

*The following material has recently been used to great success with management and leadership teams. If you'd like to learn more, please review our Programs and contact us at [www.leadershiptransformationgroup.com](http://www.leadershiptransformationgroup.com)*



## **Planning for Ongoing Collaboration: Leading Intra-Agency Work through Indirect Management**

Interdivisional work requires ongoing cooperation and collaboration so that these systems keep improving. When they are identified as these have been, they are hard enough to do! But there will come a time when breakdowns occur, requiring each of you to initiate a collaborative activity with another program, zone, or district that may take considerable effort.

You will then run into the reality that your formal authority falls short of your responsibilities and success—that some of the success of you and your unit is dependent upon the actions of others outside your chain of command. Responding effectively to this challenge will require you to establish a collaborative work environment across units even without that formal authority. To do so will require you to use what David Lax and James Sebenius calls “indirect management.”

To engage in indirect management means you desire a systems improvement where you and others have concentrated responsibility but shared authority and resources. In other words, there are things you see that have to change and that are affecting your unit, but you don't really have the power to get others to go along automatically with your request to change.

This organizational reality requires the creation of an ongoing collaborative approach to your work with other units, supervisors and managers—which is at the heart of TQM. Only when you learn to be effective negotiators and collaborators as indirect managers can you succeed in maintaining ongoing quality improvements across an agency as complex and demanding as your organization. Rather than returning to wars between programmatic and/or geographic camps, you will therefore want to plan out how one best collaborates in the future.

# Planning for Ongoing Collaboration



## Planning the Collaboration

1. **Collaboration actually begins with an identified need of one person: you or a member of your team.** When a problem between one unit and another or across a division or office of a particular division happens with frequency, a collaborative manager identifies that problem as a reason to discuss the issue with others.
  - a. To make certain you are on track, brainstorm within your group (perhaps at a staff meeting) an identified problem. If there is time, add in the Five Why's to begin identifying what system needs work.
  - b. Remind unit members to assume that others know their job and that there are other Internal Customers. Your work therefore focuses on systems' identification from the start.
  - c. You have now created Internal Customer expectations within your unit about improvement, and for the sake of reliability set a realistic date for when you will get back to them on the identified problems and what is being done to improve them. Remember—it is more important in maintaining satisfaction to be consistent than quick (and erratic). Don't commit to return to the group in a week if that is unrealistic.
2. **Contacting the collaborator in the other unit, division, or work site**
  - a. Approach your colleague on the basis of a shared goal and not on the basis of the problem they are causing. As much as possible, work from the concrete as to what system needs to be improved for mutual benefit.
  - b. Shape the discussion with your communications skills, including positive and constructive feedback, your per's DISC profile, and, when appropriate, "The Three R's and the Two Truths." Likewise, focus on outcomes leading from improvement, and allow for equal input.
  - c. Define tasks around clear roles that are the basis of the collaboration.
3. **Making it work through your increased professional skills as a leader with the Power of Acknowledgment, TQM Tools and Strategic Action Planning.**

## Planning for Ongoing Collaboration



- a. State the issue in clear terms and then ask for their interpretation. If met with resistance, utilize the Power of Acknowledgment to re- focus the issue in planned, actionable terms that work for everyone.
  - b. Agree on what can be worked on. Use the Five Why's or one of the Advanced TQM Tools to facilitate what is to be done.
  - c. As with good strategic planning, define each point of clarity as a “little victory” or movement towards resolution of the problem.
  - d. Set targets, tasks, and time-lines for when you will meet, using the TQM model of Plan, Do, Study and Act to guide each session.
  - e. Report back on progress to your original group: Collaboration is continuing!
4. **Collaboration, like quality improvement, is continuous and ongoing. The motto of “consistency not constancy” applies here with great meaning.**
- a. Be realistic. Managers and supervisors do not have a great deal of time for cross-divisional work. However, a small amount done over time with permission of your supervisors can make a real impact on your team.
  - b. Some of the most important areas for collaboration are within your own program. See them as opportunities for strengthening your team.