

Rock Solid The Leader and Collaboration

BLOG

Driving home that night, we tried to contain our excitement, but it was a lost cause. We would have had more success holding a beach ball underwater!

Pattie and I had just enjoyed an amazing evening with our good friends talking about a workshop that we would soon launch designed to help people think and act biblically and deliberately about how to leverage the second half of life for maximum Kingdom impact. We were pumped!

Long story short, several weeks earlier, God had impressed on our hearts to develop this workshop. From there, Pattie and I set out to find a team of people who not only would confirm this ministry initiative but, more importantly, would join us in developing it. Over the weeks that would follow, what began as a seed of an idea became a harvest of reality—all through the beauty of collaboration.

Collaboration. A big word. With even bigger potential. Like a tsunami building its way to shore, when people purposefully partner together the possibilities for something big to happen are formidable.

Here's the point: wise is the leader who understands that through collaboration good ideas are transformed into great ideas.

In Proverbs, the quintessential book on all things wisdom, this truth is tightly packaged and stocked on the lower shelf for ease of access: *"Without good direction, people lose their way; the more wise counsel you follow, the better your chances"*. Do the math—more collaborators, better outcomes.

The upsides of collaboration are many. In addition to creating superior output, you build team spirit—a sense that you are engaged in something much bigger than yourself. You build commitment—as your involvement increases through collaboration, so does your dedication. And you build ownership—nothing feeds motivation more than switching your seat from hired hand to stockholder.

So how does a leader cultivate collaboration? Let me trot out a few thoughts for your consideration:

- **Start with an admission.** Go on record that not only do you want help, but that you need help.
- **Establish access.** Make it unmistakably clear that everyone has equal opportunity to influence a discussion or decision or direction. Everyone's input is valued regardless

of what box they occupy on the o-chart. No tenure required. No dues to pay.

- **Lead out with questions.** There is nothing quite as empowering as a well-stated question that kicks open the door for thought-provoking dialogue.
- **Set the stage.** Give permission to debate ideas and concepts vigorously. In fact, be clear that it is what you expect.
- **Create safety.** While ideas should be ‘attacked’, the person presenting an idea never should be. Be quick to toss a penalty flag if the discussion gets personal.
- **Embrace the mess.** Be prepared for the chaos of collaboration. Expect that there will be moments when your self-talk includes something like: “WHAT was I thinking?!” Be encouraged. The majority of the time, having embraced the momentary confusion, you will not only emerge with a direction that simply will be better than if you had gone it alone, but you will have a group of people engaged at a much more substantial level.

In short, leadership is not a solo-sport. Rather, it is the privilege and opportunity to join with others, and in so doing, tap into the beauty and potential of collaboration. Take it out for a test drive. I guarantee you’ll be back for another spin.

Lord, continue to remind me that I am hard-wired by You to be a person who works with others to the end that Your Kingdom purposes are more fully fulfilled.