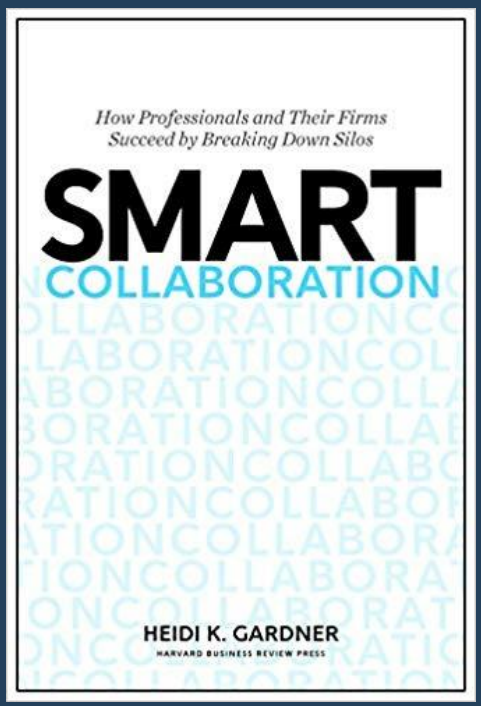

Smart Collaboration

Year of publication: 2017
Author: Heidi K. Gardner
272 pages
Link for purchase: https://amzn.to/2IBNXh2

"Smart Collaboration" is a work written by Heidi K. Gardner with the intention of showing how professionals can leverage the success of their companies.
The book brings case studies and examples related to the real world. In addition, it brings success stories and how to make a collaboration work in the most efficient way.
Launched in 2017 by Harvard Business Review Press, "Smart Collaboration" has 8 chapters and was considered best-selling by the Washington Post.

Score

9

9 Aplicability
8 Inspiration
8 Innovation
9 Impact on results
9 Structure

Main ideias of the book

- Explain the values and strategy of intelligent collaboration;
- How to attract and deal with millennials in the workplace;
- Why shouldn't you be a solo expert;
- How a leader could implement intelligent collaboration in his firm;
- How a client sees and expects a firm to provide it.

For whom is this book suitable?

- Executive Directors;
- Entrepreneurs;
- Business experts;
- Anyone interested in the collaborative field or in becoming a leader.

Overview of the book

Introduction

An intelligent collaboration refers more to the means of a purpose than to the purpose itself. It highlights the individual capacity of each member and their ability to deliver a quality product.
In addition, it analyzes how these members can act as a group to deliver an innovative project, dealing with dense and complex problems.
A smart collaboration is not about you delivering more products to the customer; it's about providing new types of products and quality.
Stimulating teamwork is neither easy nor cheap. The company leader is committed to presenting the benefits of collaboration in a specific and concrete way. In turn, you will have more consistent results and professional success for each individual on your team.

A smart collaboration is not about you delivering more products to the customer; it's about providing new types of products and quality.

But how can a leader implement intelligent collaboration? What are the challenges for the company to embrace collaboration? And how can each individual contribute effectively?

The business case of a collaboration

In this chapter, the author focuses on what business leaders think about the challenges facing their companies: improving the process of their company and, as a result, generating better results.
Heidi says a collaboration is a significant factor that benefits both the financial and the associates of the company. It introduces the four key results of intelligent collaboration:

Revenues and profits

Collaboration is associated with better financial results for the companies. Collaborating generates a higher profit return for old and new service providers, and aims to improve customer service.

Customer loyalty and retention

By improving the quality of service through collaboration, Heidi demonstrates a long-term result: customer reliability at your service.
The more partners serves a client, the longer the client will remain loyal to the company, strengthening the corporate-client relationship.

Innovation

Collaboration leads to better (and more innovative) results and more useful services for the customer, ensuring long-term benefits for them. Innovation happens most when experts work in teams.
The author says that not every problem needs a new solution; but most solutions can be adapted to a specific customer problem.

Transparency and risk management

The practice of collaboration provides better supervision to your co-workers, thereby reducing the risks of misconduct and individuality.
An example of this is the "lone wolf" partner, who is only interested in maintaining the relationships of his clients only and only under his own control.
Gardner, finally, says that benefits only flows if customers are delighted by the values the team provides.

The case of a person of a collaboration

Collaboration not only makes people feel at ease, but is also a "self-fulfilling prophecy":

- people feel in the right place;
- hard work becomes more efficient and effective;
- the company becomes more successful.

Side contracts

Many companies compete to hire the most experienced professionals, but few of them are well equipped to adopt a lateral hiring (in which the company's talent can jump from one department to another).
That's good for both sides, yeah:

- the company is able to retain the professional "talent" in your company;
- The professional can explore different areas within the company, identifying the area that is most identified, professionally, growing faster.

Collaboration ensures that these side contracts are successful and productive. For this, the author explains the stages of how to integrate a successful lateral hiring, among them:

- Leaders should make it clear to the contractor that they expect participation;
- Develop interpersonal trust. A mentor is recommended to assist you with the company's standards, and to develop a new level of contractor confidence towards the company.
- Involve the contractor in the company's mechanisms. Thus, when he has established himself in the company, assign him to a committee position or other leadership position.

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> *For the Millennials generation, collaboration can be seen as an opportunity for empowerment. They expect to be involved in all aspects of the company and are motivated to face challenges. In general, they also value and seek a personal-professional balance.*

Conquering the millennials

For the Millennials generation, collaboration can be seen as an opportunity for empowerment. They expect to be involved in all aspects of the company and are motivated to face challenges. In general, they also value and seek a personal-professional balance.
Note: Do not confuse balance with stabilization in your career. Generation Y seeks to balance the sides of your life so you can work harder and harder to reach new heights faster and faster.
How can a leader improve the performance of a Millennial within his company?

- Clearer, more objective and specific feedback: Millennials have a critical sense of knowing what they are doing. So directing them to where the point of improvement is makes their work more productive;
- Developing a culture of informal feedback: leaders, partners and team members should feel empowered and obliged to provide feedback when necessary to avoid anyone repeating mistakes without knowing;
- Focusing on flexibility: Millennials want more control over their working hours, creating working days that further exploit their productivity.

Creating loyal allies

Companies may not be able to hold everyone. But treating them as friends and having a sincere and honest relationship can make your former employees or clients develop a sense of loyalty to the collaboration.
Some of the essential factors of a collaboration that help maintain this perspective are:

- Expectations: make it clear at the time of recruitment that most do not reach the partner level;
- Feedback: it is important to keep people aware about their progress in a honest way;
- Communication: communication is essential for a good interpersonal relationship and should be expressed in a positive but realistic way;
- Give time to time: letting the person leave the company under good conditions and giving them time to find a new opportunity is an important aspect.

Employees

The solo specialist

This type of employee is excellent in what he does and has a vast knowledge in the area he works. However, he does not usually get involved or seek to develop on issues that are not specifically related to his field.
The author makes it clear that if you are one of these, her intention is to make you change your mind.

Heidi says that soil specialists who (systematically) take their partners to their field of work tend to have a significant growth next year. And even more so for partners who are not part of your area.
Such action reduces, for example, the cumulative workload. And it also increases the possibilities for innovation on a certain idea.
Gardner brings strategies on how to help these professionals achieve more benefits by breaking down barriers that prevent them from working proactively as a team:

1. Build a confidence of competence: look for other people's skills; make connections with partners who can serve your client's needs; create a team that has the experience you can count on. "Participate, help, learn."
2. Nurture interpersonal trust: if you act with integrity and seek to work with people who resemble your standards, you are more likely to attract more trusted partners. "Quality attracts quality."
3. Go deeper into the client's wider problems: try not only to focus on the client's technical problems, but also to develop a genuine interest in the "whole of the work".
4. Learn about your own company's offerings: get to know the different areas and keep an eye on your company's changes;
5. Create a more effective collaboration process: select the resources that are right for your team; align your project with your expectations; develop a purpose for the team; ensure that your team members are informed and prepared;
6. Deal with collaboration policies: employees need to agree on how to allocate responsibilities and resolve potential conflicts.

The experienced collaborator (rainmaker)

These employees understand that teamwork is the right way to build a dense portfolio.

Three characteristics that we can identify in an experienced employee are:
- Intellectual acumen refined for more complex works;
- Discipline;
- Power: has the wisdom to advise the CEO when he is in crisis;
- Young spirit.

With these requirements, this professional is capable of..:
- Create the right team;
- Develop the necessary leadership for the team;
- Manage a diverse team.

A rainmaker shares his opinions and experiences. And it is undoubtedly a great business to ensure a successful work with a larger number of teammates.

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The contributor

The contributor focuses on the positive, negative and the way a member operates within the team. While an experienced employee sends work, the contributor receives work.
In this aspect, some contributors tend to keep their heads down and unravel the work within their practices. But when they deliver their best, their price is priceless.
A contributor can devise effective strategies to reduce costs, increase benefits, and reduce time to return on investment for collaboration.
To this, Heidi K. Gardner exemplifies two types of strategy that this type of employee can adopt:

The contributor focuses on the positive, negative and the way a member operates within the team. While an experienced employee sends work, the contributor receives work.

- Cultivate appropriate partner relationships: Selecting specific customers and their partners is paramount to gain an information advantage. This way, you can start a relationship in a more solid way, and become an exemplary member;
- Develop your skills for tougher problems: motivate yourself to learn about business principles that you will be better prepared to hold a conversation with the client.

But how can leaders help a person benefit from a contributor's advantages in the company? In his book, Gardner gives tips, some of them:

- Show examples of how a particular working technique works successfully;
- Give constructive criticism, honestly;
- Value your good work;
- Encourage them to think like customers;

Ringmasters

If you are the leader of the company, then this overview is for you. Or if you want to be one, Heidi Gardner will explain to you how to make it happen.
Can you imagine that person who gathers all the "tribes" and makes everything happen? Who's not afraid to take risks and try new opportunities? This is the behavior of the great ringmaster.
The ringmaster is the person who runs the show: he gathers all the people of the company and directs them to the same goal. For this, Gardner says how you can improve the performance of your team:

Measurement

It is based on the measurement of a certain company group in order to align the members in the same direction. Gardner says it is necessary to establish a general strategy for the company and allow each individual to establish his or her own objective.
Then, measure each other's collaborative behavior and avoid being inflexible. In this way, you can have consistent results to the collaborative culture.
Take the company's objective to the employee's work, show that his work has importance and applicability to the real purpose of the company.

Finally, use and enjoy the facilities of technology to organize goals and help keep everyone aligned.
Transparency: using the online platform allows other team members to clearly see the company's objectives.

Compensation

A bad example of compensation causes people to accumulate work and stimulates competition between members. Besides, Gardner says changing this system isn't an easy job.
And it is a fact that giving value to your employee's work is a good way to ensure a good performance in the team. You can engage your employee by adopting a meritocratic system, for example.
But know that the change process is not a simple process, and should be applied to the company slowly (1 year, for example), with the expenses properly planned.
These rewards make the job more worthwhile than a salary: keep your team happy.

Customers

We are already bald as to how a collaboration can work within the company. But what about from the client's point of view?
In the last chapter of the book, Heidi explains that, in general, customers attach great importance to quality collaboration. In addition, they deeply value the proximity of an external advisor to the firm and the product.
But don't think that pretending to know everything will convince customers to buy your product: they don't like this pretext. You must connect to their reality, as well as bring them to yours.
But they can't always see the benefits of a collaboration, and (guess what?) it's their job to make them understand.
There are a number of advantages that a collaboration can offer. In his work, Heidi explains each of the following benefits:

- provides the client with access to the best experts to solve the most difficult problems;
- provides the client with a more condensed understanding of their own business;
- generates a global reach;
- stimulates innovation and responsibility;
- generates consistency, better results and mitigates risks;
- expands its collaborative capacity and efficiency;
- promotes simplicity;
- strengthens your brand.

If your company is like any other, then you have an environment formed by great professionals, creative, intelligent.
If you embrace intelligent collaboration, then you have a team of great professionals aligned to expand your horizons, innovate, work as a team, and earn customer loyalty.
Lastly, Gardner quotes a phrase (much said) throughout his book, which serves as inspiration for people who want better results but do not want to change:

"What got them here won't get them there." (What brought you here won't take you there.)

What other authors say about it?

Jim Collins and Jerry Porras, authors of the book Built to Last, discovered that most visionary companies didn't start with a revolutionary idea that made them successful right at the start. In fact, they got off to a slow start and, over time, managed to dominate their markets.

Brené Brown, in Dare to Lead, says that a leader must take responsibility for recognizing the potential of people and their ideas and encouraging them to develop that potential. He knows that the true power is the one shared with all.

John C. Maxwell, on the other hand, in the Golden Book of Leadership, says that the best leaders are those who knows how to listen. Listeners knows what's going on because they're on the lookout. They learn better than others because they absorb information from various places. In addition, good listeners have the ability to better see the strengths and weaknesses of other people.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

In addition to understanding the concepts of intelligent collaboration, it is essential to understand what a leader should be.

To increase the productivity of the company, the leader must leave his expectations well defined from the moment of hiring, give honest and objective feedback to his employees and maintain a positive and realistic interpersonal communication.

A good leader should be concerned with nurturing trust between his team and him. For this, you can define objectives for your team that align with the company's purpose in a concrete way.

And not least, a good leader must think like a client. Such a requirement results in better and more varied types of service that meet even the most complex problems of the customer.

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