

Writing Sample

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Soft Skills Training

Examining the Collaborative Relationship

Advantages of a Collaborative Relationship

James works for a recruitment agency that specializes in finding lawyers for suitable firms. He often does work for Bigcorp, a large law firm, but James hasn't heard from them in a while.

James calls Donna, the head of the personnel department at Bigcorp, to find out what is happening.

Donna tells him that his fees are no longer within her budget for recruitment. She's working with a smaller budget this year and may have to use a different agency.

James and Donna have often worked together in the past and have found each other to be reliable and trustworthy. However, Donna's budget is going to cause problems for them.

A collaborative relationship is one in which the parties involved consider both the relationship and the outcome to be important. As a result, they work together to achieve optimum success in both areas.

In order to foster a collaborative relationship, you need to be able to:

- Identify the features of a collaborative relationship
- Recognize opportunities for using collaboration

A collaborative relationship has several advantages for both parties in the relationship. These include:

- working toward compatible goals
- engaging in creative problem-solving
- exploring win-win scenarios

Advantage	Information
Compatible goals	Both parties try to ensure that their goals are mutually complementary.
Creative problem solving	Both parties search for new and innovative ways of solving problems to ensure that they both achieve their goals.
Win-win scenarios	Both parties work together so that both of them can achieve a desirable outcome.

One of Donna's goals is to use James' agency and one of James' goals is to keep Donna as a client. Their goals are compatible because they both want to maintain the productive relationship that they built in the past.

They look for a creative way to solve their problem that will suit both of them. James agrees to reduce his fees and Donna tells him that her firm is going to set up another branch in the next year and commits to using his agency.


It's a win-win result because Donna gets a reduction in fees and James gets the promise of repeat business.

Determine When to Use Collaboration

It is important to identify opportunities for using collaboration. Use it when the relationship matters, when you trust the other party and for long-term goals.

James relies on Donna for the employment of his lawyers and Donna relies on James to provide her with highly-skilled staff.

James and Donna trust each other because they have had many successful dealings with each other in the past. They both want to maintain their relationship for future dealings.

 It is important to be able to recognize opportunities to enter into a collaborative relationship since not every situation calls for one. For example, let's take a look at this next scenario.

James needs to buy a new photocopier. He has bought products from Paul in the past and has been satisfied with the quality of his merchandise.

Paul offers to sell James a photocopier and he promises that he will deliver the photocopier within a week if James pays upfront. However, James is a little nervous about handing money over to Paul in advance because the last time James bought a photocopier from Paul, he had to wait a month for it - and Paul had promised to deliver it in a week!

In this case, a collaborative relationship will most likely not work since trust is missing from this relationship.

Use collaboration within an organization when you and the other party have common interests and when the likely outcomes of a negotiation are undesirable.

Same organization - If you and the other party work in the same organization, it is wise to collaborate because you share similar goals and work closely together.

Common interests - If you share the same clients, suppliers, or service personnel, you should try to keep your working relationship running smoothly.

Negative outcome - Sometimes, you and the other party know that you are both going to be dissatisfied with the results of a negotiation. In this case, it is a good idea to collaborate to search for a solution that suits you both.

Activity - The Collaborative Relationship

1. Which of the following can be advantages of a collaborative relationship?

- a) Both sides win in the end.
- b) Only one party can win in the end.
- c) Each party considers the relationship to be important.
- d) Both sides engage in competition.
- e) Both sides engage in creative problem solving.

2. You should collaborate when:

- a) You and the other party are both from the same organization.
- b) You and the other party are in rival companies.
- c) You and the other party have conflicting interests.
- d) You want to maintain the relationship for long-term goals.
- e) You trust the other party and vice versa.