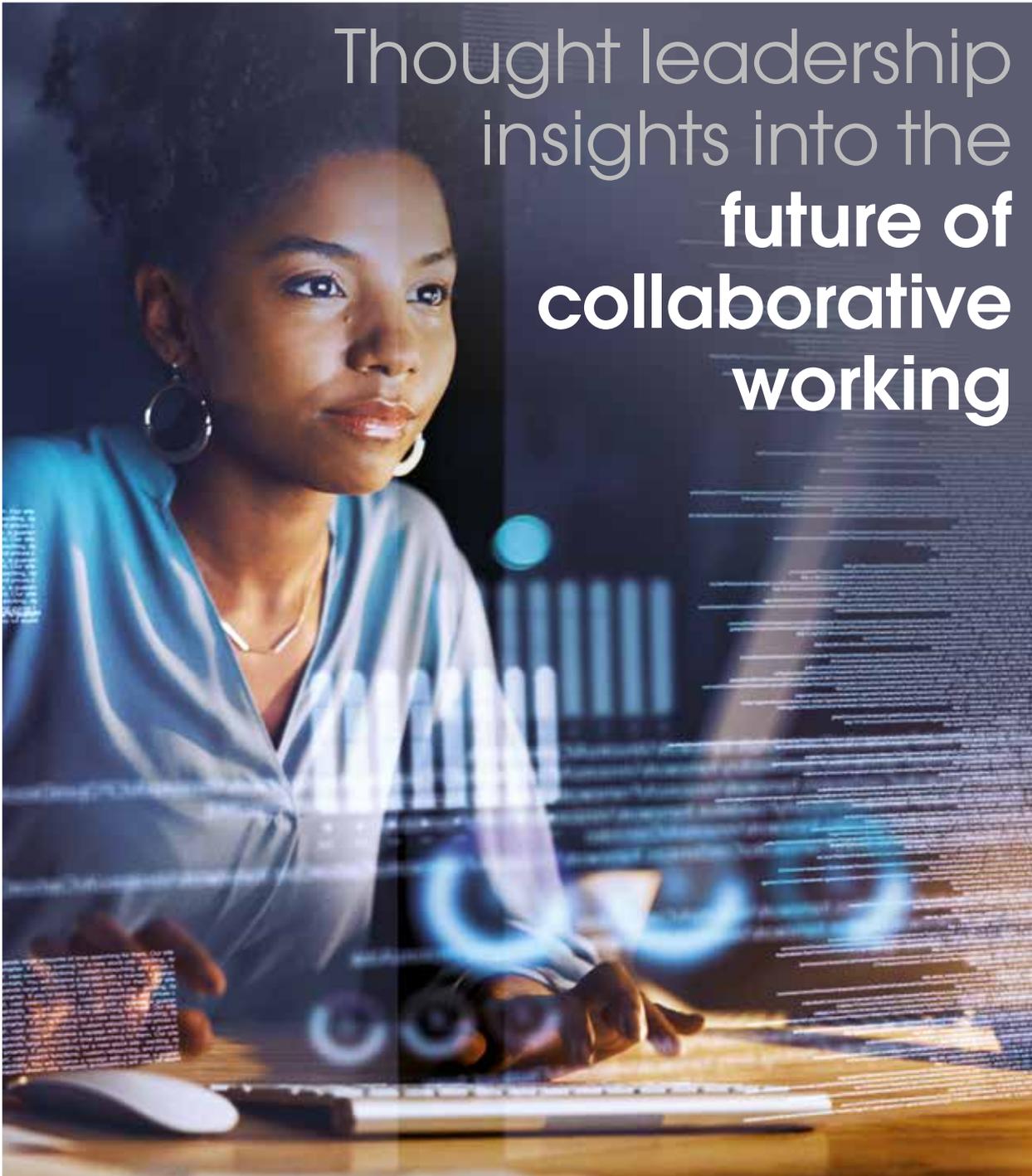




Thought leadership
insights into the
**future of
collaborative
working**



Foreword

This report has been commissioned by the Institute for Collaborative Working (ICW) to provide its members and their associates with insight into the future of collaboration and collaborative working.

The ICW Thought Leadership Special Interest Group (SIG) conducted the work with contributions from the ICW membership, alongside wider analysis, research and insights from selected key contributors.

The publication does not purport to provide a definitive view of the future of global commerce and any associated changes, or seek to foresee beyond a reasonable timeframe; it simply seeks to provide a reasonable perspective of the ongoing potential for collaborative interactions for organisations.

The current ICW Thought Leadership SIG team are the main authors of the document: **Adrian Miller, Andrew Hopper, Frank Lee, Jeremy Campbell, Odilon Serrano and Stephen Abrahams**. Their backgrounds and experience are detailed at the end of this document.

The authors would like to acknowledge and thank a number of people whose involvement in this report has contributed significantly to its final output, either through their additional insight, critical analysis or detailed review. They are:

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Executive summary

This report provides insights into the future trends and direction of collaboration, evaluating the impact of factors including megatrends, changes in business norms and social attitudes, influencing organisational interactions, and relationships. The objective is to highlight the key challenges and opportunities ahead for organisations and individuals and how these can be addressed or realised through collaboration.

Compiling the report brought together experts with extensive experience in collaboration, with a broad range of backgrounds and accomplishments. Benefitting from a research-led approach, the findings of this report derive from desktop research on megatrends – collective experiences of experts who were carefully selected as thought leaders in collaboration – the findings of which were further corroborated by a comprehensive survey that provided both qualitative and quantitative information. This informed our thought leadership in producing this paper.

From the research undertaken, several key themes have emerged which provide insight into the future of collaboration and how we expect effective collaborative working can continue to unlock value, deliver improvement and drive success at a business, social and economic level. The key themes are:

How context defines collaboration

Collaboration has become a somewhat overused term for explaining a whole range of interactions between organisations and individuals. The report considers how factors including advances in technology,

knowledge sharing, data analytics and human behaviour are key enablers, without which collaboration is often just a label.

The key success factors

Collaborative working practitioners told us that these are collaborative leadership, vision and values and relationship management. Without these core principles and practices in place, organisations do not have the key ingredients to achieve sustainable long-term collaborative success.

Benefits of a structured approach

Effective collaborations need a structured approach that is highly adaptable and agile, and that enables them to manage risk and develop relationships rapidly, with different types and sizes of organisation. A structured approach is the difference between working together and collaborating; it is a key ingredient for the future of collaboration. It provides:

- A clear understanding of the objective for collaboration
- A mutually agreed understanding of what value is and what value is expected to be accrued
- Knowledge and information sharing, building trust
- Governance structure(s) that encourage desired behaviours
- Clearly defined ways of working together

- Expectations around behaviours and the development and maintenance of trust within the relationship
- An embedded approach to working across the organisation, not dependent on an individual
- A culture of mutual respect.

Structure is important but it needs to be easily understood and accessible

Methodologies and standards, such as ISO 44001 Collaborative Business Relationships, are highly important, but need to be made more agile and accessible to more organisations of all sizes in the future. The current perception is that structured collaboration, in its present form, is targeted towards large organisations. When this perception changes, the use and benefit of the ISO framework and a structured approach to collaboration will be more effective, and the value added will be more widely adopted.

A growing move to collective capability

Collaborative networks and communities are becoming more widespread and some organisations are moving quickly in and out of collaborative projects. This is increasing the need for agile mobilisation and, as a result, new methodologies need to be developed and communicated in a language and structure that makes them easily accessible to all participants.

More remote working and building trust

Trust is key to enabling sharing, learning and openness, which in turn is key to supporting an

agile and dynamic collaborative environment. As remote and virtual working becomes a more common practice, this will challenge how we build trust and develop relationships. Organisations will need to find new solutions in a digitally based world to build individual and corporate relationships that display trust and appropriate behaviours.

Taking collaborative behaviour seriously

Collaborative behaviours have always been a key component of working well together and are the foundation for developing resilient and sustainable business relationships. New ways of learning will need to be developed to address behavioural aspects, and these new ways should become embedded in our culture by employers and professional institutions. Strong consideration should be given to balancing relationship skills with technical skills to emphasise and implement collaborative working.

Adopting new solutions for better collaboration

Structured collaboration will look somewhat different from how it looks today, as we will see virtual teams that rarely meet face to face, using technology such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. These technologies will respond to the challenge by continually improving the user interface and the virtual meeting experience to facilitate enhanced collaboration in a more virtual world.

Shared values and ethics

Understanding our collaborative partners will have greater

significance in the future, and both sharing and demonstrating our values will be vital to success in a more virtual world. We will need to develop the skills to do business with organisations from different cultures and with different values, while still staying true to our own corporate values as we provide products and services that result in real social value. This makes a strong case for a suitable benchmark that validates an organisation's collaborative and ethical credentials.

What organisations value

How organisations seek to re-interpret value will be one of the key lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic experience; emphasised by how strong relationships were seen to contribute to better outcomes during times of difficulty and uncertainty, rather than relying on adversarial contractual arrangements. As challenges change and the circumstances under which we operate evolve, organisations might need to look again at how they measure and understand the value of collaboration in a more flexible and dynamic world.

The challenges that we face today – such as climate change, sustainability, increasing social care for the elderly and the vulnerable – are so large in scale that the solutions we are developing to address them require multi-faceted technologically diverse solutions.

Collaboration offers a way to meet these and other challenges, alongside culturally aligned organisations – through merging and innovating around each other's intellectual contributions,

discovering new and alternative solutions, solving problems and dealing with risks together. Unification with other parties and expanding networks provides the means to grow and enhance the thinking and capability of organisations and their people. The "win-win" principle should not be a platitude or unobtainable myth, but should in fact represent a strong motivational force and goal when multiple parties agree to galvanise their resources in pursuit of the same or aligned objectives.

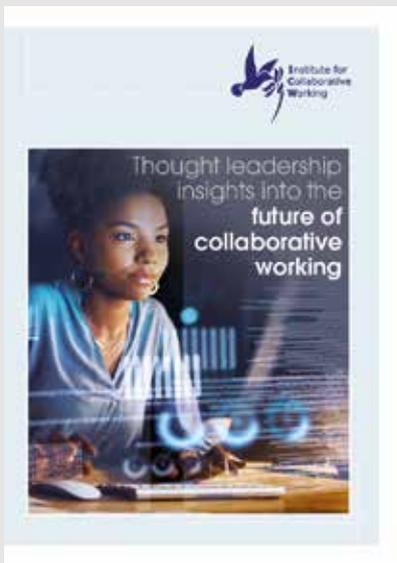
It is only through organisations from multiple sectors, both public and private, working together and expanding their horizons that effective, long-lasting solutions will emerge. It is difficult to see this being attainable or working effectively unless it is pursued through a structured collaborative approach.

The future of collaboration is an exciting prospect with greater use of technology and collaboration with more diverse partners to address new challenges in new ways. Our skills will change, our systems will develop and our leadership techniques will improve, and we will see more and better tools to facilitate collaboration and build trust.

The fundamental principles that underpin collaboration today will continue to hold true in the future. Several things will remain critical: behaviours that foster mutual trust, objectives that bring value to all involved, demonstrable and skilled collaborative leadership that results in innovation, value creation and a working environment where trust, respect and integrity are paramount. ■

Introduction

This report has been constructed to reflect targeted analysis, research and considered thought in relation to the future relevance, application and adoption of collaborative working. To help the reader navigate the report it is worth understanding the significance of its main sections, along with from where they derived, and their primary purposes:



Setting the context

This section represents the views of the ICW Thought Leadership Special Interest Group (SIG) in relation to a broad range of current circumstances, along with existing and future challenges. This is intended to provide a foundation of current practice to consider the future.

Insights from the survey

In order to inform the Thought Leadership Group's analysis and evaluation better, we took perspectives from a wide range of experts that participate and have a strong interest in collaborative activities and thinking. Their feedback, in response to set and open questions, has been analysed and aggregated to inform and further broaden our thought leadership perspectives.

Success factors

Using the views from the survey, along with detailed contributions from a more intensive and focused group of experts, we have extrapolated and identified what we believe to be the range of important factors and activities that contribute to success in collaboration.

Strategic direction

Finally, we have used all these elements to galvanise a set of insights that should help us look at what is important for future collaboration. This may not be an exhaustive list, but we believe it is the basis for understanding the emerging and exciting challenges that will cement collaboration as a key organisational enabler, to achieve future business sustainability and success. ■

Objectives and purpose of the report

This paper has been prepared to consider the future state of collaboration, taking account of likely developments in the business environment with a focus on:

- Trends and future influence factors and the degree to which they may impact collaborative working, such as how changes in business norms or socio-economic changes and challenges could affect organisational interactions and relationships
- Challenges and changes ahead for organisations that have adopted collaborative working
- Helping organisations understand the relevance of collaboration in the future and the need to develop competence
- Identifying those key factors that will be important to individuals in relation to their personal development
- Articulating the dynamics that may impact the future evolution of collaborative frameworks, such as ISO 44001
- How collaborative working will support organisations to meet the challenges of tomorrow
- Since Covid-19, the accelerated move towards using digital platforms for all communications, which presents new challenges for managing collaboration.

Collaboration has been recognised by many leading organisations as a key component of their strategy, enhancing how they interact with other organisations, with the objective of creating value along with exploring new and innovative ways of evolving their

operations or business. However, the interpretation and level of collaborative maturity varies widely, with a range of perceptions, as can be seen in Figure 1, shown on the next page.

What works today in collaboration may not necessarily apply, or operate in the future, so understanding the context and analysing changes in the external environment is important to gain insight to deliver strategic goals and adapt operations. This type of analysis can be significantly enhanced by shared research and inputs from likeminded organisations with similar strategic challenges. Furthermore, shared critical thinking enables a broader appreciation of the potential impact of future challenges based on key considerations, such as global megatrends, sustainability and unexpected change.

A significant and inevitable factor for organisations and individuals is a need to operate effectively under conditions of increasingly constrained resources. For example:

- Organisations facing increasing demands to do more with less
- An imperative to reduce any negative impact to our natural environment and climate
- Critical social priorities to protect and help the vulnerable and less able in our society.

These factors demonstrate that the value of collaborative working is not simply a matter of financial

priorities, as the benefits and drivers are many faceted. When faced with major challenges, organisations need to build in some resilience by taking account of the long term. Collaboration is an enabler to finding and implementing solutions to access wider benefits under constrained conditions, such as telecoms companies sharing resources to deal with mast capacity in remote locations. ■

Setting the context

In setting the context, the desire is to create a foundation of understanding of where we are with respect to collaborative working, and from that point, discuss the future.

Whilst the international standard for collaboration is relatively new, historically, there have been successful projects and programmes of great complexity. The key attributes for success were and still are:

- Leadership
- Technical competence
- Structured ways of working
- Clarity of purpose.

These are embodied within the ISO 44001 standard in conjunction with requirements that drives a collaborative approach.

Major projects and programmes have become more complex as a result of requirements associated with safety, social value and

sustainability. In addition, with drivers such as the advances in technologies, the need to be more efficient with resources, working in disparate locations, globalisation and conflicting commercial priorities, there is now a significant need for improved integration and the introduction of structured collaboration for mutual benefit across a range of stakeholders.

While collaborative working may seem fundamental to some, there are examples where the desired outcomes have not been achieved. This is often due to the absence of a structured approach to collaboration, which results in objectives not being aligned and a competitive self-interest that impedes an effective relationship. The ISO 44001 standard provides that structured framework.

A structured approach is needed to establish a collaborative framework that creates and

Figure 1: **Perceptions about collaboration**

MISCONCEPTIONS

- Collaboration is soft and fluffy
- If we collaborate, we will have to agree with everything
- Collaboration limits recognition and hampers progress
- Only self-interest powers people
- 'We don't need formality or a systematic approach' – just 'play nicely'

PERCEIVED OBSTACLES

- People cannot be trusted
- Systems prevent collaboration
- Collaboration dilutes focus
- This is how we have always worked. Why do we need to collaborate?
- This is ours. We are not sharing
- It's not possible to align customer and supplier objectives

STRUCTURED COLLABORATION

- Strong collaborative leadership underpins better relationships
- Sharing knowledge improves joint performance
- Motivates people and encourages shared success
- Clear joint objectives drive better outcomes
- Within trusted partnerships, issues are resolved before they become disputes

encourages the right attitudes, culture and behaviours as well as a common language, joint objectives and purpose. The standard provides that framework and ensures a common understanding, maintenance of quality and assurance of purpose. The framework is adaptable to the specific context of the collaborative undertaking and is hence, fit for purpose, rather than strictly formal: effective as opposed to bureaucratic. A truly collaborative working relationship needs to add value to all the stakeholders in that relationship. However, any form of collaborative relationship takes commitment and effort.

The nature of work and what people are being asked to achieve has become more complex and progressive. Organisations, public and private, are requiring a greater degree of cooperation and collaboration. We have all come to expect more from business relationships, and stakeholders are as interested in the manner of *how* things are achieved as in *what* is achieved, as seen in the movement towards improving social outcomes as a dimension of success.

Large, complex projects and programmes generally require more capability and capacity than a single supplier can provide, thus driving the need for collaborative working that will provide the skills, resources, capability and capacity required to instil client confidence in a value-added outcome.

Organisations are increasingly seeing the need for and benefits

of incorporating structured collaborative approaches into the procurement process, and requiring the potential end-to-end supply chain to demonstrate the cultural and behavioural attributes that are required for collaborative working – although many client organisations are not yet demanding that potential suppliers need to be certified to ISO 44001.

Establishing a structured approach to collaborative working is still evolving. Some organisations often underestimate the importance of their own role in the collaborative working process for which they themselves are asking. That is, the supply chain must work collaboratively in the context of a transactional contract and/or a transactional client relationship. Organisations must take full responsibility and accountability for their own role in producing and executing effective collaborative working – recognising each other's aims and need for mutual benefit, regardless of their place in the supply chain. This requires focus on *people, process, systems and culture*, which collectively will drive collaborative working *capability*.

The capability of an organisation to collaborate is dependent on its internal culture, values and behaviours. If organisations cannot collaborate internally, then there will be challenges to collaborating in external business relationships. A strong collaborative culture, underpinned by effective people, processes and systems has been shown to enable a more productive and value-added business relationship.

How context defines collaboration

Collaboration could be defined as two or more people working together to achieve mutually common goals. The context is what makes each collaborative effort unique and is what enables a collaborative effort to be implemented. The following are examples of aspects that add context:

Drivers

The drivers for wanting to collaborate can be multifaceted with a myriad of motivations such as:

- Speed and flexibility to access new markets ahead of the competition, working with complementary organisations with an established presence
- Extending competencies, as many organisations have intentionally based their approach on a set of core competencies, so to go beyond these typically requires partnering
- Multiparty solutions: successful solutions require a systems-based approach which often taps into broader social trends. Few organisations have all the components of the solution
- Building relationships to evolve and innovate: to really succeed, organisations will need to work across their internal boundaries to access best practice, work with new customer segments and with other business cultures.

Figure 2: **Attitude, culture & behaviour**



The context of collaboration is dynamic because relationships mature, conditions change, or we seek a controlled disengagement. It is important that the barriers and enablers to collaboration are understood, and it is realised why it is necessary to understand the context of the collaboration and regularly ensure that all parties are aligned.

Enablers and barriers to collaboration

We have identified various enablers and barriers to collaboration, and this is not intended to be an all-inclusive list. These were identified through shared experience, feedback and thought leadership analysis. We focus on a behavioural perspective to understand some of the key enablers and barriers to collaboration. Figure 2 (shown above) describes the individual and organisational behaviours that create or remove barriers to collaboration in a practical sense.

There is a range of dimensions and influences that could potentially contribute to positive or negative outcomes in the progression of collaboration by organisations. They can include, but are not limited to, several examples that could facilitate and have an impact and influence on future collaboration, as noted in the tables that follow.

What can be seen with respect to these enablers (see Table 1, pages 11-12) or barriers (see Table 2 pages 13-14) is how applying ISO 44000 Principles For Successful Collaborative Business Relationship Management can enhance them or help overcome them. ■

These drivers are based on identifying and accessing benefits, such as the need to innovate, to influence affordability and economics, address complexity and the need to constantly maintain and build capability.

Technology

The use of collaborative tools, information management and knowledge sharing.

Ways of working

The demands of a specific undertaking may be more service orientated versus asset ownership, as well as short and long-term, and should meet specific needs and guide the desired collaborative behaviours.

Application

The need to manage uncertainties as opposed to certainty, addressing the complexity in delivery, relationships and stakeholder interactions.

Relationship

There are three general types of relationships: transactional, cooperative and collaborative. It is possible, indeed likely, that all three may exist within a collaborative undertaking.

Table 1: **Enablers to collaboration**

**APPLYING ISO 44000
COLLABORATIVE PRINCIPLES**

DIMENSION	CHALLENGE	
Contracting models	Contracting models can facilitate effective collaboration because they can incentivise and support a way of working that encourages the right behaviours and approaches that enable people and organisations to work together to support common objectives. This would be further supported by contracting models within a collaborative framework.	Business objectives Establishing common objectives between partners establishes the basis for agreeing a suitable contracting model.
Business culture	Working towards a more collaborative culture is a huge undertaking if it is not initially present. It can make the difference between whether an organisation is serious about collaboration and the message it sends to the parties it wants to work with.	Vision and values Most organisations can gain an advantage from collaboration, so embedding it as one of your values and legitimising collaborative working confirms commitment.
Value chain innovation	The ability to rethink value and evolve in an ever-changing world. For example, change the make-up of supply chains to meet constantly changing needs. This could mean that one party makes a short-term sacrifice, but does not undermine long-term outcomes, while maintaining the business relationship.	Value creation Encouraging and embracing flexibility is a key contributor to finding new ways to unlock value. Regular review of value is key to forming and continuing a collaboration.
Government agencies	Persuading governments of the benefits of collaboration, including its compatibility with fair and effective competition, has great potential to drive the adoption of collaboration. Ensuring compatibility with regulatory requirements could change mindsets and prompt implementation across the public sector. The support of government agencies would make a significant difference to the motivation of suppliers because of the influence and incentive of public sector procurement directives, tenders and contracts. This will encourage commercial behaviours, stimulating market interest and encourage innovation in the private sector.	Business objectives Demonstrating how collaboration can be a key part of a business/supply chain strategy, the purpose behind it, and to drive innovation. Value creation Put this at the heart of any collaborative initiative. It should be the starting point for adopting organisations to articulate what value means to them.
Appetite for risk sharing	Working with partners on risk strategies can open a whole new opportunity to create value together. Value is not just generating revenue or reducing cost; often it can be just as important to protect business continuity or other types of risks. Declaring your risks to partners to manage and mitigate them presents an opportunity for partners to help in risk mitigation strategies and actions to achieve mutual benefit.	Risk management This is a critical aspect of collaborative relationships because threats and opportunities influence behaviours. Partners working together to highlight and mitigate their respective business risk can be a strong platform for success.

Table continued on next page

Table 1: **Enablers to collaboration** ...continued

APPLYING ISO 44000
COLLABORATIVE PRINCIPLES

DIMENSION	CHALLENGE	APPLYING ISO 44000 COLLABORATIVE PRINCIPLES
Transparency	Sharing information by collaborating organisations is important in building a relationship and discussing and testing the purpose and benefits. Almost the first action when seeking to create the right environment to collaborate should be to show a willingness to be more transparent. Setting boundaries in sharing information establishes a foundation of trust and transparency.	<p>Information and knowledge sharing Appropriate sharing and managing of information and knowledge is the platform for effective collaboration.</p> <p>Collaborative leadership Establishing the appropriate parameters and basis for sharing, and ensuring it is maintained, requires support from the top.</p>
Systems and processes that enable collaboration	Effective collaboration is the removal of traditional siloed barriers between organisations. Establishing systems and processes and shared ways of working that are simple but effective is a key element of adding value through collaboration. A greater level of trust-based decision making will benefit both organisations through a more agile and rapid way of working.	<p>Governance and processes Relationships between organisations require governance structures that support collaborative decision making to ensure success, along with ensuring they are efficient, agile and fit for purpose.</p>
Trust and behaviours	Individuals will trust through character or competence. In the absence of trust, organisations will not act in unison, resulting in damaged relationships that are difficult to restore. Transparency is a starting point for collaboration, as is building trust. Trust is often seen as a rather abstract and unquantifiable concept but there is no doubt that it is a cornerstone of a relationship-based approach to working together.	<p>Trust and commitment to mutual benefit Embedding this principle is essential for delivering to the full potential of a collaborative relationship.</p> <p>Collaborative leadership A key role of leaders is to ensure that trust between organisations is built and maintained.</p>

Table 2: **Barriers to collaboration**

**APPLYING ISO 44000
COLLABORATIVE PRINCIPLES**

DIMENSION	CHALLENGE	
Organisation and business models	<p>How organisations are set up, or how they generate their business, makes a difference to how necessary it is to work with other parties on collaborative ventures. For example, a vertically integrated business is probably less likely to explore the potential for collaboration; but an organisation that has a strong focus on its core competency and seeks to look externally to attract non-core capabilities for collaboration, would benefit.</p>	<p>Vision and values An organisation that wants to collaborate will need to reflect this in its values.</p> <p>Business objectives These support how an organisation and partner establish a collaborative relationship for mutual benefit.</p>
Business culture	<p>Some organisations have a corporate culture and maturity that does not lend itself to a collaborative way of working with external parties, or even internally. This may be entirely appropriate for the way that an organisation operates or succeeds, but the organisation culture needs to adapt if the prospect of supply chain collaboration is seen as an advantage.</p>	<p>Vision and values If the vision of the organisation does not support collaboration, this needs to be reviewed if there is an expectation that collaboration should be a viable option.</p>
Ownership and intellectual property (IP)	<p>Without consensus, to work together to share ideas and knowledge in order to form new propositions or solutions, may lead to questions around equitability and trust. It is natural that organisations will value what they own or create and would want to protect their intellectual property (IP). If circumstances permit, they might consider the advantages of jointly owned IP.</p>	<p>Information and knowledge sharing Appropriate sharing is important alongside proper protection of each party's intellectual property (IP).</p> <p>Exit strategy So that parties understand their IP is protected on disengagement.</p>
Commercial self-interest	<p>Key to the success of working together is the recognition that both parties must benefit in some way. For example, while a 50-50 partnership implies equity, collaborative relationships are more sophisticated and complex than this. This needs to be recognised and the value from the collaboration must be monitored with an understanding that adjustments or improvements may be required. If organisations only want to prioritise their own interests, the collaboration is not likely to endure.</p>	<p>Collaborative leadership This is important to ensure self-interest does not overrule successful collaboration.</p> <p>Relationship measurement and optimization Checks the health of a collaborative working relationship and capacity to create value and deliver objectives.</p> <p>Exit strategy Removes uncertainty and enhances joint engagement.</p>

Table continued on next page

Table 2: **Barriers to collaboration** ...continued

APPLYING ISO 44000
COLLABORATIVE PRINCIPLES

DIMENSION	CHALLENGE	APPLYING ISO 44000 COLLABORATIVE PRINCIPLES
Government and regulation	<p>There appears to be a perception that collaboration is not compatible with public procurement rules, and as a result, the benefit that collaboration brings might be missed or not realised. Competition can often be viewed as the principal way to achieve value for money, rather than working closely with a partner to drive value. The way forward is to overcome this perception and provide a practical way of showing that fair competition is also compatible with collaboration, which can be accommodated and specified in tenders.</p>	<p>Value creation Understanding how value targets can be achieved through working with partners can support an approach to blending competition and collaboration.</p> <p>Relationship management A structured approach to managing and sustaining a collaborative relationship will underpin its success for both parties.</p>
Risk management	<p>Risk management and some associated behaviours have traditionally been the internal function of individual partners to ensure protection and the capability of responding to threats that could impact a mission. Joint risk management allows for partners to deal with risk more comprehensively.</p>	<p>Risk management Sharing how threats could influence behaviours can change how parties work together.</p>
Resources, skills and capability	<p>The availability of capable resources and ensuring that they are harnessed effectively is a real success factor. Frequently, organisations pursue a strategy of collaboration but do not equip their people, help them understand the way to work, or give the authority to succeed. Leaders also need the right skills, as seniority does not equal collaborative competence.</p>	<p>Collaborative competence and behaviour Establishing and developing collaborative behaviours, skills, and capabilities enhances relationships.</p> <p>Collaborative leadership Leaders demonstrate competence and ensure the right resources and skills support collaboration.</p>

Current state

Covid-19 and society's response to the issues associated with minimising its impact have challenged the accepted approach to collaboration and collaborative working.

Industries have had to adapt quickly to maintain business continuity and have turned to alternative ways of communicating. Remote working has fast-tracked the adoption of tools and applications such as *Microsoft Teams* and *Zoom* well before they would have been used to their full potential.

This fast-tracking has been carried out of a sense of urgency and necessity to respond to a crisis in which nearly all industries and societies found themselves.

The initial collaborative response to the pandemic was very positive from a business relationship perspective, in that people came together to solve a common problem (see Figure 3) and existing collaborative relationships have been enhanced. For example, where possible, suppliers have granted extended payment terms to customers to allow other organisations to respond. Customers have paid suppliers in advance to ensure cash flow and the continuation of service. In some sectors, this was the first time customers and suppliers have worked collaboratively, sharing resources to continue their service delivery and to help ensure both parties' survival.

Where relationships have been well-established, mutual support has been enabled in the crisis, and, generally, relationships have strengthened in the face of uncertainty.

Figure 3: Ventilator case study

Covid-19 drove new collaborations, such as the UK Government request for companies to work together and design, procure and assemble critical care ventilators. Despite limited knowledge in the medical industry for some organisations and unfamiliarity with each other, they approached it as an opportunity to support the UK in a time of crisis. Delivery timescales were unprecedented. The response brought together a highly capable, diverse delivery team to create a comprehensive supply chain with all the necessary and related assembly infrastructure and relationships to succeed.

Communication and engagement were vital to assure success:

- A shared, centralised single source of truth
- Frequent workshops with a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure maximum collaboration
- Use of applications to allow dispersed experts the ability to share issues or observations in a timely way
- A clear change control process, managed by the delivery team, to ensure control – recorded and managed.
- Agile project management, to drive the project plan and focus on risk priority and reduction on a daily basis

Innovations included setting up the manufacture of two different systems at two different sites, providing designs that would meet more than ten times normal throughput of a traditional ventilator production line.

Collaboration included closely working with stakeholders; the UK Cabinet Office and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, to ensure the product was quickly adapted and developed to meet the changing response needs of the crisis.

It is possible that positive behaviours that came to the fore in the crisis may not continue during the recovery period, particularly where commercial and performance pressures may invite recourse to contractual remedies. So, when looking to the future of collaboration, industries and society need to consider the alignment of their values with those they seek to have longer-term collaborative opportunities with – focusing and reinforcing the desired collaborative behaviours, ensuring that they have the structured processes and ways of working to guide those desired behaviours.

Organisations that have managed this period of crisis relatively successfully have done so by utilising their established relationships, building teamwork

and reinforcing joint collaborative values. This will lead to a more widespread, professional and effective approach to collaborating in the future. ■

Insights from the survey

– Key socio-technical trends

The Institute for Collaborative Working (ICW) conducted a comprehensive survey of its members (organisations and individuals) to get feedback on topics including: social and technical impacts of emerging trends and the potential impact on collaboration; the importance of collaboration principles; and open-ended questions on collaborative leadership and collaborative capabilities.

Key socio-technical trends

While technical trends are enablers in their own right, they are difficult to separate from the social trends, which are influenced by the behaviours that people may demonstrate when applying technology. Furthermore, collaborative working will also support the implementation of these trends.

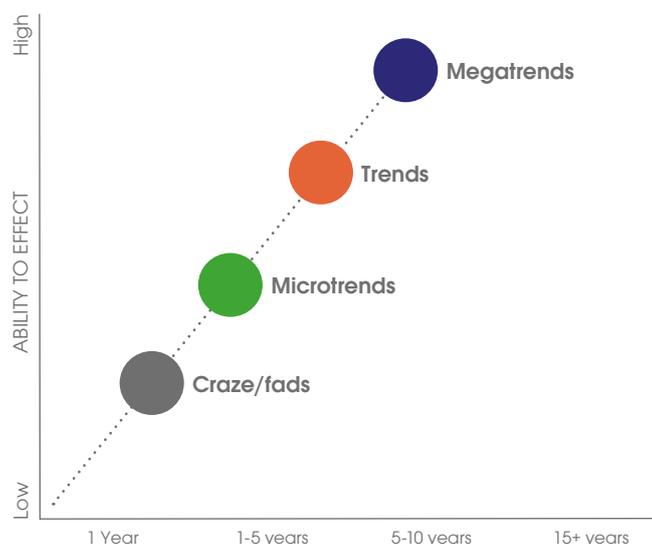
Influence of social megatrends

The megatrends seen bring both opportunities and challenges and it's clear that structured collaborative working will support how organisations address and take advantage of them. Likewise, the identified megatrends will bring changes to the way collaborative working has been deployed traditionally, and as a result, new structures, systems and competencies will need to be developed and refined. Megatrends (see Figure 4) reveal shifts in behaviour or attitudes that

have global impact, and span multiple industries and can drive shifts in behaviours, attitudes and collaborative working. In a fast paced, rapidly changing global environment, megatrend analysis is vital for organisations seeking to drive their sustainable growth and remain relevant as rivalry increases and innovations disrupt whole industries.

The extent and reach of a megatrend's influence can be accelerated by financial crises, shifts in social realities that define the marketplace, or the threat of arguments over assets. For example, during the Cold War megatrend influence drove the collaboration and innovations that started the space race and swift developments in the field of microelectronics. Likewise, electrification, mass production, and globalisation were also

Figure 4: Forces with the ability to impact society, the economy and our lives



Reference: Copenhagen Institute of Future Studies

megatrends that fundamentally shaped society.

The common thread among them is that they presented inescapable strategic realities for corporate leaders. The inevitability of megatrends presents an ever-present challenge to organisations, which must continually evolve and adapt to the change business landscape and technological threats and opportunities. Organisations must recognise megatrends and position themselves to adapt. If they fail to adapt, they will lose market share and may disappear, losing out to organisations that can adjust to the new and remodel themselves quickly to maintain and increase their own market share.

The 2021 megatrends that are emerging are becoming the “new normal”. We may notice that some current megatrends are having this effect, while there are others we may be doing subconsciously, such as:

1 Individualisation: We experience this daily; it has become a central part of modern life. The aim is to distinguish oneself from others. The result is that people and organisations now expect individualised bespoke products, solutions and services. This has resulted in individualism, making branding one of the key aspects of modern sales and marketing e.g. cross-selling will encourage the need for greater collaboration.

2 New perception of health and well-being: More and more lifestyle-related disorders

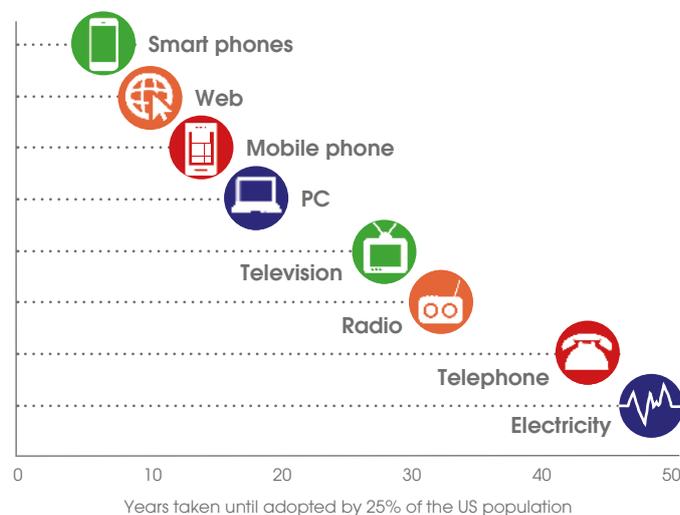
and diseases will materialise. As they do, an increasing amount of personal and public finances will be spent on health and longevity. This health megatrend focuses not only on the prevention of disease, but also on the perception and expectation of wellness. Over the coming decade there will be an increasing focus on health which will infiltrate more aspects of private and work life. This will inevitably lead to artificial and technologically enhanced human capabilities and the opportunity to collaborate through shared medical research.

3 Commercialisation: This is the satisfaction of our human needs through the private market. Digitalisation has made it much easier to reach consumers globally, and the internet has massively advanced

commercialisation by making it inexpensive and quicker for organisations to market increasingly complex products globally. Commercialisation means faster competition, shorter product lifecycles, and increasing specialisation, differentiation and innovation. Collaboratively, organisations are merging technologies to create value and positive social outcomes as a result of their innovations.

4 The internet of things: This is the network of physical objects connected to each other, communicating without human intervention. A key megatrend is technological development, and the exceptional rate at which technology is now evolving. It took about 40 years for 25% of the US population to get telephones, but just five years to reach this same level of

Figure 5: Technology adoption rates are increasing rapidly



Reference: US census Wall Street Journal

adoption for smart phones (see Figure 5, page 17). Technology is being adopted faster than ever and is influencing every global industry. This can subsequently be driven by consumer demand.

The internet of things is perhaps the most prevalent way technology is being used. A simple example is in the home, where devices “talk” to each other to automate processes, like your fridge automatically ordering more milk when you run low. Clearly, organisations will be able to use this technology to interact without human intervention. This could have considerable benefits and present new challenges for effective collaborative working.

The internet of things and its expansion is starting to give a formidable push to even more consolidation amongst companies who are leading its adoption.

5 Sustainability megatrend:

There is a level of worldwide public protest in favour of significant improvement in the management of the global environment, and a fundamental reduction in fossil fuels consumption. The growth in social stigma pertaining to air travel and, more recently, sea transport, is a clear indication that the trend to reduce the generation of greenhouse gases in the normal operations of business will continue. Before Covid-19, governments were already discussing taxing air travel to try to reduce demand and fund carbon reduction technologies.

In the future, business will be conducted at “arm’s length” as business travel becomes prohibitively expensive and socially unacceptable. Also, the effects of the way business have been continuing during pandemic lockdowns has shown that people do not have to travel to do business. Business is becoming smart and an emerging phrase is: “Smart is the new green”.

Companies are thinking about how this change can happen and we are starting to see the natural evolution of green products and services into smart products and services, with intelligent sensing technology and internet connectivity driving better optimisation. The need for smarter solutions and energy-efficient living will propel and promote collections of smart collaborative communities. These smart communities will be assessed on the level of

intelligence and integration of infrastructure that connects the healthcare, energy, building, transportation, and governance sectors.

Fundamental shifts in how energy is sourced, managed, and utilised will have effects across borders and industries, providing industry leaders with the opportunity to improve their bottom line and their global environmental footprint simultaneously.

Organisational size versus megatrend adoption

Megatrends are easier to implement and utilise in large organisations. Conversely, SMEs and start-ups find it much harder due to resource challenges (such as financial, competence and skills availability).

The reasons why larger, global organisations are better positioned to leverage these multiple megatrends are:

- **Platforms that interconnect:** Most tech firms offer “platforms” that connect different groups of people and allow them to engage in mutually beneficial exchanges. This can be expensive to implement due to resources and licensing agreements for numbers of users.
- **Infrastructure of the information economy:** The information services infrastructure is increasingly controlled by a handful of companies, including Amazon, Apple, Google and Microsoft. Currently the world’s three



most valuable companies are all tech companies; making use of these services can be expensive and smaller companies may not be able to justify using these services against return on investment.

- **Supply chains:** Collaboration is becoming more and more desirable across global organisations. Global organisations are now reaping enormous efficiencies by setting up supply chains that span the world and involve hundreds of partners, ranging from wholly owned subsidiaries to outside contractors. Covid-19 has taught us a lot about reassessing cost and value. Looking to the future, collaboration will be a method by which we can de-risk supply chains and build a more resilient society that is more able to meet unexpected challenges.

If we encourage small and medium size organisations and support them to embrace and take advantage of the megatrends, this will allow them to expand and collaborate with other organisations.

If we get this right and use collaborative approaches, we will see real benefits to society.

We will then see an environment where smaller organisations can grow and thrive, innovation is encouraged, and start-up companies have a greater likelihood of success. Consumers will benefit from a market that operates to the benefit of society but without the need for additional market regulation from government. GDP will rise and more companies will be successful, generating economic growth through greater innovation.

Megatrends will continue to influence the way we live. They help determine our future and the future of our global industries. The organisations (large or small) that can capitalise from multiple megatrends, especially those using technology development and the sharing economy, are going to be positioning themselves as successful collaborative business leaders into the future.

Technology

With respect to collaboration and collaborative working, technology is a great enabler to managing information, sharing knowledge and coordinating the collective effort of team members, partners, clients and stakeholders.

The challenges to realising

benefit may be that there is a lot of technology available and this is even more prolific by the emergence of megatrends such as: big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning, hyperconnectivity and technology that better enables effective remote working. The challenges that have been identified are:

- The collaborative behaviours that provide transparent sharing of knowledge and management of information
- There is not always a level playing field as some collaborating parties may be more advanced with technology and tools. This can lead to incompatible outputs that are difficult to integrate later
- The real or perceived issues associated with intellectual property, resulting in barriers to collaboration that can limit innovation and performance
- Technology for remote working is changing how we work and communicate. The issues with Covid-19 have tested this technology, and many organisations and individuals have adopted it sooner than they might have otherwise done so
- The effectiveness of, and engagement in communications can be challenged when needing to interpret two-dimensional versus three-dimensional signals.

Technology advancement is desirable to improve collaborative working and we must ensure that we derive value. ■

Insights from the survey

– Collaborative trends & developments

In addition to the megatrends, insights from the survey respondents spanned a range of areas, based on open questions. Responses have been summarised to indicate where they believe collaboration is moving, alongside observations on potential development focus.

Who is driving collaboration?

There is a view expressed by survey respondents that maximum value has not always been derived from collaborative working. This is particularly evident when the client organisation, who “holds the purse strings” advocates a collaborative approach to delivery but they themselves are not consistently committed (i.e. in good *and* difficult times). Where clients *have* embraced and adopted a collaborative approach, they have experienced increased benefit and value.

To generate increased growth and development that will ultimately result in collaborative working becoming an embedded business practice delivering maximum value, all parties need to be wholeheartedly committed to being collaborative partners.

A strong view expressed in the survey was that, if clients create the right platform and environment for collaboration, their suppliers and potential partners will collaborate, and all parties will attain best value through enhanced relationships. However, collaboration needs to integrate into and complement the way parties work, supporting their culture and values which should be embedded into their contracts, people, process and systems; otherwise, it will be perceived as an administrative burden and something else to do.

Client understanding and attitudes is key to real collaboration that can deliver “value” through more effective and efficient procurement and delivery. If it is simply cost driven to the sole benefit of the client and there is no reward for the supplier or other parties, it is simply a race to the bottom on price alone. This may work for commodities or standardised requirements, but it is not going to drive new value or genuine innovation. Where clients lead, their suppliers will follow, indicating the need to promote and inform collaborative working and its values throughout the supply chain, focusing on the development of competencies of all participants.

Structured or unstructured collaboration?

The majority of respondents identified that there is a significant appetite to collaborate. However, there can be a temptation for an unstructured approach, based on the perception that a structured approach is associated with an administrative burden; that collaboration is either too complicated or simply a “nice to have” appears to inhibit a structured approach to collaboration.

There is an expressed view that ISO 44001 is overly complicated, and this can result in organisations preferring to look for a more informal approach to collaboration. This, however, can result in the collaboration lacking the structure that provides the foundations for a successful collaboration, and as a result, does not provide the added value that would otherwise be derived.

While there may be challenges with adherence to the standard, observations indicated a perception that collaboration is a “nice to have” and implemented without some specific structure. Business partners may be working together through coordination and cooperation and not realising the real value of collaboration which often results from the innovation that can come from challenge.

Feedback on ISO 44001 is interesting because there are clearly organisations that fully value its

purpose and application, whereas there remain others that are reluctant to make the investment. This is either because they believe they can be just as effective without it or the value of the standard has not been sufficiently articulated. The compelling reason to use the standard rests in the structured framework and the key principles that allow for a sustained and consistent approach for organisations that want to collaborate with each other.

Supporters of the standard believe that it should be given the same prominence as other management standards, which suggests elevating its status further. Those organisations that are yet to be won over imply that a simplified standard could be the way forward, which meets all the intent of what currently exists but is more flexible and adaptable.

This is reinforced by indications that suggest that, while a formally structured approach can ensure longevity, it is important to ensure that when managing collaborative ventures, an agile approach that is underpinned by trust reinforces how benefits are achieved.

There can be value in all forms of collaboration, but successful business collaboration needs a structured approach to manage risk and adapt to changes in complexity and context. In the absence of a structured approach collaborative relationships may degrade and increase risk once conflict arises. The structured approach needs to operate for mutual benefit and should apply a value added and tailored approach, so that the specific collaboration needs are met.

Articulating the value

There is a range of challenges around the right ways of working and being able to articulate the benefits and value properly. The difficulty that many organisations face to be able to identify and measure value, continues to be one of the keys to unlocking far greater interest in collaboration.

Often there is over emphasis on seeking monetary value when it is in fact the intangible or non-financial benefits where real collaborative value is created, such as when two organisations work together or innovate to improve safety.

Whilst identifying that value creation is key, one of the strong themes connected to how collaborative value can be described and demonstrated is in relation to joint risk management. More organisations are appreciating that working closely with other parties is a prerequisite to providing a better understanding of risk and that working together can create opportunity. Subsequently, arrangements or models that involve a greater sharing of risk and reward, with associated incentives, can support this.

Another dimension associated with value is transparency and how it can be a driver to enable a greater sharing of business analytics and management information, creating trust. Trust and openness are vital to enabling greater innovation, more effective ways of working and value creation. For example, the importance of seeing and understanding the

“Trust and openness are vital to enabling greater innovation, more effective ways of working and value creation”

whole life value proposition is that benefits are much more likely to be realised if you are able to work collaboratively with your suppliers: you will be able to access the full benefits of a long-term commitment.

People and professionalism

Collaboration is both a professional discipline and a skill that will help people in their career. Many individuals have a strong preference for relationship-based working, so they enjoy working collaboratively. Feedback suggests that individuals view a collaborative approach as more productive, but it is not yet recognised as an emerging professional discipline. There are strong views that the key to embedding collaborative working is to establish it as a professional discipline. However, based on the observations of how individuals view collaboration, it is still some way from reaching this status. This highlights the challenge and the need for more emphasis on a coordinated approach between industry, academia and the Institute for Collaborative Working.

Notwithstanding the pursuit of more widespread collaboration, the importance of existing attitudes and behaviours of people that are involved is critical to the success of collaboration. This reinforces the case for greater education, training and mentoring because it is this deficiency that will make or break future collaboration. So too is ensuring that the right people are involved, and they should exhibit the ability to be open to change, as well as agile and diverse in thought.

A specific area of the survey considered the role of collaboration amongst the younger generation. In general, the younger generation are viewed as natural collaborators and want to engage, but they are also more likely to be professionally mobile. Considerations need to be made to allow them to be more mobile and have greater access to areas of interest to them, which is likely to need a new approach to training, development and retention. Interestingly, the way that collaboration encourages fully integrated teams seems to support the way many people like to work, including younger professionals.

With the rapid advancement in communications, social media and 24-hour news channels, there is an instinctive desire for people to share information quickly, often without full consideration of the implications, including the possible effect of sharing so much so quickly. This may affect the effectiveness of communication, such as out of date information being shared and conclusions drawn before all the facts are known.

For collaborative working to work effectively, communication between and amongst the respective parties needs to be made within a framework that is designed specifically for the circumstances of any particular collaboration, ensuring the benefits of quick and dynamic communication are realised whilst balancing that against other factors.

Organisations

Attending to attitudes and behaviours at an organisation level is necessary both now and in the future, so it becomes an embedded culture. Honesty, authenticity and consistency will encourage people to buy into, and trust, a collaborative culture, and organisations will see clear benefits by accessing value from effective relationships.

There are several challenges for organisations that need to be addressed for collaboration as it relates to people:

- The need to engage better with a leaner workforce across more locations and management structures. For example, it can be challenging when certain roles may be remote but must direct or interface with site teams
- Concerns about capability, suitable resources and appropriate skills across businesses to practise effective collaboration, including at the top executive levels of organisations
- Reduced resource capacity to implement and develop new relationships despite the obvious value creation opportunity
- Sharing of risks in complicated ventures and ensuring the right people and mindset; taking responsibility for making collaboration work; seeking win-win solutions
- The ineffectiveness of internal collaboration can impede collaboration with business partners. If an organisation cannot act in unison when working with external relationships, then this will undermine their objectives.

Organisational leadership is needed to create a collaborative environment and culture that people trust. They need to support collaborative champions by introducing and implementing collaborative ways of working that will bring value to the future of collaboration. ■

“There are strong views that the key to embedding collaborative working is to establish it as a professional discipline”

Success factors for the future of collaboration

One of the questions in the survey asked for respondents to provide a view on the priority of the collaboration principles as defined in ISO 44000. The scoring resulted in three main groupings of the collaborative principles. We have used this feedback to provide a visual representation of how we understand the application of these principles (Figure 6) and the importance of the future of collaboration.

The first group comprises what are considered to be core principles that must be embedded in any organisation to enact effectively the capability to enter a collaborative relationship.

The **ENACT** principles are Collaborative Leadership, Vision & Values and Relationship Management.

The second group is made up of what would be considered engagement principles that are needed to engage and establish relationships.

The **ENGAGE** principles are Trust & Commitment to Mutual Benefit, Business Objectives and Collaborative Competence & Behaviour.

The third group comprises what would be considered enabling principles that represent the implementation of an effective collaborative business relationship and collaborative working.

The **ENABLE** principles are Value Creation, Governance & Processes, Information & Knowledge Sharing, Risk Management, Relationship Measurement & Optimisation and Exit Strategy.

Hence, the key success factors for the future of collaboration are:

- **Collaborative leadership**, which is critical to establishing the environment for collaboration to thrive, and understanding and adapting to context and change.
- **Vision and values**, which

provide the foundation and the basis for why we would want to collaborate and how we should collaborate.

- **Relationship management**, which informs how we want to collaborate, how we will manage the selection of partners and the strategic approach to establishing long-term relationships for mutual benefit and value. The future and effectiveness of collaborative working is dependent on these core principles from the start.

The core values are explained in detail in the next pages.

Figure 6: Collaboration principles



Collaborative leadership

A key factor of any successful endeavour is leadership. That is not to say that it must be hierarchical. In the past, leadership was often considered from a command and control perspective. However, the delivery environment has changed. Projects, stakeholder management, business relationships, government and politics have evolved into complex interactions and interdependencies that are challenging the capacity for leaders to cope if they do not have the mindset to lead collaboratively.

Collaborative leadership is the type of leadership required to get effective and efficient results across internal or external organisational boundaries. A collaborative leader invests time to build relationships, handles conflicts in a constructive manner, and shares control. This spans all industries, organisation sizes and third sector organisations, and is critical in establishing collaborative relationships and delivering through collaborative working.

Why do we need a collaborative leader? There are other styles of leadership such as the autocratic, authoritative, pacesetter, democratic, coaching, affiliative or servant leadership. These types of leadership have their place and value. The collaborative leader will have a sense of which style of leadership is needed and will be able to adapt at all levels of relationships (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Collaborative leadership attributes extend beyond general leadership



A collaborative leader must have fundamental leadership competency and capability. They also need to possess other attributes such as:

- Strategically minded with a strong sense of the context of what we collectively want to achieve and the value this provides. This is particularly important with respect to the recognition of, and leading of change.
- Strong emotional intelligence to know how the individual and the team are doing in order to create the collaborative environment for best benefit and value.
- Strong social intelligence to understand the environment with respect to the various stakeholder expectations and emerging changes.
- The ability to manage conflict. This is a key aspect of successful collaborative efforts.

Collaboration is generally quite easy when all is well; however, it is in the midst of challenge that collaborative working adds its greatest value; this is the opportunity for innovation. The collaborative leader must recognise challenge and change and deal with it head-on and be adept at preserving long-term relationships.

- Other important attributes include: being team oriented; a good communicator and listener; open to sharing and being transparent; facilitating creativity and innovation; the ability to motivate and inspire; empathetic; exuding a belief in the power of collaboration; and demonstrating and expecting ethical behaviours.

Collaborative leaders also have a good sense of self and know their limits to remain resilient. They understand that they may not be

entirely in control and that it is not possible to know all the answers. They recognise the concept of shared leadership and they make good use of resource and capability. They embrace the need for transparency and the importance of that in building and maintaining trust with their teams, partners, clients and stakeholders. They understand the value in tapping into the entire network of the organisations and relationships with a view that diversity is the bedrock of innovation. They appreciate the time and investment taken up-front in preparation to deliver effectively and efficiently, embracing the concept of going slow to go fast.

For example, meetings have previously been face to face and are now conducted via various platforms. This approach appears to be working but does represent challenges to establishing and growing relationships where the parties do not know each other, and trust is nascent. The result is different with a “hybrid” meeting (parties in a conference room and on a virtual platform). The behaviours were markedly different and not very inclusive. While this is a simple example, it reflects challenges in the future with mixed communications and disparate locations. This emphasises the need for collaborative leadership to be aware of the environment, the context and the need for engagement, inclusivity and adaptable leadership. Anyone involved in collaboration should demonstrate leadership. Collaborative leadership is a vital success factor in the future of collaboration.

Vision and values

The importance and role of vision is to give focus and energy to organisational direction. The objective is a simple one: to enable all players (everyone including customers, stakeholders, partners, supply chain and investors) to see clearly the road map of what lies ahead.

Execution of the vision can be significantly more challenging and becomes even more complex depending on the context of the undertaking, such as: partnership, depth of supply, number of stakeholders and complexity of change. Critical to developing and communicating the vision is leadership. The vision is also related to the common purpose and aids in providing the clarity of purpose to guide the collaborative effort.

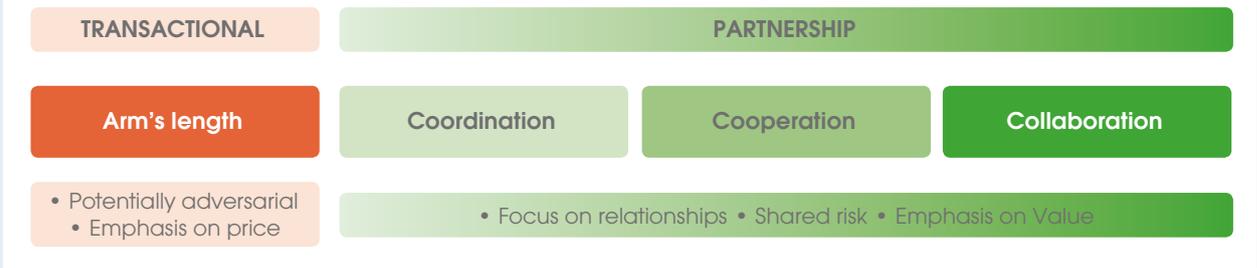
Successful collaborative leaders demonstrate the ability to execute the vision with agility and organisational resilience and adaptability; reacting to market, economic, political, environmental, sustainability, diversity and health and well-being issues. In a collaborative context, leadership and vision are central to the success of any multi-dimensional relationship. Effective leadership of a collaborative relationship is there to create shared visions, clarity of purpose and joint objectives, which have the compelling power to sustain commitment over time. With this foundation, we are more able to respond to a sudden disruption and would be more resilient and change ready.

A shared vision enables all parties of a collaboration effort to transcend transactional behaviours and act in the best interest of the collaborative parties. This means working together to envision the future, setting the agenda, giving direction and purpose to the collaborative enterprise.

Exemplary relationships are built on fundamental beliefs that guide decisions and actions along the path to success and significance. Again, as with vision, developing shared values in the context of a collaborative business relationship is a critical activity, especially if the collaboration is made up of multiple organisations. Nevertheless, collaborative relationships which are based on shared values authentically built on deep rooted beliefs, can drive commitment and value to the organisations and purpose they serve. Adopting this approach to shared values builds trust between the partners and is the foundation for aligning objectives with confidence.

Creating shared values for the collaboration creates a successful anchor point for all parties to align and work towards achieving their objectives. Successful organisations develop shared values that benefit all parties; created together, they become powerful symbols and make a positive difference to behaviours, attitude and performance. In creating shared values, organisations develop a deep and authentic understanding of each other’s capabilities, strengths, and competencies. Communicating and embedding the vision and values in a manner

Figure 8: **Spectrum of relationship interaction**



that results in the right behaviours creates the sustainable culture that will lead to success.

Relationship management

Effective relationships are balanced and reciprocal. A key component of any successful collaborative relationship is integrity, whereby individuals support each other and are genuinely motivated to care about the well-being and success of each other in working together to achieve the collaborative purpose.

There are several contributing factors to successful long-term relationship management, including:

- Building trust
- Good performance
- Focus on improvement
- Sharing knowledge and information
- Relationship management competence
- Aligned values
- Understanding each other's objectives
- Effective communication
- Engagement and effective interfaces
- Clear expectations and boundaries.

Applying a structured approach to relationship management ensures that the maximum benefit can be derived from working with other organisations. An effective approach should usually include many of the following elements:

- **Segmentation:** Puts the focus on strategic and priority relationships, allowing organisations to target resources where they can provide most value, increasing benefits through consolidation, leverage, efficiency and continual improvement.
 - Factors such as value, business criticality, interdependency, risk, operational and technical integration and long-term fit are all aspects that should be considered in prioritising your relationships. There are various stages of establishing and managing relationships from transactional to interdependent. Typically, it is the more complex and critical relationships that should be prioritised. The relationship spectrum is illustrated in Figure 8.
- **Strategies:** Strategies should establish the rationale for why it is important to work with another organisation. For each strategic or priority relationship a strategy will establish why and how you intend to collaborate. To support the strategy, a relationship management plan should be developed to provide the structured framework of the processes to be used and actions to be taken, together with appropriate accountabilities to deliver the relationship strategy. The plan is something that should be shared with the other party, whereas elements of the strategy are confidential.
- **Governance:** A structure is required to manage the relationship. It should provide clarity of what and how interactions should operate, including identifying the right people to be closely involved and their accountabilities. Joint governance is appropriate in collaboration, but it needs to be effective and not onerous for either party.
- **Engagement:** To ensure a practical and transparent approach to how the parties facilitate effective engagement, a series of reviews on a periodic basis should be established. It is critical that senior executives engage to discuss the strategic direction of the relationship in addition to assessing performance, as part of the joint governance approach. Collaborative organisations may also appoint relationship managers for their key relationships to act as the focal point in their business and be accountable for applying agreed processes. Do not assume that all engagement needs to be formal.
- **Performance management:** This is a critical element of ensuring that both parties are getting what they want from the relationship. It should be aimed at addressing any shortfalls across a range of aspects of the relationship and agreed performance to meet defined levels and targets. It should

provide improved visibility and data to address relationship performance issues, as well as informing and supporting the teams that are responsible for governance and oversight of the success of the relationship.

- **Continual improvement:** Based on the output of the performance management process, a joint improvement plan should be developed to address issues, improve performance, and enhance the relationship. Focus and success in making improvements is a clear demonstration of an effective relationship.
- **Development:** Good relationship management supports initiatives to develop new and improved capability.

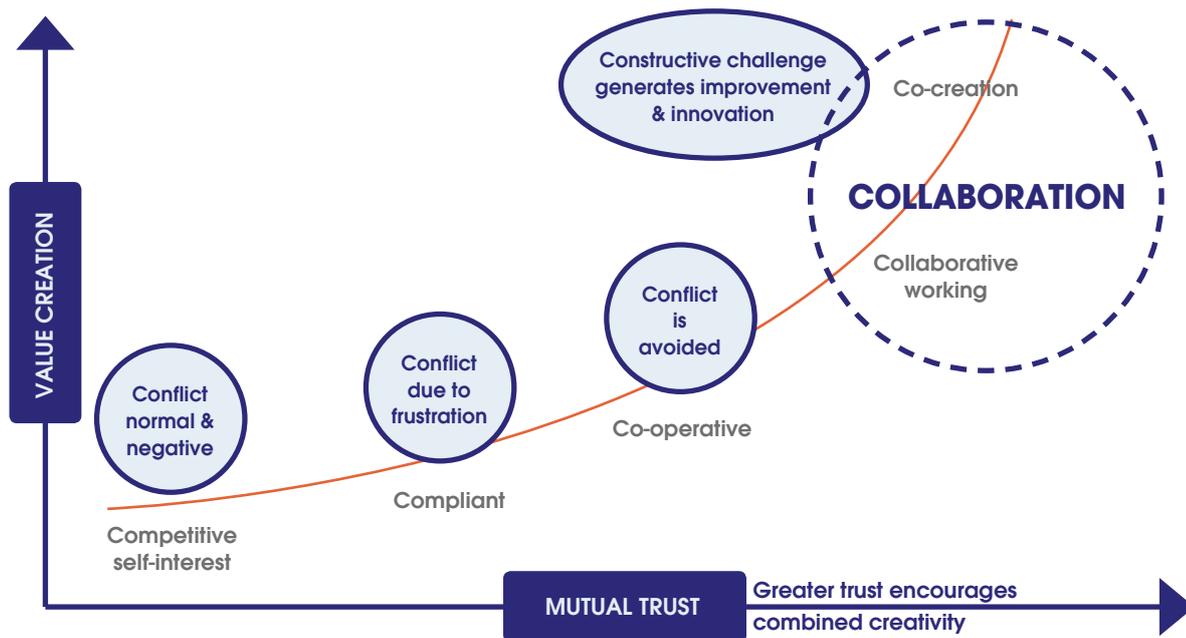
As well as seeking opportunities for innovation, there should also be scope to explore further opportunities to work together. In a collaborative relationship this is where value is created.

- **Systems:** Relationship management is influenced by changes in policies, processes, roles, and relationship agreements. Effective systems can be a critical enabler. Systems enable better relationship management by providing standardised tools, templates and data management, which will enable greater relationship visibility and performance.

Good relationship management will always be a foundation for effective collaborative working.

In the future, as challenges in complexity and relationship increase, it will be even more crucial. The benefits can be significant because advanced relationships can lead to step changes in improvement and innovation (see Figure 9). ■

Figure 9: **Advanced relationships harness creative challenge**



Strategic direction for the future

From the research undertaken, and subsequent analysis and evaluation, several key themes have emerged which will define the future of collaboration and how effective collaborative working can continue to deliver value and drive improvement.

In an ever-changing world where perhaps the only certainty is that it will be full of uncertainties, the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns have taught us some salutary lessons about the status quo. Conversely, on the optimistic side, collaborative working brought benefits, some of them unexpected, whereby the pandemic forced us to work in new ways, leading to positive outcomes. It can be argued that the pandemic just forced us to change quicker than we would have done otherwise.

In the future, good relationship management will increasingly become a more key component and a fundamental enabler to effective collaborative working and there will be a need to adapt the existing techniques as well as develop new practices to address the challenges and complexity of relationship structures.

What is evident from the research we have undertaken is that a perception prevails that structured collaboration, in its present form, is a business tool primarily for large organisations. This needs to change because it is only through the widespread adoption of collaboration that its advantages can be realised for all types and sizes of organisation and people. As a result, collaborative working methodologies and the standard will need to be updated to be made more agile and made

accessible to as wide a community as possible. This does not infer that ISO 44001 needs to be made easier, but rather simplified in language and structure. For example, ensuring that the pure collaborative working and management system elements are integrated. This facilitates the alignment of collaborative working with other standard systems such as health, safety, environment and information security, thus increasing the adoption of the standard and taking to a larger community the benefits it brings.

As collaborative networks and communities become more widespread, we will see the concept of collective capability, involving groups where the sum of what they bring to any project or undertaking is greater than the sum of the constituent parts coming together, creating synergies for quick one-off projects. The speed of mobilisation of collaborations will increase and happen much quicker, and collaborations will become more dynamic with organisations moving quickly in and out of collaborative projects. New methodologies will need to be developed and communicated in a language and structure that makes them easily accessible to medium, small and micro-sized organisations.

Remote and home working will become increasingly normal for more of us. It may be that large offices full of people and the ease of holding round table discussions may be a thing of the past, obviously for health, safety and infection control reasons; but smaller offices with fewer people

travelling to them is a far more sustainable way of doing business than the old model. This will reduce our carbon emissions and save time on travel, making us more efficient. We must not overlook that people and staff satisfaction and development needs are changing; the disadvantages may include feelings of isolation and lack of ability to interact creatively or as effectively with other colleagues. Flexible working for work-life balance becomes more important and brings both opportunities and challenges for the future of collaborative working.

For example, virtual meetings tend to be quicker, sharper and more focused than in-person “face to face” meetings, but appear to take place more frequently. This limits the time and opportunity to develop relationships and build trust, which is key to good and effective collaboration and presents a challenge that will need to be resolved. New interpersonal protocols may emerge to replace the informal exchanges that previously filled the margins of face to face meetings. In addition, new technology provides the capability to share data and information quickly, often in real-time. Individuals who may have previously been used to assimilating and understanding information before presenting may find themselves doing this in a live situation without the preparation. Establishing a climate of trust will be key to enabling this type of sharing, learning and openness, which is key to supporting an agile and dynamic collaborative environment. In the future, organisations will be able to access knowledge for short periods,

almost like borrowing an expert from the library, embedding them into the collaborative environment project for a short period and then returning them.

As interpersonal contact decreases, the dependency on technology will increase, and knowledge will not just be with people but in systems that can be shared. It will be just as important to ensure that the integration of systems, information and communication devices through the internet is ensured in the same way as for people. The protection of our own and other parties’ information and knowledge is vital to maintaining integrity and trust.

Understanding key socio-technical concerns

Collaborating in a varied context as discussed above will require new skills, different mindsets and new methodologies. Specialist training will be required for those already in the workplace, and academic institutions will need to

adapt the courses they run. New ways of learning will focus on behavioural aspects to address how we develop resilient business relationships and build rapport with people when there are cultural challenges and potentially differing values, to encourage diversity within teams. Collaborative leadership will need to consider the mental health and well-being of employees adapting to new dynamic ways of working.

New skills and approaches will need to be embedded into our people to supplement existing ones. For example, when we don’t have the benefit of the body language and shared experiences to understand language nuances, pick up hidden meanings, identify stress or use humour to diffuse a situation. Just as new collaborative models will need to be developed, technology will need to facilitate change. However, people will always be at the heart of the solution. We have seen greater use of virtual meetings using tools like Teams, Webex and Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic,

“New methodologies will need to be developed and communicated in a language and structure that makes them easily accessible to medium, small and micro-sized organisations”

as these can potentially enhance collaborative working. Training in effective facilitation, engagement, inclusivity and participant behaviours makes the efficacy of these tools greater. Crucially, we must also recognise that in some instances there is no adequate substitute for the value of face to face interaction, because of the need to convey authenticity and confirm trust.

These communication tools are going to be part of the solution to how we collaborate in future, but the tools and how we use them will also need to develop to meet our needs going forward. For example, if they are going to help build trust in relationships and not just facilitate remote meetings once trust has already been established, we will need to be able to continue to share information securely in real-time with collaborative partners around the globe where those partners are in a dynamic, changing environment, avoiding negative unintended consequences.

“A challenge will be how to know and understand our collaborative partners and share and demonstrate our values if we never meet them”

To meet these new challenges, we are seeing a suite of solutions developing, including portals where like-minded organisations can connect, and due diligence systems that can be subscribed to, facilitating partner linking and proving a “head start” in developing the trust-based relationship. The new methodologies will recognise the need for effective governance systems to be in place to underpin alignment, define responsibilities, accountabilities, boundaries, risk management and rules for safeguarding information and knowledge, and to ensure lessons learnt are rapidly applied to future collaborative relationships. Although these tools are important to collaboration, it will be our knowledge of collaborative working and the underpinning behaviours that will ensure greatest value is achieved.

It is not just systems that will change – people and competencies will also need to adapt to be successful collaborators. Changing values and social trends will also need to be considered e.g. ethical considerations are of a higher priority and will become increasingly important to individuals and organisations. This illustrates the importance of social value and outcomes in the collaborative consciousness.

Identifying the role of key stakeholders

A challenge will be how to know and understand our collaborative partners, and share and demonstrate our values if we never meet them. We will have to consider social and ethical issues and increased regulatory requirements e.g. sustainability, habitat protection and human rights. The question will not only be “can I work with them?” but also, “should I work with them?”. Depending on their approach to an issue that is ethically important, and whilst it might not directly impinge on what we plan to do together, it may impact on the risks to our reputation or brand identity. As a result of the potential influence and importance of these social and ethical issues, we need to be more diligent in our partner selection.

Disparate geography, time zones and re-interpretation of requirements will challenge the development of personal relationships. To address this, organisations and employees need to consider flexible working in terms of people working remotely and the times people work to allow for effective collaboration.

How organisations seek to re-interpret value will be one of the key lessons learned from the pandemic experience; emphasised by how strong relationships were seen to contribute to better outcomes during times of difficulty and uncertainty, rather than relying on adversarial contractual arrangements. As the challenges and circumstances under which we operate change, organisations will need to re-evaluate and understand the value of collaboration in the management of risk. Often contracts are adversarial by nature and incorporation of collaborative principles enables an effective basis for delivery and encourages the desired behaviours, so parties jointly act in the best interest of the outcome and take a non-adversarial approach. While there continues to be progress in the development of collaborative contractual type documents, the leadership and behaviours in implementation make the difference in execution, particularly in times of challenge and change.

Overcoming challenges

To manage this change, our tools and methodologies will need to adapt, and we will have to find ways to ensure the business tools in our partner selection process take these issues into account. There is an opportunity for like-minded organisations to manage risk together through the use of portals, networks and independent verification systems. We expect

these will be based on a mixture of member inputs and independent third-party verification.

Collaborative tools, systems and processes are improving, changing and evolving to meet the changing expectations and global working environment. They are becoming more dynamic with less direct face to face interaction, so we widen the possibilities for potential new collaborative partners, providing the widest choice to maximise the opportunity for value creation. We anticipate the development of more advanced training and educational programmes to ensure the collaborative competencies required are in place, including those required for collaborative leadership.

Teams of the future will need to understand the potential barriers to collaboration e.g. vested interests, personal agendas, reluctance to change or to exit relationships, and courage to initiate new ones. In addition, security concerns about sharing will need to be addressed. Data, information and knowledge are already real commodities of the 21st century, where they would be addressed by firewalls and regulations. However, as we collaborate across borders, these tools may not be effective and new solutions will be found, such as blockchain, which will become more widely deployed in collaborative networks.

As teams become more geographically separated, we will have to ensure leaders are competent to manage in a remote working environment.

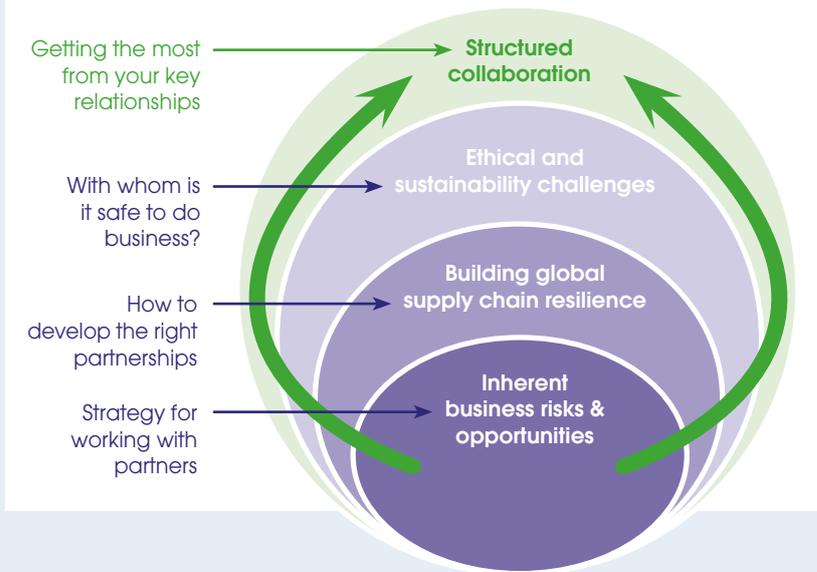
Collaborating does not mean we always agree, but effective conflict management leads to meaningful solutions and innovation. Collaborating when we do not agree is always difficult, so this skill needs to be developed and embedded in our people from an early stage.

A derivative part of the collaborative competencies that need to be in place is the resultant behaviours. It's clear from our research that effective collaboration only works where and when collaborative behaviours are exhibited by all parties. We must clearly identify what these behaviours are and how they can be evidenced and embedded into the culture. The negative consequences of a lack of correct behaviours being demonstrated are often a reflection of poor leadership engagement. The goal is to ensure a culture where the correct behaviours are in place and exhibited almost unconsciously. It is therefore critical that we embed the importance of behaviours into our academic and vocational education and training, that we develop and deploy tools for measuring correct behaviours and that they are being consistently demonstrated.

To illustrate the collaborative mindset, positive things happen when we think in the following way:

- The win-win, no-lose principle
- "I did not ask because I trusted you to tell me if I needed to know"
- Openness or honesty in communication
- Best for project ethos.

Figure 10: **Structured collaboration supports 21st century business needs**



However, it is often natural to resort to traditional conflict style behaviours when times are difficult. This is exactly the time when we need to exhibit all the best collaborate behaviours.

A key competence for leaders will be the ability to recognise when to deploy a collaborative approach and to ensure that their organisation has in place the systems, processes, skills and resources ready to be deployed effectively when the need arises. They need to understand that the context under which any collaborative team is deployed can dramatically affect the outcomes. Leaders also need to understand that context is vital to the outcome; a successful solution is dependent on the context and is not one size fits all. Good collaborative leaders will recognise that different situations require customised solutions to ensure what is required

for a successful collaborative approach in terms of a structured collaborative environment, appropriately resourced, that fits the needs of the undertaking. For collaborative working to realise full potential and be genuinely effective, collaborative leadership competence must become standard practice.

The value of a higher level of collaboration

Based on the evidence we used to develop this report, structured collaboration and collaborative working will become significantly more relevant in the future. Organisations that can deploy a higher level of collaboration will result in better relationships, the ability to innovate, manage risk, embrace change and generate value. This creates a more sustained and resilient organisation that will be best placed to respond to emerging opportunities, resulting in a competitive advantage (see Figure 10).

The future of collaboration is exciting; how we collaborate will be different and will help us address new and emerging challenges, but the fundamental principles that underpin collaboration today will hold true in the future. Our skills will change, our systems will develop and our leadership techniques will improve. Several things remain critical: behaviours that foster mutual trust, objectives that bring value to all involved, clear collaborative leadership that results in innovation, value creation and a working environment where trust, respect and integrity is paramount. ■

Final thoughts

The context or circumstances under which a collaboration takes place has an enormous effect on the outcomes. The way it's conducted or undertaken is a key learning point, because every collaboration is unique and will need to have a specific solution applied to enable it to succeed. The concept of this paper was to provide insights into the future direction of collaboration. We evaluate the impact of factors including megatrends, changes in business norms and social attitude, and the influencing organisational interactions and relationships. We have eight final thoughts that stand out:

Structure

Structured collaborative working is the key to adapting to and addressing the increasingly complex challenges that face our society – from climate change to social care, supply chain security to ethical procurement. Structured collaboration is what makes the difference between cooperation or casual collaboration and raising the capability of organisations to work closely and effectively together. Organisations and governments that understand and react to this quickly will create opportunities through innovative solutions, gaining competitive advantage in the future.

Collaborative leadership

The future will demand more from leadership than ever before as a result of the complexities of relationships and stakeholders in successful collaborations. Leaders will be judged not only by what they deliver but also by how they deliver. Collaborative leadership is critical to establishing the environment for true innovation to thrive. It is also critical for providing the ability to recognise and adapt to context and change. To be considered effective, the capability of collaborative leadership will be essential in the future at all levels.

Trust

Trust is crucial to collaboration. In the future, as we move towards more rapid, long distance, virtual relationships, establishing and sustaining trust needs further consideration of context to meet differing circumstances. It's priceless, potentially unstable and vital to collaborative success, in a physical and a virtual environment.

Collaborative competence

A world with less face to face contact appears inevitable. This will be best managed by applying appropriate competencies and skills, leveraging key enablers and encouraging appropriate behaviour. Development of the right competencies is key and will need to be continually updated as situations change leading to collaborative skills and capability becoming a professionally recognised discipline. Universities and organisations need to understand and react to this with advanced education and training.

Behaviours

Our ways of working are changing and will challenge how we need to communicate and engage in the future. As technology becomes more important to enabling collaboration, communicating and embedding the collaborative vision and values

in a manner that results in the right behaviours, creates the sustainable culture that will lead to success.

Technology

Technology is being adopted faster than ever and is influencing every industry and organisation; it is a great enabler for communicating, managing information, sharing knowledge and coordinating the collective effort of team members, partners, clients and stakeholders. The advancement of technology will continue to improve collaborative working, providing that we utilise it effectively to create value. Collaborative professionals need to nurture relationships and encourage the right behaviours to get the very best from collaborative tools and technology.

Accessibility of ISO 44001

ISO 44001 must adapt to the changing world and become more inclusive in its language and structure, encouraging its adoption by any organisation wishing to benefit from the value of the principles of collaboration. Accessibility will create a step change in the adoption of the ISO 44000 family of standards.

Unknowns

Finally, the most significant change, trend or occurrence that will emerge in the future is the one we have not yet identified. We need to develop a strategic insight to recognise and adapt to change and to maintain alignment in collaborative working. By working through emerging change with trusted partners and sharing our collective experience rather than working in isolation, the more equipped we will be to face the future together. ■

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Publication of this report has been kindly sponsored by the following organisations:

