

### Crystal Ball: What will the Future bring to Collaboration?

In today's environment one cannot speak about Innovation without speaking of Collaboration. As Innovation is to Growth, Collaboration is to Innovation. Most of us have come to the realization that a group or team will always come up with a better solution than any single individual will. ....although we all likely know somebody who really has not bought into this and truly believes that they know it all and that they can do it all better themselves... The trick is to harness the collective knowledge and experience of all the members and go through a magical process and come up with a wonderful solution.....simple.....right? We have all heard of the methodology....Forming....Norming....Storming...and Performing. We have also learned that if groups work together for a long period of time.....they can get caught or stuck with "Groupthink" and need new members to bring in new ideas and ways of approaching problems to come up with better solutions. All great.....but if we look into the crystal ball....what is happening and what is coming toward us? What will the future bring us? What are some of the changes which will have impact on how we work together ....collaborate and innovate? Let us examine three aspects which will have great impact.....

1. Mobility....how we work....where team members are
2. Changing demographics.....a new generation is about to join the workforce
3. Global Collaboration across traditional boundaries

**Mobility.....**In 2012 IDC -- International Data Corporation, a leading global provider of market intelligence, advisory services, and events for the information technology, telecommunications, and consumer technology markets, published a study on Mobility. In its report is stated..... "Our forecast shows that the worldwide mobile worker population will increase from just over 1 billion in 2010 to more than 1.3 billion by 2015." This represents 37.2% of the total workforce. More and more people are working from home as teleworkers...whether part or full-time.....others are on the road large portions of the time. Teams who need to work together are often scattered over multiple locations. There is an expectation that each of us is to do more and more with fewer resources. Getting everybody together to come up with this "magical" better solution is not happening anymore, or at least not as often. Getting everyone together is both very time consuming and very expensive. An immediate solution, which many of us resort to.....is serial "one on one" conversations. After having a series of one on one conversations with others, the collective thoughts and inputs are compiled, and if time is available it may be circulated for comments.....but is this the "best possible" outcome? Likely not. So why is it that organizations think that they can make this work? The enabler is ....of course TECHNOLOGY. The list of tools available to all these people, teams and groups is endless. ....more and more of them as SaaS platforms (Software as a service). There are tools to help people share.....tools to help them communicate....tools to search.....and more and more organizations are putting in place industrial strength "Facebook-like" applications such as Moxiesoft, Jive or Yammer in order to increase employee engagement and promote sharing and joint problem solving.

Now to the second element....changing demographics.....what does that have to do with innovation....with collaboration? How many of you speak another language?.....now how many of you were raised bilingually? Learning a language as a child is a very different experience than learning a language later in life as an adult. As a child it is seemingly effortless...all comes on its own....easy. Learning later in life requires huge effort and time commitment. The languages learnt intuitively as a child are actually stored and processed in a different part of the brain than languages learned later in life.

How does this fit in the context of history....remember ?

First Personal computers? ...1983.....significant roll out in the years following that...? The Internet?.....early 90s.....then....first desktop internet based video conferences? ...also early 90s.

Now that is all interesting and very "Adult".....but what were the kids doing? Around 2005 the teenagers were all signing up for MySpace and Facebook in droves.

But what were the little kids doing? Remember Club Penguin? Webkinz? Millions of kids signed up. These were on-line sites where children joined, played and invited their on-line friends to come and play with them. Six year olds were signing up and playing on-line with their friends. Many parents were introduced to the concept of a "virtual" playdates! They have saved lots of driving time. Along the way gaming consoles with VOIP connections also joined the m le. Kids could talk and socialize, all while playing a game. Many of these children then found SmartBoards and "BlackBoard" in high school and university.

So the significance of all this...? These kids...they are the first generation of native "digital" speakers, the ones that grew up in this new environment, they are now in university and over the next 5 years this first wave up will be entering the workforce. They work, share and communicate differently. Their reference base is different and will have huge impact as they rise through the ranks and build their influence. And now for the third element .... Collaboration across traditional boundaries....both across geographic borders as well as across the boundaries of organizations. The world faces issues which cannot be solved on a piecemeal basis.....examples are energy and the environment. The challenge is how to make the lifecycle of a product (design, manufacture, transport, use and ultimately, disposal) as eco-efficient as possible.

On a global level there is an initiative led by the WBCSD. This stands for the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. This organization was originally founded in 1992 on the eve of the Rio Earth Summit. The WBCSD is a CEO-led organization of forward-thinking companies that galvanizes the global business community to create a sustainable future for business, society and the environment. As members, it now has over 200 world leading corporations, representing virtually all industries and countries.

A great initiative on a global level.....but what does that mean for us?...today? What can we do? How does this fit into how we innovate?...how we collaborate? Each of us can look at the supply chain we are part of. We each have our suppliers, our partners and our customers. Often a change by one party, which make cause cost to them.....can allow another member of the value chain to dramatically reduce its costs.

In order to realize this potential, we all need to look at how we work together with our supply chain members.....yes we need to innovate...we need to collaborate.

So now back to our three elements of change....mobility, demographics and collaborating across traditional boundaries. These will have, actually already are having, tremendous impact on our behavior, how we work (together), our processes and the tools we use. This all needs to be while keeping governance, privacy, access and security intact. On one had we must encourage "openness" in order to collaborate, yet on the other hand we are well aware of the fact that uncontrolled, increased "openness" can make us vulnerable. We have much to learn, much to understand. So much so that at Collabogence with a partner, are embarking on a major research initiative to develop a methodology, framework and tools which will allow us to measure how well teams and organizations are doing and allow them to move forward with greater confidence in changing their organization and investing in new tools. More and more groups and teams will be enabled by "applications clusters" of tools which will greatly facilitate what they are doing. The research will focus on mapping each of the tools used against four quadrants;

- Sharing: how we create, store, manage and access information
  - Communication: how we communicate, do we initiate, participate, work "one on one" or in groups
  - Search: how we find it.....how curious are we.....how much effort are we willing to undertake....and how much value does the information we create represent for others?
  - Enterprise 2.0, Social, the communities: how "engaged" are the participants? Do people ask? Do they answer? Do they do so regularly? Or once in a blue moon?
- All very interesting....Fascinating.....stay tuned

*Collabogence is an advisory firm focused on improving collaborative activity and performance, including the use of technology, especially in virtual/remote global teams and collaborating across the firewall with customers, partners and suppliers.*