editing a document line-by-line on their computer before giving it to one or more colleagues to review.

With respect to its place in collaboration, you need to see coordinated action happening that is contextualized by team members within the framework of something bigger. If there is no explicit connection to something wider, it's unlikely that the specific activity is part of a collaboration. It's a one-shot transaction, not collaboration.

Outcome—Why We Are Collaborating

The fourth and final element of collaboration is an outcome-orientation. It's the change or impact the team members are working together to make happen. During times of group conflict or procedural stress, the "higher goal" contained in the outcome can serve to strengthen the resolve of each team member to keep working together.

The change could be:

- *A Product or Service.* The group develops a new product or service for release into their current market. Each team member brings particular skills and expertise for product design, packaging, channel development, supply chain coordination, marketing, and strategy.
- *A Document.* The group is working together to write a document that communicates their shared understanding on or position about a particular matter. A group of academics work together to convey new research findings in an article that challenges traditional notions. A group of lawyers develop a new contract for an important client moving into a new business partnership. A group of marketing professionals write press releases together that set a new standard for communicating the company's message.
- *A Decision.* The group works together to make a decision about a particular matter, and while various documents, presentations, and meetings are needed during the course of working together, it's the decision that ultimately matters. A senior executive group has to decide whether to invest in a new line of business, or stay focused on what they are doing now. A product-marketing group has to decide which products to push hard at this year's conference, and which they can merely reference.
- *Greater Understanding.* While having a specific, tangible outcome is a good sign of collaboration, there are times when "developing a greater understanding" is the outcome. Maybe it is the situation where a particular decision has to be made in the future, and the group works back through their calculations and assumptions every 6 months to gauge whether the time has come. Or perhaps an executive is evaluating a new course of action, and while he or she is not ready to make a decision yet, requests work to be done exploring particular options.

During times of group conflict or procedural stress, the "higher goal" contained in the outcome can serve to strengthen the resolve of each team member to keep working together.

Summary—Four Elements of Collaboration

Even though it is essential, communication on its own is not collaboration. Collaboration also requires agreements, action, and an outcome-orientation.

Collaboration is Seen in Three Types of Work

Now that we have looked at the *pre-conditions* for collaboration, on the basis that collaboration is “*people working with other people towards a common outcome*,” let’s look more closely at collaboration at work. Not all work is collaboration, so it’s important to know what we’re talking about. Think about it this way. There are three factors to consider when looking at work, and two rating options for each factor:

- The definition of the outcome for the work—what the individual or the group is working toward. The two options are: provide input into the outcome, or don’t.
- The means of doing the work, or the work practice followed by the individuals involved in doing the work. The two options are: provide input into the work practice, or don’t.
- The degree of work that happens with other people directly, as opposed to being carried out by an individual. The two options are: work alone, or work together.

Not all work is collaboration,
so it’s important to know
what we’re talking about.

By using the two-rating scales per factor, we can combine the three options into five meaningful patterns, as shown in Figure A-4. Note the inclusion of the word “meaningful;” the additional patterns in the combination are not meaningful to a discussion on collaboration, because they focus on work that is carried out by an individual working alone. These have been excluded. Only three of the resulting patterns are “collaborative.”

Figure A-4. Three Types of Collaborative Work

Pattern of Work	Work Alone or With Others	Input into Work Practice	Input into Outcome
Pattern 1, “Do What You’re Told” Work	Work Alone	No	No
Pattern 2, Cooperation	Work with Others	No	No
Pattern 3, Delegated Collaboration	Work with Others	Yes	No
Pattern 4, Methodological Collaboration	Work with Others	No	Yes
Pattern 5, Dynamic Collaboration	Work with Others	Yes	Yes

Working with other people is a common theme in collaboration, but additional attributes need to be true for collaboration to be taking place—such as providing input on the work practice, and providing input for the outcome of the joint effort. Patterns 3-5 are deemed “collaborative,” while patterns 1-2 are not.

In Pattern 1, *Do What You’re Told Work*, the workers have no input into defining the outcome, no input into the work practice, and they work alone. With respect to working alone, any work output they create is combined with work from other people, but they themselves do not do it. For example, consider a production assembly line where people are treated as mere cogs in the process. Each person has a specified job to complete, as defined by the process designer. People work alone on their own task. A supervisor ensures compliance with the process definition, and can give out punishments for non-compliance or rewards for super-productivity.

In Pattern 2, *Cooperation*, people work together directly, rather than having indirect links between work. Perhaps people work together because greater strength or dexterity is required to complete the task at hand. Or more expansive thinking is required. The basic idea is that the people involved have to work together to get the task completed—and they know they are working together. For example, consider the same production assembly line, except this time the work is cell-based, and multiple people work together on the same component at the same time. They have to coordinate what they do.

In Pattern 3, *Delegated Collaboration*, people work together as in Pattern 2 (Cooperation) but now the people involved have input into the work practice. The outcome is defined for them—imposed if you will—but the people involved have to decide how to complete the

task. This sometimes happens when the employees are more skilled in the work practice than the manager. Perhaps it can't be reduced to specific process steps, and requires judgment, skill, and insight. Or perhaps an enlightened manager knows that better morale will be created if he or she gets out of the way and lets the group decide how best to work together. For example, continuing with the production line example above, except there is no separate process designer. The assembly line workers both plan how to do the work and carry out the plans together.

In Pattern 4, *Methodological Collaboration*, people work together and have input into defining the outcome, but the work practice is defined for them through a pre-established methodology. The group follows the firm's methodology when doing the work, and while most firms with methodologies will accept feedback from staff about ways of improving the methodology in the future, for all intents and purposes the methodology is rigid for any current project. Consulting firms are the exemplars of methodological collaboration.

In the final pattern, *Dynamic Collaboration*, the people doing the work also define the outcome. It's not imposed, because the understanding of the outcome changes and morphs as the problem is explored. It's an iterative process of problem exploration, outcome definition, and returning to problem definition again. For example, on the production line, now the definition of the products to be produced requires interaction with the end customer to understand their needs and goals. Prototypes are developed and created by the production team to explore how they meet the customer's requirements.

Collaboration Can Take Place at Different Levels

Collaboration is a construct that applies at many different levels. While the focus of this book is on collaboration between people and groups—people-to-people, people-to-group, and group-to-group—collaboration can also refer to a style of working together between organizations and nations.

At an organizational level, "collaboration" is denoted by terms like strategic alliances, supply-chain collaboration, and joint ventures. In these different forms of working

together, the emphasis is on making the most of the varying skills, resources, and assets from multiple organizations to improve market place positioning.

Collaboration can refer to a style of working together between organizations and nations.

Nations can also collaborate, definitely during times of war (to bring expanded strength to bear on a common enemy), but equally during times of peace. For example, a bilateral trade agreement is one form of collaboration between nations.

While this book does not focus on collaboration between organizations and nations, it's appropriate to briefly acknowledge that such collaborations exist.

Collaboration Has Significant Downsides

Collaboration is not without its problems. Talk about collaboration focuses almost exclusively on the first definition of collaboration—*“people working with other people to achieve a common outcome”*—and ignores the second—*“traitorous cooperation with an enemy, usually an occupying force.”* Both are valid definitions! Or consider Michael Schrage’s take: *“Sometimes collaborative, cooperative relationships indicate a well-run organization, but [they] can also signal self-indulgent complacency.”*⁴ Hence there are two opposing forces at work whenever we talk about collaboration, but the downsides are generally ignored. While this book has focused on the practical outworking of the good side of collaboration, let’s briefly consider nine downsides of collaboration.

1. **Decision-making approaches are worse.**
2. **On average, people invest less of themselves.**
3. **Work-in-progress is highlighted.**
4. **No additional benefit or value is gained.**
5. **Seeing outside perspectives is more difficult.**
6. **Innovative ideas are held back.**
7. **Distinguishing collaboration from other joint work patterns is difficult.**
8. **Extra time to complete the work is required.**
9. **Seizing the collaboration mandate leads to significant organizational changes.**

Sometimes collaborative, cooperative relationships indicate a well-run organization, but they can also signal self-indulgent complacency.

Let’s take each downside in turn, and also consider how to mitigate the negative effects.

Downside 1. Decision-Making Approaches are Worse

Collaboration can lead to poor decisions, such as when the easy path is chosen because it’s efficient, with no consideration being paid to evaluating its effectiveness. For example, when introducing a consumer product to a new market, the product team needs accurate information about market conditions. If one group member has had previous experience with the new market, the group may take the easy path of only consulting the team member instead of commissioning market research or engaging experts from other parts of the organization or world to give their input on entry conditions. Thus poor decisions are made due to reliance on an easy source of information—perhaps this means collaboration is seen as a “short-cut, not the right-cut.”

Reducing the likelihood of poor decision-making can take a number of forms. In its communication with the project sponsors, the team can specify the key decisions it is working on, and note how they are dealing with them. If a sponsor thinks something more or less should be done, they can raise it as issue. A second approach, and one that embodies more action, is to have periodic reviews with the sponsors. These review meetings assume the existence of corporate guidelines on project processes, such as a project methodology. A third approach is to pay for an external review of critical projects at various stages, to catch poor decisions before they impact on the overall quality of the project. This costs money, but for critical projects it will be worth it to have an external pair of eyes look over the work to date.

Downside 2. On Average, People Invest Less of Themselves

Collaboration can result in people investing less effort in the project. In social psychology this is called social loafing, and happens whenever one or more group members do little or no work and rely on the other group members to cover for them. Social loafing destroys the synergistic potential of bringing multiple people together, so that rather than achieving greater value due to synergy ($2+2+2=8$), lower value is obtained ($2+2+2=3.5$). Social loafing in collaboration can be seen when people don't give their full input into a decision, their comments on a document under-review, or sit quietly during a discussion.

Dealing with social loafing in ongoing groups can be as simple as speaking to the individual concerned and making them aware that other people know of their loafing tendencies. More complex reactions include leaving them out of group activities, formal warnings by involving the HR department and their manager, and at the extreme, the termination of their employment. Social loafing is best handled quickly, so patterns of behavior are not formed. One way of preventing social loafing from having a detrimental effect on a group is interim deadlines for all deliverables. This gives clear insight into who is not pulling their weight.

On the other hand, perhaps the root problem isn't social loafing at all, but instead an ingrained culture that punishes collaboration. If people's ideas are stolen and passed off by others as their own, people will not want to share their best ideas. Because the culture suppresses them from bringing all of themselves to the work, they give up grand ideas about working effectively with others and do the bare minimum to get by. If it's a cultural problem that's driving people to invest less of themselves, major changes will be required to change the situation.

On the third-hand—we did say that collaboration was supposed to be synergistic!—technology-enabled collaboration could be causing massive communication challenges for group members. If people are working with others across multiple time zones, different languages, and divergent national cultures, doing it all by phone or video conference could be too hard. For example, team members just can't face spending hours on the phone talking through critical issues and coming to agreement—hence things are left to fester. In

such situations, getting everyone together in person for a few days of face-to-face work will be required to change the situation.

Downside 3. Work-in-Progress is Highlighted

Collaboration highlights work-in-progress—as Martin White likes to say, “*that there is no work and there is no progress.*”⁵ Working with others in regular group meetings, and even using technology tools to support tracking of task allocations between meetings, quickly gives a sense of what is not happening. Specific people aren’t completing their assigned tasks, and this has a negative effect on group performance. Work-in-progress is highlighted, and what’s seen is all bad! One comment on a McKinsey article about workforce collaboration focused on the lack of accountability that can occur in collaborative efforts:

Collaboration highlights work-in-progress ... that there is no work, and there is no progress.

*It’s difficult to say “the buck stops here” when the “here” is spread amongst so many in so many locations. It can be easy to hide inside a collaborative effort without doing much actual work, because your individual role/expectations/output may be difficult to isolate and the person in charge may not have much control over your job performance (does not have power to hire/fire/review). Wally in the Dilbert cartoons has made a career out of exploiting the vagueness of individual accountability in collaboration to end up doing nothing.*⁶

While there are various surface reactions to dealing with a lack of progress, hiring the right people to begin with is the root mitigation strategy. Finding, hiring, and encouraging people who want to work hard and get stuff done—in conjunction with other people—is essential to creating a high-performance organization. With respect to surface reactions, however, approaches to dealing with a lack of progress include offering additional coaching on effective collaborative work, training in personal time management, and the introduction of formal project management methodologies.

Downside 4. No Additional Benefit or Value is Gained

Collaboration may not be required, based on the nature of the task. The outcome from the task may be achievable by a single person working alone, or by a group working without reference to other groups. In such cases, forcing collaboration on the task will result in greater expenditure of time and effort, with no gain in benefit, and possibly even a decline in overall value. This is what happened at Sterling, when all sales teams had to “collaborate” with other sales teams and experts during the creation of proposals, even though it was only the new sales teams who needed the benefits that collaboration with experts could bring.⁷

Reducing the negative effect of this downside is centered on being clear about why collaboration is needed for a particular task or project. Is it due to needing access to specialized knowledge that one person does not have? Is it due to needed buy-in and support from multiple parts of the organization? The manager responsible for allocating the task to a group should clearly specify to themselves first, and to the group second, why multiple people need to be involved.

Downside 5. Seeing Outside Perspectives is More Difficult

Collaboration can lead to groups becoming blind to outside perspectives, particularly among groups that have worked together successfully in the past. Their internal process for deciding on the importance of information has become stabilized, which is positive for increased efficiency, but at the same time negative for ongoing effectiveness. It can be negative for ongoing effectiveness because when the external environment changes—through new industry regulations, the entrance of new competitors, or the change in consumer preferences—the group can't see the implications of these changes. The group's internal stability hides the lack of stability on the outside.

For example, consider the fiasco around HP's release of the WebOS-powered TouchPad tablet in mid-2011. Facing stiff competition from the Apple iPad, HP pulled the product from all global sales channels after only 10 weeks. While we could applaud HP for listening to the market, the bigger question is why the TouchPad made it to market in the first place. Palm, which HP purchased for \$1.2 billion in 2010, hadn't released a runaway product for years, and the tablet market was crowded with Apple in the foreground and many other challengers rallying for position. The level of ineptitude at HP in being unable to see that the TouchPad faced a tremendously difficult road from day one is startling, but this was exacerbated by the swift removal from the market instead of committing for the long-term.⁸

Mitigations for this downside center on bringing in new people, looking at the current situation from new viewpoints, and deliberately seeking out counter-arguments.

Downside 6. Innovative Ideas are Held Back

Collaboration can cause innovative ideas to be watered down or neglected altogether. As awareness develops among the team members of each others' individual preferences, a given member may feel that their idea is too radical for the group, or will get shot down in discussion. Therefore they suggest it with only half-hearted enthusiasm, or never voice it at all. If that innovative idea is exactly what the group needs, future performance is compromised.

Collaborative groups are great when they work, and terrible when they don't.

Collaborative groups are great when they work, and terrible when they don't. The risk with ongoing groups is that they get stuck in a particular way of doing things, and lack the willingness to make fundamental changes. There are two recommended ways of dealing with such groups—bringing in an external expert to review the performance of the group, and changing the group members. For both, however, the pressure to conform to current ways of working will be significant. For the external expert, the group will argue against his or her recommendations if it involves significant change. For changing group members, if only one or two people are changed at any given time, the group will attempt to socialize them into the group's current performance strategy. In the final analysis, take it as a warning sign when a group that's supposed to be doing important work for the organization is always recommending the same course of action. It may be time to get rid of the group entirely, and start again with a completely new set of people.

Downside 7. Distinguishing Collaboration from Joint Work is Difficult

Distinguishing collaborative work from other joint work can be difficult, particularly when thinking about the technology people use to get their jobs done. They send an email message to a colleague suggesting lunch, another message to a direct report to set up a meeting, and a third message with their feedback on a draft document for the team project. The technology used is the same, although only the third message is part of a bigger picture collaborative effort. When everything flows through a single tool, it can be difficult to show the differences between collaborative work and non-collaborative work. Or think about meetings. They can be a deeply collaborative affair for creating shared understanding between a group of people, or merely another way of asserting your right to speak and pull rank. It's a meeting nonetheless, but not all meetings are created equal.

Collaboration is an implicit part of work, especially in modern organizations.

Collaboration is an implicit part of work, especially in modern organizations. One estimate puts the costs of collaboration at over 80% of the annual budget, and yet there isn't anyone with responsibility for "collaboration." It's implicit and invisible. "*We're collaborating*" indicates a constellation of many common processes in working together to achieve a common outcome, rather than a particular special activity that only applies to collaborative work. There is work that's more collaborative than other types of work, but there is a risk of becoming too fixated on very nuanced differences in trying to explain exactly what collaboration is and is not.

Downside 8. Extra Time to Complete the Work is Required

Collaboration adds time to the process of completing a successful project. Groups made up of people who have not worked together before, and groups with a changing roster of members will frequently take longer to complete a project successfully compared to more mature and stable groups. Requiring more time to complete the project is usually due to

increased coordination costs—the time and effort required to keep each team member apprised of what other team members are doing, and by implication, what each team member should do next. These coordination costs are shown through a greater number of meetings, or a higher incidence of email discussion threads to share status updates.

There are a few ways of reducing the extra coordination costs in collaborative projects, but before jumping to possible mitigations, it's important to respect what is going on here. The coordination of joint action is essential to the project getting done, and as team members work together over time, the cost of extra coordination will decline. However, bringing people together—in person—at the beginning of a new project can reduce ongoing coordination costs, because team members have a greater awareness of each other and their respective styles. Likewise, for intensive work during the collaboration, nothing beats putting people in the same room. On a more fundamental level, though, by keeping project teams small enough, coordination costs can be minimized.

Downside 9. Seizing the Collaboration Mandate Leads to Big Changes

The final downside is that collaboration is very unforgiving of half-hearted attempts. A leader, manager, or employee can't be collaborative one moment and dictatorial the next. You can't say you respect a team member's opinion in one breath and then shout at them for their dumb and stupid ideas moments later. Incentive schemes that reward individual excellence, compensation strategies that create rivalry between departments, and talking "collaboration" only when it suits, denigrate the concept and possibility of collaboration. Unless collaboration is a way of living and being all the time, it's not going to work. This isn't to say that perfection across your organization in collaboration from day one is required, just that if collaboration is advocated in name only—to align with flavor-of-the-month management speak—then it's not going to work.

Making collaboration work in an organization requires an authentic willingness to change the culture, incentive schemes, internal competition dynamics, and working practices across-the-board. But it's not all going to happen at once, or even quickly—for bigger firms with people spread across the world, transitioning to a collaborative way will take years. Start the journey, and then keep going. Take notice of what isn't working, and make the necessary changes. Observe the conflicts that collaboration brings about, and decide whether the conflict is something intimately linked with being collaborative or something that's detrimental to ongoing efforts. Take notice, and then take appropriate action.

Summary—Downsides of Collaboration

In this section, we have looked into nine significant downsides to collaboration, and briefly discussed mitigation strategies. There is a lot more than could be said about these downsides and the mitigation strategies, but that will have to wait for a future book.

Summary

This Appendix has outlined a high-level view of the concept of collaboration, and examined it from many angles. We looked at the three pre-conditions required for a collaborative approach to make sense, along with the implications of missing particular pre-conditions. We discussed how communication is an essential element of collaboration, but how collaboration is a much broader concept that also encompasses agreements, action, and an outcome-orientation. Finally, we touched briefly on the three core patterns of collaborative work, and delved into the downsides of collaboration.

This Appendix has outlined a high-level view of the concept of collaboration, and examined it from many angles.

¹ John Michael Simpson, the CIO of the Mississippi Department of Transportation, talked about this scenario for roadside mowing equipment at the Share2010 conference in Sydney in November 2010. See my notes on his session at currents.michaelsampson.net/2010/11/share2010-session2.html.

² For more on the collaboration value of the Star Alliance—for passengers, the airlines, and the industry—see currents.michaelsampson.net/2010/12/staralliance-collaboration.html.

³ If Jane does the initial research component, future task allocations for this could be “assigned” to her with a mere glance from the team leader. If Bob is the team leader, he could glance over at Jane while saying “*There will be some research required in this next phase*,” and assuming that Jane doesn’t disagree that she will do the research, the task is hers.

⁴ Michael Schrage, “*Competition Plus Collaboration Equals Innovation*,” published March 2007. See www.cio.com/article/40974/Competition_Plus_Collaboration_Equals_Innovation.

⁵ I don’t know if Martin is the originator of the quote as such, but I heard it first from him at a conference in Europe in 2010. So I treat it as “Martin’s quote.” For more on Martin White, his books, and his consulting work around intranets, see www.intranetfocus.com.

⁶ The McKinsey article is entitled “*Using Technology to Improve Workforce Collaboration*,” published October 2009. The comment I included is from Gerald Nanninga, on page 3 of the comments. See whatmatters.mckinseydigital.com/internet/using-technology-to-improve-workforce-collaboration.

⁷ For the story about how collaboration hurt business performance at Sterling, see pages 38-39 of Morten Hansen’s 2009 book, *Collaboration: How Leaders Avoid the Traps, Create Unity, and Reap Big Results*. www.thecollaborationbook.com.

⁸ For more on HP and the webOS fiasco, see “*HP washing its hands of webOS: discontinues tablets, Pre phones*,” by Casey Johnston on Ars Technica, at arstechnica.com/gadgets/news/2011/08/hp-washing-its-hands-of-webos-discontinues-tablets-pre-phones.ars (August 2011). In September 2011, after the webOS announcement, the then-CEO of HP was removed and replaced by Meg Whitman, previously CEO at eBay. HP’s current position on webOS-based devices has not changed. It is, however, offering tablets running Windows 7, with future devices expected to run Windows 8.

Appendix 2.

Detailed Table of Contents

Page 8 provides a Visual Overview of the book. Here is the detailed Table of Contents.

Acknowledgements	6
Visual Overview of Collaboration Roadmap	8
Table of Contents	9
Overview	11
My History with Collaboration	11
Four Reasons for Writing Collaboration Roadmap	11
What's New in Collaboration Roadmap	12
A Few Words on Independent Advice	13
A Note About Web Links	14
Let's Talk	14
Foreward—by Ed Brill, IBM Corporation	15
Chapter 1. <i>Setting the Scene</i>	17
What's Changed to Make Collaboration So Important?	18
Difference 1. The World is Smaller	18
Difference 2. The World is More Complex	20
Difference 3. The Workforce is More Distributed	22
Difference 4. More Emphasis on Brain than Brawn	24
Summary—Collaboration is Important	25
So What's the Problem	26
The Solution: A Collaboration Roadmap	28
Why the Roadmap Starts with Technology	29
Collaboration Roadmap Versus Vendor Roadmap	30
Intended Audience	31
Summary	32

Chapter 2. <i>Really Understand the Technology</i>	35
How to Read this Chapter	36
Frameworks for Evaluating Collaboration Technology	38
Why Are These Frameworks Necessary?	38
Framework 1. Collaborative Teams—the Seven Pillars	39
Pillar 1. Shared Access to Team Data	40
Pillar 2. Location Independence	42
Pillar 3. Real-Time Joint Authoring and Editing	44
Pillar 4. Team-Aware Calendaring	46
Pillar 5. Social Engagement	48
Pillar 6. Team Task Management	50
Pillar 7. Collaboration Auto-Discovery	52
How to Use the Seven Pillars Framework	54
Framework 2. Collaborative Groups—the Four Connectors	55
Connector 1. Common Area for Conversation and Discussion	56
Connector 2. Common Storage of Shared Artifacts	58
Connector 3. Common Calendar for Upcoming Real-Time Events	60
Connector 4. Surfacing of Related Groups and Conversations	62
How to Use the Four Connectors Framework	64
Framework 3. Collaborative Organizations—the Four Foundations	65
Organizational Collaboration: Philosophy	65
Meet Julian from Product Development	66
Foundation 1. Identify Expertise Shown in Collaborative Systems	67
Foundation 2. Correlate Knowledge Stored in Collaborative Systems	70
Foundation 3. Signal Activity on Collaborative Topics	73
Foundation 4. Form Ad-Hoc Groups to Explore Collaboration Potential	76
How to Use the Four Foundations Framework	78
Integrating the Three Frameworks	79
Framework 4. Collaboration Scenarios	80
Emphasis and Assumptions	80
Common Collaboration Scenarios	80
Three Step Process	81
Collaboration Scenario 1. Document Co-Authoring	82
Collaboration Scenario 2. Managing Meetings	84
Collaboration Scenario 3. Sharing Learning and Best Practices	86
Collaboration Scenario 4. Individual Coherence	88
How to Use the Collaboration Scenarios Framework	90
Decision Factors with Collaboration Technology	91
Factor 1. Viability of the Vendor	91
Factor 2. Financial Cost of the Product Over Time	92
Factor 3. Capabilities of the Product	93
Base 1. What the Product Offers Today (Document Review)	
Base 2. What the Product May Offer Tomorrow (Vendor Roadmap Review)	
Base 3. How the Product Actually Behaves (Lab Study)	
Factor 4. Business Partner Channel and Support Mechanisms	94
Factor 5. Alignment with Other IT Strategies	95

Create a Decision Matrix	96
Decision Strategy: Mitigate or Migrate	98
Signal 1. Other Firms Are Making the Product Work	
Signal 2. You Intend to Recreate the Current Way in the New Technology	
Signal 3. You Know What Went Wrong with the Current Technology	
Signal 4. Third-Party Products Are Available to Cover the Gaps	
A Final Comment	
Summary	100
 Chapter 3. <i>Outline the Vision</i>	103
Revisiting the Fundamentals	104
Three Challenges	104
Being “Business-Led” Versus “Technology-Led”	105
Value Propositions of Collaboration Technology	106
Core Value 1. Improve Process Efficiency	106
By Reducing Travel Expenses	
By Working Together Regardless of Location	
By Reducing Process Activity Time	
By Reducing Variation	
Core Value 2. Increase Process Effectiveness	108
By Improving Meeting Effectiveness	
By Improving Activity Coordination	
By Improving Decision Agility	
By Improving Product Design	
Core Value 3. Increase Organizational Effectiveness	110
By Reducing Duplication of Effort and Deepening Learning	
By Becoming “One Firm” to Leverage Scale and Expertise	
By Enhancing Organizational Memory	
By Allowing Flexibility in Organizational Design	
Core Value 4. Encourage Innovation	112
By Staffing Teams for Innovation	
By Holding a “Jam” to Explore New Ideas	
By Seeking Product and Service Ideas from Customers	
By Inviting Feedback from Experts	
Core Value 5. Improve Communication	114
By Improving Shared Understanding About Project Status and Current Work	
By Replacing Frustration About Data Currency with Argument on Implications	
By Reducing the Cost of Communication	
By Reducing Time-to-Contact	
On “Less Email, Fewer Phone Calls, Fewer Meetings”	
Core Value 6. Deepen Customer Intimacy	117
Customer Intimacy at the Organizational Level	
Customer Intimacy at the Individual Level	
Two Supplementary Value Propositions	118
By Reducing Environmental Impact Through Reduced Carbon Emissions	
By Reducing Email Storage Requirements	

Alternatively, Ask a Different Fundamental Question	119
What's Your Vision?	120
Step 1. What are the Core Collaboration Scenarios?	120
Step 2. Where are the Opportunities for Improvement?	121
Step 3. What's the Size and Scope of the Various Opportunities?	122
Step 4. Where's the Best Place to Start?	122
Summary	122
 Chapter 4. <i>Accept Technology is a Small Factor in Success</i>	125
You've Got the Best: Is it Enough?	126
Collaboration Frameworks	127
Framework 1. Impediments to Implementation	127
Framework 2. SharePoint for Business	128
Framework 3. 90% People, 10% Technology	130
Framework 4. Avoiding Failure or Chasing Success	132
Framework 5. Academics on How IS/IT Creates Value	134
Framework 6. Barriers to Collaboration	136
Framework 7. Lessons from Lessons Learned	137
Key Lessons from the Frameworks	138
Still Not Convinced?	140
Summary	140

Chapter 5. <i>Determine Your Governance Approach</i>	143
Defining Governance	144
First Principles: Governing Transactions	144
Why Governance Before Engagement and User Adoption?	146
Why Do We Need Governance?	146
Governance Reason 1. Avoiding the Mistakes of Yesteryear	
Governance Reason 2. Avoiding Individual Choices Derailing Collaboration	
Governance Reason 3. Avoiding Information Management Chaos	
Governance Reason 4. Avoiding the “New Tools, Same Outcome” Trap	
Governance Reason 5. To Get Somewhere Great	
Macro-Governance: Governing the Use of the Technology	152
The Grand Unified Theory of Governance	153
Level 1. Operate/Explore	
Level 2. Manage/Control	
Level 3. Value/Leverage	
Summary—Defining Governance	155
Governance Structure: Ownership and Decision Rights	157
A Structure for Governance	157
Group 1. Strategy and Steering Group	158
Group 2. Business Impact Group	160
Group 3. Collaboration Technology Group	161
A Process for Making Governance Decisions	163
Governance Themes for Collaboration	165
Three Exclusions to Our Discussion	165
Six Governance Themes	166
Governance Theme 1. Team or Group Space Creation Rights	
Governance Theme 2. Team or Group Space Closure Policy	
Governance Theme 3. Team and Group Space Standardization	
Governance Theme 4. Third-Party Products	
Governance Theme 5. Intent of Collaborative Group Spaces	
Governance Theme 6. External Access for Clients and Partners	
Patterns of Governance Themes	176
Summary—Governance Themes	176
Getting Governance Going at Your Place	178
We Are At Level 1. Operate/Explore	178
We Are At Level 2. Manage/Control	179
We Are At Level 3. Value/Leverage	179
Summary	180

Chapter 6. <i>Make Every Effort to Engage the Business</i>	183
What is Engagement?	184
How We Talk About Engagement in Daily Life	184
How IT People Talk About Engagement	185
A Working Definition of “Engaging the Business”	186
Engaging the Business Versus Business Requirements Capture	186
The Role of Engagement in Collaboration	187
McKinsey: Your Approach Matters	187
Five Hallmarks of Engagement	188
Hallmark 1. Joint Discovery and Learning	189
Hallmark 2. People From Different Groups and Backgrounds	190
Hallmark 3. Permission to Not Know, Commitment to Teach	191
Hallmark 4. Willingness to Overlook Apparent Fault	192
Hallmark 5. Joint Intention Towards an Evolving Shared Vision	193
Summary—Five Hallmarks	193
Strategies for Engagement	194
Strategy 1. Lunch	195
Strategy 2. One-to-One Meetings	196
Strategy 3. Brown Bag Lunches	197
Strategy 4. Workshops	198
Strategy 5. Proof-of-Concept Examples	200
Type 1. Generalized Proof-of-Concept: Demonstrating Functionality	
Type 2. Specific Proof-of-Concept: Demonstrating Business Value	
Strategy 6. Internal Surveys	202
Strategy 7. Exploratory Pilot Projects	203
Summary—Strategies for Engagement	203
Examples	204
Example 1. Insurance Firm	204
Example 2. Research Firm	205
Example 3. Professional Services Firm	206
Example 4. Manufacturing Firm	207
Example 5. Global Consulting Firm	207
Capturing What You Learn	208
Written Notes	208
Video	208
Analyzing What You Learn	209
Database or Wiki	209
Document	209
Warnings About Engagement	210
Warning 1. There is a Cost of Only Pretending to Engage	210
Warning 2. Don’t Demand “Big Engagement” Before “Little Engagement”	211
Warning 3. Don’t Drive Change—Facilitate It	212
Engagement Versus User Adoption	213
Summary	214

Chapter 7. <i>Apply Intentional Energy to Adoption</i>	217
Adoption Theory: Key Concepts	218
No Adoption, No Benefit	218
User Adoption is a Common Problem	219
Models of Change	220
Roadblocks to Change	
Four Models of Change	
Key Lessons on Effective Change	
First Wave Versus Second Wave People	222
Four Stage Model of User Adoption	223
Is the Process Linear?	
Don't Do Them All	
User Adoption Survey	225
Strategies for User Adoption	226
Stage 1. Winning Attention	226
Strategy 1.1 Executive Support	
Strategy 1.2 Real-to-Life Scenarios	
Strategy 1.3 Exemplar Stories	
Strategy 1.4 Roadshow	
Strategy 1.5 Organizational Chaos	
Examples and Case Studies	
Stage 2. Cultivating Basic Concepts	233
Strategy 2.1 Classroom Training	
Strategy 2.2 Web-Based Training	
Strategy 2.3 Pages on the Intranet	
Examples and Case Studies	
Stage 3. Enlivening Applicability	238
Strategy 3.1 Facilitated Group Re-Imagining	
Strategy 3.2 Over-the-Shoulder Watching	
Strategy 3.3 Embedded Champion	
Strategy 3.4 Sandbox for Experimentation	
Strategy 3.5 Easy First Steps	
Strategy 3.6 Build It And They Will Come	
Examples and Case Studies	
Stage 4. Making It Real	246
Strategy 4.1 Zero Other Options	
Strategy 4.2 Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns	
Strategy 4.3 Bulk Loading Party	
Strategy 4.4 Internal User Group	
Examples and Case Studies	
Strategies for User Adoption: Closing Comments	253
Creating Your User Adoption Approach	254
Tool 1. The User Adoption Jigsaw	254
Adding More Pieces to the Jigsaw	
It Takes Time to Complete the Jigsaw	
The Danger of Dropping the Ball	
Tool 2. Write Out Your User Adoption Approach	258
Tool 3. Appoint a User Adoption Analyst	259

What To Do When Nothing Works	260
Summary	261
 Chapter 8. <i>Pursue Increasing Value</i>	263
The Pursuit of Value	264
A Framework for Pursuing Increasing Value	264
Strategy 1. Keep Focused on the Human Practices of Collaboration	266
Face-to-Face Interaction Rapidly Creates Trust and Collaborative Willingness	
Play the Long Game	
Emphasize Effective Practice	
Address Collaboration Missteps	
Strategy 2. Work with New Teams and Groups to Spread the Learning	268
Engage with Similar Teams and Groups	
Engage with Different Teams and Groups	
Re-Engage with Teams and Groups that were Reluctant to Participate	
Re-Engage with Teams and Groups with Out-of-Scope Requirements	
Strategy 3. Extend What You're Doing Into New Processes	270
The World Has Changed—What are the Current Collaboration Challenges?	
You've Done Collaborative Teams, Now Address Collaborative Groups	
You've Earned Your Stripes, Now Change the World	
A Comment on Products Versus Platforms	
Strategy 4. Learn About New Opportunities and Possibilities	272
Read Case Studies from Vendors	
Attend Product-Focused Conferences	
Attend Themes-Focused Conferences	
Talk with Practitioners About Their Work	
Use Online Communities to Connect with Similar People	
Write Up Your Work for an Industry Publication	
Summary	274
 Chapter 9. <i>Your Collaboration Journey</i>	275
A Brief Recap of Our Journey	276
Six Additional Resources for Your Journey	278
Resource 1. Read my Blog, Books, and Reports	278
Resource 2. Register for the Collaboration Roadmap Newsletter	279
Resource 3. Attend the Public Seminar	279
Resource 4. Host the In-House Workshop	281
Resource 5. Engage Michael for Consulting on Collaboration	282
Resource 6. Let's Discuss Your Journey	283
Go and Do Great Work	283

Appendices

Appendix 1. <i>Collaboration Theory</i>	285
Collaboration is a Means to an End	286
Collaboration Has Three Pre-Conditions	286
Pre-Condition 1. Practice	287
Pre-Condition 2. Process	287
Pre-Condition 3. Potential	288
Missing Pre-Conditions	289
Collaboration is More Than Just Communication	290
Communication—How We Discuss and Decide What To Do	290
Agreements—How We Stabilize Performance	292
Action—When We Do Stuff	293
Outcome—Why We Are Collaborating	294
Summary—Four Elements of Collaboration	295
Collaboration is Seen in Three Types of Work	295
Collaboration Can Take Place at Different Levels	297
Collaboration Has Significant Downsides	298
Downside 1. Decision-Making Approaches are Worse	298
Downside 2. On Average, People Invest Less of Themselves	299
Downside 3. Work-in-Progress is Highlighted	300
Downside 4. No Additional Benefit or Value is Gained	300
Downside 5. Seeing Outside Perspectives is More Difficult	301
Downside 6. Innovative Ideas are Held Back	301
Downside 7. Distinguishing Collaboration from Joint Work is Difficult	302
Downside 8. Extra Time to Complete the Work is Required	302
Downside 9. Seizing the Collaboration Mandate Leads to Big Changes	303
Summary—Downsides of Collaboration	303
Summary	304
 Appendix 2. Detailed Table of Contents	 307
 Appendix 3. Table of Figures	 317
 About the Author	 320

Appendix 3.

Table of Figures

Chapter 1. *Setting the Scene*

Figure 1-1. Effects Are Felt More Widely Than Natural Boundaries	20
Figure 1-2. Four Major Differences When Taking a Long View on Work	25

Chapter 2. *Really Understand the Technology*

Figure 2-1. How to Read Chapter 2—Goal Alignment	36
Figure 2-2. How to Read Chapter 2—Organizational Size	37
Figure 2-3. SharePoint 2010 Team Site	41
Figure 2-4. IBM Lotus Notes TeamRoom with Offline Access	43
Figure 2-5. Google Docs with Real-Time Joint Editing	45
Figure 2-6. SharePoint 2010 Calendaring in Outlook 2010	47
Figure 2-7. Yammer for Social Engagement	49
Figure 2-8. Huddle for Team Task Management	51
Figure 2-9. Analyzing a Fictitious Collaboration Product Against the Seven Pillars	54
Figure 2-10. Collaborative Teams and Collaborative Groups	55
Figure 2-11. Common Area for Conversation and Discussion	57
Figure 2-12. Common Storage of Shared Artifacts	59
Figure 2-13. Common Calendar for Upcoming Real-Time Events	61
Figure 2-14. Surfacing of Related Groups and Conversations	63
Figure 2-15. Identifying Expertise and Creating Connections	69
Figure 2-16. Activity Signaling in IBM Connections	75
Figure 2-17. Forming Ad-Hoc Groups in Yammer	77
Figure 2-18. Integrating the Three Collaboration Frameworks	79
Figure 2-19. Document Co-Authoring Alternatives	83
Figure 2-20. Sharing Learning and Best Practice Alternatives	87
Figure 2-21. Examining Individual Coherence	89
Figure 2-22. A Weighted Decision Matrix	97
Figure 2-23. Grading Scheme for the Seven Pillars	101

Chapter 3. *Outline the Vision*

Figure 3-1. Explaining SharePoint for Project Work	114
Figure 3-2. The Four Steps to Vision	120

Chapter 4. *Accept Technology is a Small Factor in Success*

Figure 4-1. Impediments to Implementation—from AIIM	127
Figure 4-2. SharePoint for Business	129
Figure 4-3. 90% People, 10% Technology	131
Figure 4-4. Avoiding Failure or Chasing Success	133
Figure 4-5. How IT Creates Value	134
Figure 4-6. How IT Creates Value (Redux)	135
Figure 4-7. Integrating the Frameworks	138

Chapter 5. *Determine Your Governance Approach*

Figure 5-1. Governance Processes Between Simple Entities	145
Figure 5-2. Governance Processes at Scale	145
Figure 5-3. Five Reasons Why Governance is Needed	146
Figure 5-4. Micro-Governance Versus Macro-Governance	152
Figure 5-5. Three Levels on the Governance Journey	153
Figure 5-6. Examining the Three Levels on the Governance Journey	156
Figure 5-7. The Role of the Strategy and Steering Group	159
Figure 5-8. The Role of the Business Impact Group	161
Figure 5-9. The Role of the Collaboration Technology Group	162
Figure 5-10. A Decision Process for Making Governance Decisions	164
Figure 5-11. Governance Themes for Collaboration	177
Figure 5-12. Three Levels on the Governance Journey	178

Chapter 6. *Make Every Effort to Engage the Business*

Figure 6-1. McKinsey on How Companies Adopt Web 2.0 Tools	188
Figure 6-2. The Five Hallmarks of Engagement	193
Figure 6-3. The Engagement Journey	194
Figure 6-4. Sample Questions for an Internal Survey	202

Chapter 7. ***Apply Intentional Energy to Adoption***

Figure 7-1. Poor Adoption Equals Wasted Expenditure and a Lost Opportunity	218
Figure 7-2. The Four Stages Model of User Adoption	223
Figure 7-3. Size of Organization	225
Figure 7-4. Survey Results for Strategies for Winning Attention	226
Figure 7-5. A Real-to-Life Scenario	232
Figure 7-6. Survey Results for Strategies for Cultivating Basic Concepts	233
Figure 7-7. Survey Results for Strategies for Enlivening Applicability	238
Figure 7-8. Survey Results for Strategies for Making It Real	246
Figure 7-9. Stop Doing, Start Doing Patterns in Yammer	249
Figure 7-10. User Adoption Jigsaw	254
Figure 7-11. Extending Stage 3 of the Jigsaw	256

Chapter 8. ***Pursue Increasing Value***

Figure 8-1. A Framework for Pursuing Increasing Value	265

Chapter 9. ***Your Collaboration Journey***

Figure 9-1. Collaboration Roadmap Assessment: Rate Your Journey	277

Appendix 1. ***Collaboration Theory***

Figure A-1. The Three Pre-Conditions of Collaboration	286
Figure A-2. The Consequences of Missing Pre-Conditions	290
Figure A-3. Four Elements of Collaboration	292
Figure A-4. Three Types of Collaborative Work	296

About the Author

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- Michael's blog on current happenings in the collaboration world, covering collaboration thinking, philosophy, approaches, and technology. See currents.michaelsampson.net.
- Resource centers on aspects of making collaboration work—including governing collaboration, user adoption, and the human practices of collaboration. See michaelsampson.net/resourcecenters.html.
- Books on making collaboration work, with a focus on collaboration strategy, governing, and how to encourage user adoption. Current titles are *Seamless Teamwork* (2008), *SharePoint Roadmap for Collaboration* (2009), and *User Adoption Strategies* (2010). *Collaboration Roadmap* is Michael's fourth book. See michaelsampson.net/books.html.
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- User Adoption Strategies: Shifting Second Wave People to New Collaboration Technology
- SharePoint Roadmap for Collaboration: Using SharePoint to Enhance Business Collaboration
- Seamless Teamwork: Using Microsoft SharePoint Technologies to Collaborate, Innovate, and Drive Business in New Ways

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