The Power of collaboration

Jamin Johanson and Van Johanson
USDA-NRCS
Richfield, UT
What is Collaboration?

What makes Collaboration difficult?

And what makes Collaboration powerful?
We spent $500k on SharePoint and people still aren't collaborating.

I collaborated five times this week, twice before coming to this meeting.

What are the odds that he even understands what collaboration means? Roughly equal to the possibility you know what SharePoint is...

Write your own at http://dilbert.com
So what is Collaboration anyway?
Col·lab·o·ra·tion Defined

• Dictionary definition—to cooperate with an agency or group with which one is not immediately connected

www.merriam-webster.com
Col·lab·o·ra·tion Defined

• Dictionary definition—to cooperate with an agency or group with which one is not immediately connected

• What is the root of this word?

www.merriam-webster.com
Col·lab·o·ra·tion Defined

• Dictionary definition—to cooperate with an agency or group with which one is not immediately connected

• What is the root of this word?
  – Labor
    • physical or mental exertion
    • Especially when difficult or exhausting

www.merriam-webster.com
Col·lab·o·ra·tion Defined

• Dictionary definition—to cooperate with an agency or group with which one is not immediately connected

• What is the root of this word?
  – Labor
    • physical or mental exertion
    • Especially when difficult or exhausting
  – co-
    • A prefix meaning together with others
  – -ation
    • A suffix meaning the process or act

www.merriam-webster.com
Collaboration Defined

• Dictionary definition—to cooperate with an agency or group with which one is not immediately connected

• What is the root of this word?
  – Labor
    • physical or mental exertion
    • Especially when difficult or exhausting
  – co-
    • A prefix meaning together with others
  – -ation
    • A suffix meaning the process or act

• Co-labor-ation—the process or act of physical/mental exertion together with others.
Synergy in Collaboration

Mathematical interpretation—when the product of a group is greater than the sum of its parts.

Compromise: \(1+1=1.5\)

Synergy: \(1+1=3\)

The group produces results that individuals could not produce independently.
What makes Collaboration difficult?

• People and organizations are all different
  – Think in different ways about different things
  – Have different goals or strategies
What makes Collaboration difficult?

• People and organizations are all different
  – Think in different ways about different things
  – Have different goals or strategies

• It requires a learning attitude
  – Open to the ideas, goals of others
  – Honesty about your own assumptions
  – Willingness to change your thinking
What makes Collaboration Powerful?
What makes Collaboration Powerful?

• People and organizations are all different
  – Think in different ways about different things
  – Have different goals or strategies
What makes Collaboration Powerful?

• People and organizations are all different
  – Think in different ways about different things
  – Have different goals or strategies

• It requires a learning attitude
  – Open to the ideas, goals of others
  – Honesty about your own assumptions
  – Willingness to change your thinking
Principles of Collaboration

• Think of your own ideas as input, not outcome
• Listen to learn, rather than judge
• Collaboration can occur in every medium of communication, and in any moment
• The level of synergy achieved is a function of the groups’ commitment to learning
• Commitment is a function of involvement
  – No involvement = no commitment
Collaborations for ESD Development

There is no single “right way” to produce ESDs,

but there is a right way to collaborate!

Photos courtesy of Miranda Meehan and Tamzen Stringham
Collaborations for ESD Development

“The greatest reward of collaboration is not knowing initially what the outcome will be, and then watching it unfold creatively and synergistically, as part of a team.”