

Collaboration skills: How to improve them and examples for your resumé

While some of us prefer to be lone rangers when it comes to getting things done at work, there will always be times when collaboration is necessary. Whether it's in your professional or personal life, collaboration is a key skill that makes teamwork smoother and more effective.

It always helps to be collaborative, meaning you can work well not just with team members, but with customers, clients and any other people in the business. Effective collaboration skills can be the key to success in modern workplaces. Organisations that foster a collaborative environment can benefit from improved decision-making, increased innovation, better problem solving and a more engaged and productive workforce. This ultimately leads to greater success in a rapidly evolving business environment – which is good news for you, too!

Whether you're working on career advancement, personal development or professional opportunities, mastering collaboration skills will help get you to your goals faster.

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What are collaboration skills?

Collaboration skills are essentially a blend of soft skills that allow for easier working relationships within a team. Effective collaboration means understanding your teammates and tackling problems in a positive way. Good communication, emotional

intelligence, relationship-building and cultivating trust are all key parts of collaboration.

Collaborative communication

It's no surprise that communication and collaboration go hand in hand. But being [great at communicating](#) is so much more than just having a chat. It also means actively listening, being conscious of [non-verbal cues](#), being attentive and solving problems. 'Communication' includes a vast range of skills that are needed to be able to effectively interact with different individuals.

While speaking is obviously a big part of communicating, so is the art of listening. In particular, [active listening](#) is a key communication skill that involves fully engaging in a conversation and concentrating on what the other person is saying, to understand the complete message. To practise active listening, it's important to consider the other person's perspective and pay attention to the language and tone they use, as well as non-verbal cues. Asking open-ended questions demonstrates that you're engaged in the conversation and you're interested in the other person's opinion.

Plus, effective collaboration and active listening allow individuals to express their thoughts and ideas clearly, which is essential for success in the workplace.

Emotional intelligence

[Emotional intelligence](#), also known as 'emotional quotient' or EQ, involves understanding and regulating your own emotions to communicate clearly and effectively. Emotionally intelligent people demonstrate empathy and self-awareness, and can regulate their emotions.

Practising emotional intelligence involves understanding how your brain works, observing your emotions and considering how your thoughts and actions affect others. Doing so helps you build stronger connections with your workmates, which can help to foster effective communication and collaboration.

Building trust

A lack of trust in the workplace can be a huge barrier to effective communication and collaboration. Whether you're trying to encourage collaboration within your team or are

actively working on your own collaboration skills, it's important to be able to trust your teammates, and for them to be able to trust you in return.

Improving collaboration skills and building trust in the workplace takes time and effort, but it's worth it! Here are some ways you can form a good working relationship built on trust:

- Act honestly and transparently: honesty and transparency are critical to building trust. By sharing information openly, providing insight into decision-making and taking ownership of your mistakes, you'll earn trust from your team.
- Be a dependable colleague: when people at your workplace know they can depend on you for help, it fosters a sense of trust. They know they can count on you to deliver when they need you most.
- Respect confidentiality: while open communication is important in the workplace, there are times when you should keep information confidential. When your colleagues trust their private information is safe, it helps create a sense of security.

If you're interested in reading more about collaboration and teamwork examples, you can check out our blog on [soft skills in the workplace](#).

Collaborative problem solving

One of the key aspects of mastering collaboration is improving your problem-solving skills. Effective problem solving involves taking logical steps to develop a solution to overcome an obstacle, a process that can be vastly different in a team setting. Here are a few tips for tackling a problem as part of a team.

Identify common goals

The first step is to clearly identify the issue and the common goal. When multiple people are working together to find a solution, it's important to make sure they're all on the same page about the desired outcome. This helps avoid conflict by ensuring everyone understands what you're working towards, even if they have differing ideas

on how to get there.

Brainstorm and idea generation

Brainstorming is a great way to get all those big ideas down on paper (or whiteboard), while fostering good team communication. Make space for everyone to contribute ideas during this phase – nothing is off limits. This type of teamwork helps boost creativity and innovation, allowing others to take inspiration from each idea. It can be exciting working towards a solution together!

Divergent vs. convergent thinking

Divergent thinking and convergent thinking refer to two different approaches to problem solving. Divergent thinking is a creative process that involves considering a vast range of different options, new ideas and unique solutions. On the other hand, convergent thinking focuses on finding a single, well-defined solution to a problem. Most people naturally lean towards either the creative or the analytical side of thinking, which can influence their approach to problem solving.

In a team setting, it's likely that you'll have some team members who prefer divergent to convergent thinking or vice versa. The fun part is getting the best of each to balance these two approaches and come up with a shared solution that everyone can get behind.

Evaluate and prioritise ideas

Once brainstorming is complete, you'll likely have a range of different ideas for tackling the problem. This is where evaluating and prioritising comes into play. Once you've generated your list of potential solutions, you'll need to prioritise them based on their feasibility, impact and relevance. Then, you can move on to evaluating each idea. This will help identify the solution most likely to succeed, and set your action plan in motion.

Developing action plans

While ideas are a great starting point, you'll need a clear action plan to successfully solve a problem. When developing your plan, make sure you define the scope of the problem and the common goals you're working towards. Your action plan should also

break down the overall objective into smaller goals and assign roles and responsibilities to team members.

Quick tip: It's always a great idea to review your action plan after the project has wrapped up. This way you can reflect on your team's performance, call out areas for improvement and recognise achievements.

Implement solutions and monitor progress

Once your team has developed a solution and everyone's happy with their responsibilities, it's time to take action and tackle the problem! As everyone begins work, it's important to continue to monitor the progress of your plan, making sure everything is on track. This allows you to identify small problems before they become big ones, and provides insights into whether your action plan is worth replicating for similar problems in the future.

Adapting to different team dynamics

One of the main advantages of working in a team is exposure to all the unique perspectives, experiences and approaches that each person brings to the table. To get the most out of your team, it's important to be open to unexpected team dynamics and to encourage your team to embrace different ways of thinking and interacting.

Understanding team roles and personalities

Part of effectively managing team dynamics is understanding teammates' roles and personalities. One tool you can use to better understand the roles of individuals within your team is Belbin's Team Role Theory. This theory groups team members into specific roles based on their strengths and weaknesses, helping you create the most effective dynamic for your team.

Another popular tool that can be used to better understand your team's dynamics is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This self-report questionnaire lends insight into personality preferences and classifies people into 16 different personality types. Each personality type varies in terms of how they perceive the world and make decisions.

Managing conflicts and disagreements

With so many different personalities and perspectives on a team, it's natural for disagreements to happen. This is why conflict resolution is a great skill to have, regardless of whether or not you're a leader. Conflict resolution is a critical aspect of effective teamwork and collaboration, allowing you to mediate the issue and resolve it while keeping things professional.

Maintaining a positive atmosphere

There's no denying that when your team is happier, they're often more [motivated](#) and productive, which is a win-win for everyone. Managing people with a mix of personalities means there's no one-size-fits-all approach to creating a positive working environment. Instead, you need to find what works best for your team.

Some ideas include:

- Celebrating the achievements of individuals and the team as a whole. When employees feel that their work is being recognised, it can help to motivate them to continue to perform.
- Providing opportunities for team-building exercises. This creates a fun environment where your team can get to know each other and let off a bit of steam, so they're better equipped to get their work done. Team-building activities are great ways to build skills that both you and the team can draw on for real work scenarios.

Supporting and motivating team members

Part of being in a team is understanding how to support and motivate different team members. In these instances, it can help to take time to get to know each team member and understand what motivates them. Knowing their unique drivers can help you to support them with what they need while you're collaborating on a task (and beyond).

Giving constructive feedback

Last but not least, adapting to different team dynamics also involves understanding how best to deliver [constructive feedback](#). Providing feedback is a skill that takes time and practice to master, especially when you're handling a range of personality types. On the other hand, it's also important to work on how you [receive feedback](#). Remember to try not to take constructive criticism personally. Instead try to be open and use any feedback as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Examples of collaboration skills to list on your resumé

If you're applying for different jobs, it's a good idea to include collaboration skills [on your resumé](#) that are relevant to the role and industry. Since there are many soft skills that fall under the umbrella of 'collaboration' you have a lot more to add than you might think!

Here are just some examples of working collaboratively that you can use on your resumé:

- Active listening
- Teamwork skills
- Flexibility and compromise
- Interpersonal relationships
- Conflict resolution
- Open-mindedness
- Constructive feedback
- Organisational skills
- Remote collaboration
- Collaborative tools
- Project management
- Meeting facilitation
- Task delegation
- Team motivation
- Conflict management
- Creative problem solving
- Data analysis
- Communication skills

- Empathy and understanding
- Decision-making skills

Collaborative tools and techniques

Aside from developing your own skills, there are a number of tools and techniques that you can use to help boost collaboration in your workplace. Here are a few that can help you on your way to mastering the art of collaboration.

Project-management tools

Whether you're working remotely or you're just looking for a platform to help your team work more effectively, project-management tools are a great way to make sure everyone is on the same page.

These tools can help streamline your workflow, automate processes, promote effective communication and allow you to deliver projects successfully. Some of the most popular project management tools include:

- Trello
- Asana
- Basecamp
- Microsoft Project

Communication platforms

If there's one thing remote working has changed, it's how we communicate. Communication platforms are a powerful tool in supporting real-time collaboration. These types of software platforms provide a number of benefits, like boosting productivity and improving time efficiency. They can also be a great place to connect with your teammates, whether it's a quick message to update a document, or just touching base to see how their day is going.

There are a number of different platforms that have been developed for workplace communication and collaboration, including:

- Slack
- Microsoft Teams
- Zoom

- Skype

Document sharing and collaboration

For many businesses, sharing documents is at the core of collaboration between employees, as well as with clients or other stakeholders. Sharing documents online is quick and convenient, plus it can allow for greater control over security and accessibility.

If you're after easy-to-use document-sharing tools, you might want to consider:

- Google Workspace
- Microsoft 365
- Dropbox Paper

Cultivating a collaborative mindset

With all that being said, fostering effective team collaboration is an ongoing process, requiring genuine commitment to working effectively with others.

Here are some simple steps you can take to promote a long-lasting collaborative culture within your team.

Encourage openness and inclusivity

Creating an inclusive, open workplace culture helps your peers feel comfortable and like they're a part of a supportive team. Part of encouraging openness involves fostering a relaxed, open-door policy for communication between team members.

Open communication is essential for breaking down any personal barriers team members might have, lessening their fear of failure and overcoming resistance to change. It can also help strengthen workplace relationships and create a more harmonious and friendly atmosphere.

Reward and recognise collaborative efforts

There's no feeling quite like getting a pat on the back after you've completed a project. This recognition plays a key role in encouraging collaboration. Taking the time to

celebrate success as a team is a great way to create a positive and warm working environment. Sometimes just a simple acknowledgement of the team's achievements is enough to foster a sense of belonging and satisfaction.

Mastering the art of collaboration is a key part of your professional development. The vast range of benefits includes boosting productivity, improving problem solving and unlocking new levels of creativity – there's a lot to be said about working effectively with your teammates!

FAQs

How can I improve my collaboration skills?

Improving your collaboration skills involves working on several other skills, which in turn foster effective teamwork. Focusing on developing your communication skills, improving emotional intelligence and evolving your problem solving is a great way to improve your collaboration skills.

What are some common challenges faced when collaborating with others?

It's not uncommon for teams to face a range of challenges when it comes to effective collaboration. Some of the most common hurdles include miscommunication, a lack of shared goals and unbalanced team dynamics. Cultivating collaboration is an ongoing process, so it's important to continuously navigate through challenges as they arise.

How do you handle difficult team members in a collaborative setting?

Every now and then, someone finds it hard to gel with their teammates. This can be due to a clash of personalities or simply a lack of interest in collaboration. When dealing with this type of person, it's essential to keep things professional. Depending on your role, you may want to set clear expectations, provide constructive feedback and employ conflict-resolution techniques. If all else fails, you may need to reassign the team member to another role or project that better suits their skills.

How can introverts excel at collaboration?

Anyone can be a great collaborator – you don't need to be an extrovert. Learning to communicate transparently with your teammates is half the battle won. If you're a team leader, try creating an open and inclusive workplace culture to ensure more introverted team members are comfortable in any setting. Ultimately, encouraging introverts to collaborate involves many of the same strategies as fostering collaboration in general, including setting shared goals, encouraging communication and planning team-building activities to create stronger connections.

How can remote teams enhance their collaboration skills?

The key to fostering effective collaboration skills in remote settings is by leveraging collaborative tools and platforms to streamline your projects and encourage communication.

Note that while it's vital for teams to stay in regular contact, it's important not to go overboard with too many messages. Be sure to set up clear guidelines when it comes to your expectations around remote communication.