



# Collaborating Made Easy

An expert on organizational change shows how to make collaboration work in the real world.

By Terrence Fernsler

## Working Across Boundaries: Making Collaboration Work in Government and Nonprofit Organizations

By Russell M. Linden. 302 pages.  
Hardcover. San Francisco: John  
Wiley & Sons, [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

Collaboration is becoming more and more the norm — and even an expectation by many stakeholders — as resources become harder to find. Leaders and managers are shifting their focus from making fundamental change within their organizations to making fundamental change in how organizations work together. However, collaboration is worthwhile only if it helps each organization achieve its outcomes better.

There are many obstacles to successful collaboration. In his insightful book, Russell Linden categorizes these obstacles as individual, organizational, societal, and systemic to help us understand why collaboration may not be working and when it may not be appropriate. Collaboration is an art, not a science. It works when there's a shared purpose, participants are willing to contribute, the right people are at the table, there's an open process, the stakes are high, and the effort is in all participants' interests.

Collaboration leaders must create a constituency of collaboration. The steps to do so will lead to a successful collaboration, and Linden explains each step well:

1. **Create visible signs** of success, and share credit widely.
2. **Set clear, simple goals** with which the public can identify.
3. **Invite outside groups** to help.
4. **Monitor** goals.
5. **Use symbols** to reinforce the partnership's power.
6. **Involve stakeholders** at every step.
7. **Connect collaboration** and self-interest.
8. **Think politically** without becoming political.

Sometimes collaboration is necessary *within* an organization to get departments working together more efficiently. This type of collaboration is more top down and

directive than collaboration between different organizations.

Linden reminds us that sometimes collaboration fails. But that shouldn't deter organizations from exploring collaborative efforts to accomplish their goals. Those organizations that best serve their clients know how to collaborate effectively, and this book has a wealth of vital information and excellent examples for both beginning and veteran collaborators. ■

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