

CULTIVATING MUTUAL RESPECT IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECT PARTNERING

Collaboration is hard.

It demands that a group of experts choose to achieve a superior outcome by embracing shared goals over selfish ones, flexing between leadership and followership, and balancing their own needs against the needs of their collaborative partners.



This is a challenge for any team, even more so for a newly formed Owner/Architect/Contractor team that needs to come together quickly to meet the design, program, budget, schedule, and quality requirements that key stakeholders expect.

So, where should you start? What is the first essential building block of collaborative team success?

It starts with mutual respect.

Mutual respect is the cornerstone of collaboration, the starting point for open and honest communication, and a precursor to trust. At a minimum, each partner must acknowledge the other partners' unique expertise and experience while working together to develop a shared plan for how they will execute the project.

Any collaborative team can set themselves up for success if they start by deliberately focusing on these critical enablers of mutual respect:

1. Be honest about your strengths, capabilities, and limitations

Brag a little, and also get humble. Be open about what specific value you are bringing to the team and where you will need help from your partners.

2. Seek to understand your partner's strengths, capabilities, and desired impact points.

Dig in with your partners, listen to and acknowledge their expertise and experience while seeking to understand where they "want" to have a unique impact.

3. Set goals using each partner's input and perspective, together if possible.

Don't talk about the success factors of the project in a vacuum; it might be more efficient and easier to get aligned, but you will be sacrificing long-term goal alignment for a short-term sense of progress.

4. Express concerns quickly, openly, and honestly – resolve conflict directly and professionally.

A willingness to have the tough conversation demonstrates respect; it means that you see your partners as equals and that you are expecting a fair and equitable discussion about conflicts or issues.

5. Acknowledge the success of your partners publicly and often.

Every team needs to celebrate success; you want to celebrate the achievement of key project goals and the partners who led the way. It's a team sport, but highlighting individual contributions is also ok.

Collaborative project teams prioritizing relationships based on mutual respect build an environment where the best ideas rise to the top, programs and budgets are maximized, and decision speed keeps pace with the demands of a challenging and fast-moving project.

You can achieve all of this on your own, or you may leverage the services of a professional partnering facilitator; either way, it's time well spent and increases the likelihood of a great project experience and outcome.



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