

# STRETCH COLLABORATION

1

**ACCEPT**

THE PLURALITY OF THE SITUATION

2

**EXPERIMENT**

TO MOVE FORWARD

3

**UNDERSTAND**

YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM

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# OVERVIEW



# Stretch Collaboration is an innovative approach to collaboration that embraces discord and experimentation

## Presentation Overview

Forging collaboration among persons, teams, and organizations can sometimes be a perfect storm. Often, we expect that members who oppose each other will just blend in when working together on their most crucial and difficult mutual problems. Yet, situations like these can cause circumstances to veer out of control. Conflicts can erupt that may be unresolvable.

The conventional model of collaboration can be a faux pas when it comes to these situations. Yet, the importance of collaboration is more emphasized today where problems have become more global and magnified.

Collaboration with enemies is a skill worth retooling. This Presentation walks us through the crucial elements necessary towards undertaking an unconventional collaboration approach in handling discord.

### 1 The 5 Key Questions of Collaboration

### 2 The 3 Stretch Collaboration Principles to Achieve Success

### 3 Understanding the New Collaboration Approach: The Stretch Collaboration

### 4 Stretch Collaboration in Practice: Learning from Case Examples

Learning the 3 Stretch Collaboration Principles can move teams forward despite members who don't agree, like, or trust each other. This deck also includes slide templates for you to use in your own business presentations.

**Stretch Collaboration takes out the heat even if the storm is brewing.**

## 5 Key Questions of Collaboration

Business confrontations can be dramatic but most are not. There are circumstances that might veer out of control. Conflicts that seem to be unresolvable. It can be a dilemma on how to move forward in situations like this.

The conventional model of collaboration in business is trying to get agreement on 5 crucial points during meetings.

- 1 **What is our common purpose?**
- 2 **What is the problem?**
- 3 **What is the solution to the problem?**
- 4 **What is the plan to execute the solution?**
- 5 **Who needs to do what to execute the plan?**

Answering these questions can involve a delicate dance of managerial authority and employee adaptation.

- **A boss with a solution in mind can face potential downsides by enforcing it unilaterally.**
- **Those who disagree may drag their feet or sabotage the team's efforts.**

The ideal scenario is for the boss to lead everyone to see the problem the same way and then agree on a way forward. On the downside, the opposite may occur.

**Disagreements may happen that can challenge attempts to collaborate.**

# Stretch Collaboration is an unconventional collaboration approach in managing discord

## Stretch Collaboration – Overview

Collaborating under normal circumstances may be easy. But today where business is so volatile and disruptive, every player may take an opposing end.

- What if the people in the room are working at cross-purposes?
- What if they cannot even agree on what the problem is, must less how to solve it?
- What if there is low trust among the people and there is no one who can control the situation?
- What if the only thing people can agree on is that the situation is unacceptable and must be changed?

- Placed in a difficult situation, the best approach is to find a way to collaborate despite disagreements.
- Agreement is off the table in a situation like this. Stretch Collaboration is just the way to go

Stretch Collaboration is collaborating with the enemy. It requires us to keep moving and trying things with the understanding that we cannot control the future. Yet, we can influence it

In problematic situations, we can still make progress even with the disagreements.

The 3 Stretch Collaboration Principles provides the basic framework in facilitating challenging situations and still achieve progress

## 3 Stretch Collaboration Principles

The 3 Stretch Collaboration Principles are crucial in addressing the 5 key questions of collaboration.

1

### ACCEPT

THE PLURALITY OF THE SITUATION

We do not have to agree on what the solution or the problem is to make progress. Different actions may support the same outcome for different reasons

2

### EXPERIMENT

TO MOVE FORWARD

We have to keep trying with the understanding that we cannot control the future. But we can influence it. Success isn't coming up with a solution. It is working toward one

3

### UNDERSTAND

YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM

We can only make progress once we have realized that we have a role in the situation. If we are not part of the problem, we cannot be part of the solution.

Accepting, Experimenting, and Understanding are crucial in forging collaboration among opposing members.

**PRINCIPLE 1**  
**ACCEPT**



# For the 1st Stretch Collaboration Principle, we must accept the plurality of the situation

## Accept – Overview

**PRINCIPLE** Accept the Plurality of the Situation

### Underlying Principles

- Every participating person, team, and organization is a whole. Interacting with other wholes, each person, team, and organization carries a different idea of what is and what should be.
- Working together, collaboration gets shaped depending on the situation we are confronted with.
- It is not a conventional collaboration anchored on one purpose and focus.

### Significance

- As an unconventional Stretch Collaboration approach, it addresses problematic situations
- Participants need not agree on what the solution or even what the problem is.
- Despite disagreements, progress can still be achieved.

The most robust agreements are those that different actors support for different reasons.

**PRINCIPLE 2**

# **EXPERIMENT**



# In the 2nd Stretch Collaboration Principle, we experiment to discover a path forward

## Experiment – Overview

**PRINCIPLE** Experiment to Find a Way Forward

### Underlying Principles

- Success is not achieved by coming up with a solution.
- Success is achieved when everyone is working toward it.
- Stretch collaboration requires a good understanding that we cannot control the future but we can influence it.

### Significance

- It works well in scenarios where what will happen, what should happen, and could happen are vague.
- It is an effective way to work with people you do not agree, like, or trust.
- A platform for open discussion is created where new solutions can emerge.
- Problems may not be solved but it is unstuck.

Stretch Collaboration is like working with clay that needs to be kneaded before positive results can emerge.

# The OAS Case is a succinct example of Stretch Collaboration among people of varied opinions

## Experiment – Organization of American State (OAS) Case Example

**CASE EXAMPLE** Addressing the Drug Problem in the Region: A Multi-stakeholder project of the Organization of American States.

**STAKEHOLDERS** 46 leaders from all countries of the Americas and sectors involved in drug policy: politics, security, business, health, education, indigenous cultures, international organizations, justice system, and civil society.

### AGREEMENT

4 Scenarios were created that formed a platform for discussion around the world.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ➤ <b>Scenario 1:</b> The drug problem is part of larger insecurity problem  | ➤ Proposed Solution: Governments need to be stronger and more forceful. Resources must be made available to combat violent drug dealing organizations |
| ➤ <b>Scenario 2:</b> The problem is that the current approach for controlling drugs through criminal sanctions is causing too much harm.                  | ➤ Proposed Solution: The justice system needs to be oriented toward decriminalization and more effective regulation.                                  |
| ➤ <b>Scenario 3:</b> The drug problem is a manifestation and magnifier of underlying social and economic dysfunctions that lead to violence and addiction | ➤ Proposed solution: Drugs need to be dealt with on the demand side, through community building and health and wellness programs.                     |
| ➤ <b>Scenario 4:</b> The problem is that the countries where drugs are produced and through which they transit are bearing insufferable and unfair costs. | ➤ Proposed Solution: Law enforcement needs to focus on the countries where drugs are used.  |

### Result of the Stretch Collaboration Approach:

- The scenario report has set a "before" and an "after" in addressing the drug phenomenon.
- While the problem was not solved, it was unstuck.
- Individual countries and states have started to experiment with different pathways to address the problem.

Stretch Collaboration allowed the emergence of new solutions.

# Guatemala Civil War Case is Stretch Collaboration done in highly stressed situations

## Experiment – Guatemala Civil War Case Example

**CASE EXAMPLE** Repairing the social fabric of Guatemala after a 36-year civil war.

**STAKEHOLDERS** No single solution was generated from the meeting of enemies, but many seeds were planted.

These were the various collaborative actions performed.

- 1 Four presidential campaigns proposed
- 2 Contributions to the Commission for Historical Clarification that records human rights violations committed during the way made.
- 3 Creation of a fiscal agreement commission.
- 4 Creation of a peace accords monitoring commission.
- 5 Work on municipal development strategies.
- 6 Development of a national antipoverty strategy.
- 7 Development of a new university curriculum.
- 8 Conduct of 6 spin-off national dialogues.

### Result of the Stretch Collaboration Approach:

- *Participants were allowed to do things differently.*
- *Quoting from Popol Vuh, an ancient Mayan cultural text, “We did not put our ideas together. We put our purposes together.” The distinction is important.*

We cannot change what other people are doing but we need to step into the collaboration process.

**PRINCIPLE 3**

**UNDERSTAND**



The 3rd Stretch Collaboration Principle involves understanding that we are part of the problem

## Understand – Overview

**PRINCIPLE** Understand You Are Part of the Problem

### Underlying Principles

- Progress is impossible until we recognize that we are part of the situation.
- If we are not part of the problem then we cannot be part of the solution.

### Significance

- Stretch Collaboration allows us to see ourselves as part of the problem and not outside it.
- Time is not be wasted on pointing out what other people should be doing.
- We get to focus first on ourselves.
- We get to ask ourselves what we could do differently to change the situation.

When we want control, that is not collaboration.