

Quest Essential Series

4 Ways to Improve Outcomes through Better Collaboration

Beyond the Team You Lead

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A comprehensive Study of 8000 managers across 250 companies identified critical challenges when executing a company strategy.

“When asked to identify the single greatest challenge to executing their company’s strategy, 30% cite failure to coordinate across (business) units”

(Donald Sull, Rebecca Homkes & Charles Sull - Harvard Business Review)



1 Advocate the breaking down of silos



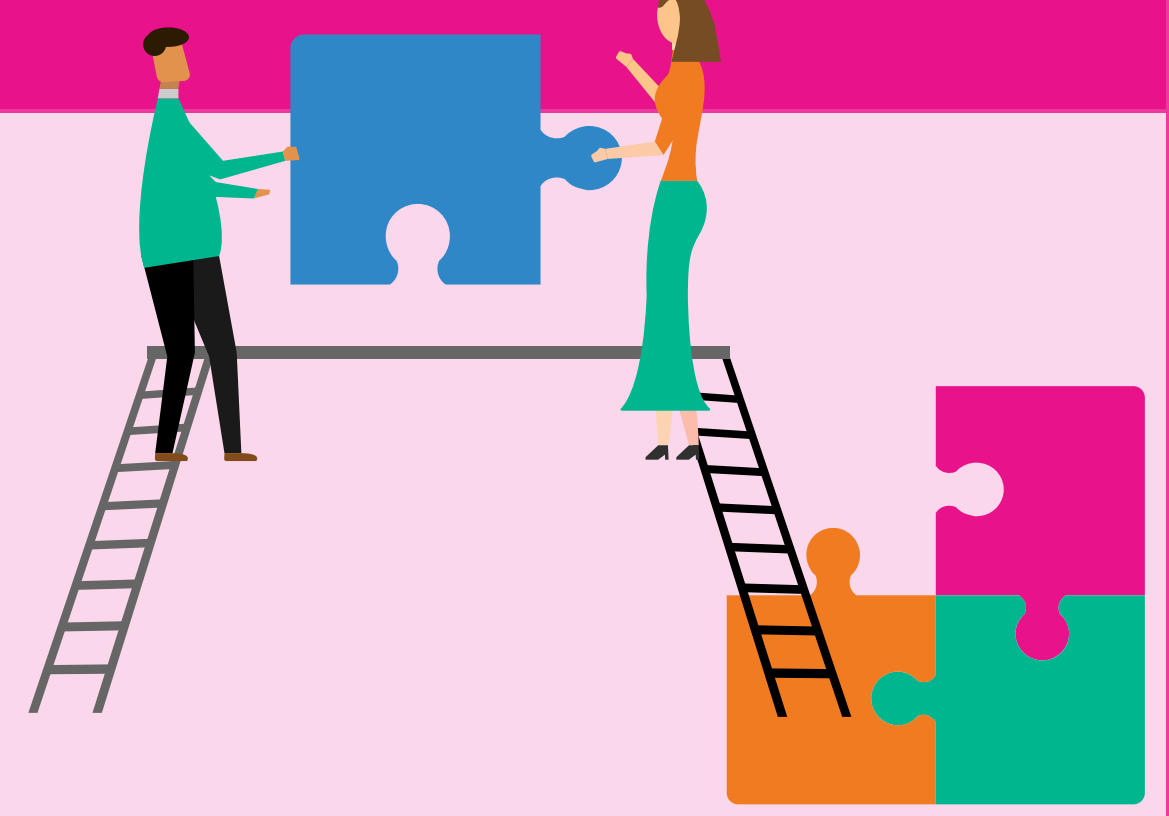
- As a team leader, you should encourage and participate in team-building activities with other department heads. Build an understanding of each other’s roles and increase collective responsibility. This can pressure-test problem-solving models and provide valuable experience ahead of problems that will inevitably arise.
- Create the cultural and physical space in your business where team members can have spontaneous conversations with members of other teams. In the age of COVID-19 informal channels in the organisation’s digital platform or regular video, chats should be used.
- If you lead a project that has impact or membership beyond your area, push for an early interdepartmental meeting. These meetings should include the relevant department heads, set a positive tone, and shape a collaborative culture.

2 Encourage trust and transparency between teams



- You should help team members understand the challenges and demands faced by colleagues in different departments. To provide a well-rounded perspective and new channels of connection, job rotations across teams should be considered.
- As a leader, you should demonstrate the behaviours that build trust. Trust isn’t born out of one single action, Consistency in ethics competency and integrity are key. Other teams need to know that they can depend on you and your team. Knowing that while they’re putting in the work, you and your team are doing your best as well.
- Together with other Team Leaders you should create an agreement and have clear visibility on which team members will do what. Alongside regular formal and informal team check-ins AND cross-departmental reviews, these contribute towards transparency and play a huge part in building trust.

3 Promote communication that empowers collaboration across ‘borders’



- Together with other team leaders agree and implement communication principles and practices that are consistent with your organisation’s values and reflect your culture. This should cover preferred format and channels; how to communicate when problems surface; and who should be doing the communicating and when.
- Encourage transparent, all-inclusive, and consistent communication between departments as an essential part of your project. We have observed that excellent collaborators effectively balance speaking (broadcasting) with active listening (receiving).
- As a team leader agree what information will be freely available, and you should ensure access is provided to this regularly. Make the best use of technology to share information and facilitate communication. The company’s digital communication platform should be a cross-departmental hub.

4 Use Strategic Influencing to amplify your impact



- Quest regularly sees people struggle as they get promoted – what made you successful previously isn’t automatedly what is needed to excel at the next level. For example, management is no longer just about maximizing the output from people that report to you.
- As a leader, success stems from crafting your department’s strategy; streamlining the delivery of outcomes for your projects; and collaborating across departments to ensure that the overall enterprise objectives are met. A key challenge is getting people who don’t report to you to invest effort in work that benefits your agenda.
- It is Quest’s view, that this can be achieved through; 1) You enabling timely conversations with a diverse group of people to ensure there is a mutual understanding of the why, what and how of each other’s roles and goals. 2), Your team members investing time and energy into building beneficial and trusting relationships (within and across organisational boundaries) that can then be leveraged for mutual benefit.

During the past 35 years, Quest has had the privilege of working with over 750 organisations across 76 countries. We have witnessed challenges of goal delivery when team leaders are dependent on other departments. We urge Team leaders to review these ways of improving collaboration. In our experience, investing in better collaboration between departments contributes to better business outcomes.

Based on: Wong L. (2019) "9 ways to improve collaboration between departments" <https://www.workzone.com/blog/>
Gupta A. (2016) "5 ways to improve collaboration between departments" www.saviom.com/blog/
Sull D, Rebecca H. and Sull C. (2015) "Why Strategy Execution Unravels and what to do about it" Harvard Business Review:

We hope that you find this useful. If so please share.

This summary was produced by Wiet Pruijm (Regional Director) and the Team at Quest Worldwide.

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