



# Chicago United Building A Culture of Collaboration: The Manager's Role

April 10, 2026

# Today's Objectives


- Understand characteristics of collaborative cultures
- Identify behaviors and systems that foster (and undermine) collaboration
- Apply concepts to your own teams
- Commit to 1–2 immediate actions

# Why does collaboration matter?

Research from McKinsey & Company and Gallup shows that teams that collaborate effectively are significantly more productive, innovative, and engaged.

*“World's Largest Ongoing Study of the Employee Experience”* (Gallup, February, 2026);  
*“Go, teams: When teams get healthier, the whole organization benefits”* (McKinsey & Company, October, 2024)

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*As a manager, fostering collaboration is not just about culture...it's about performance.*

Think about your best team experience.  
What made it great?

# Characteristics of Collaborative Cultures

## Trust and Psychological Safety

People feel safe to speak up; Mistakes are treated as learning; Input is welcomed and valued

## Clarity and Transparency

Aligned goals; Defined roles; Clarity about decision-making

## Inclusive Team Practices

Diverse perspectives invited; All voices are heard; Actively counter dominance and bias

## Strong Relationships

Collaboration is relational, not just operational; Trust and connection increase openness, speed, and resilience

## Enabling Systems

Streamlined communication; Reduced silos; Tools used intentionally

# Quick Resource: The Four Distinctions of Trust

Freeing ourselves from the limiting belief that trust is all or nothing!



*"The Thin Book of Trust: An Essential Primer for Building Trust At Work, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition," Charles Feltman*

# Practices for Building a Culture of Collaboration

## Build Trust First

Collaboration fails without trust; Teams must believe their colleagues will contribute positively and reliably; Transparency and relationship-building are essential starting points

**Why it matters:** Trust enables open communication and risk-taking, which are critical for teamwork

## Create Clear Shared Goals & Roles

Align teams around a common purpose; Clarify responsibilities and decision-making authority; Ensure everyone understands how their work contributes

**Why it matters:** Clarity reduces confusion and increases accountability, enabling smoother collaboration

## Prioritize Open & Structured Communication

Establish consistent communication channels and norms; Encourage idea-sharing across levels and functions; Make information accessible and transparent

**Why it matters:** Communication is the “backbone” of collaboration and prevents silos

## Foster Psychological Safety

Create an environment where people can speak up without fear; Normalize feedback, disagreement, and learning from mistakes

**Why it matters:** Teams collaborate more effectively when people feel safe contributing ideas and challenges

# Practices for Building a Culture of Collaboration

## Leverage Diverse Perspectives

Actively include different backgrounds, roles, and viewpoints; Encourage constructive debate (“intellectual friction”)

**Why it matters:** Diverse thinking improves problem-solving and drives innovation

## Invest in Relationships & Team Connection

Create time for team members to get to know each other; Build rapport beyond task-focused interactions

**Why it matters:** Strong relationships increase openness, trust, and willingness to collaborate

## Promote “We” vs “Me” Mindset

Shift from individual performance to collective success; Highlight how strengths complement each other

**Why it matters:** Collaboration thrives when people see success as shared, not competitive

## Enable Collaboration Through Systems & Design

Use tools intentionally (don’t overload with tech or frameworks); Create environments (physical or virtual) that support interaction; Reduce friction in workflows

**Why it matters:** Collaboration improves when systems make it easy—not harder—to work together

# Practices for Building a Culture of Collaboration

## Recognize & Reinforce Collaborative Behavior

Celebrate teamwork, not just individual achievement; Reward knowledge-sharing and partnership

**Why it matters:** What gets recognized gets repeated

## Model Collaboration

Demonstrate inclusive behaviors (listening, inviting input); Be explicit about what collaboration looks like in practice

**Why it matters:** Leaders set the tone—culture follows behavior, not intention

*Which of these do you do well?  
Where do you struggle?*

### Resources:

*“Building A Psychologically Safe Workplace”* (TedX, Amy Edmondson, May, 2014)

*”* (Gallup, February, 2026)

*“Go, teams: When teams get healthier, the whole organization benefits”* (McKinsey & Company, October, 2024)

*“The Benefits of Employee Engagement”* (Gallup, February, 2026)

*“Gen Zs and millennials at work: Pursuing a balance of money, meaning, and well-being”*  
(Deloitte Insights, June, 2025)

# Collaboration Breakdowns

*Even with good intentions, collaboration often breaks down in predictable ways.*

## Breakdowns

- Silos → teams optimize locally, not collectively
- Dominant voices → fewer ideas surface
- Lack of clarity → duplication or inaction
- Unspoken norms → exclusion without intent

## Manager Challenges

- Competing priorities and siloed structures
- Lack of time or intentionality
- Over-reliance on informal networks (which excludes those outside of the networks)
- Manager habits that unintentionally limit participation


*“Collaborative Overload”* (Harvard Business Review, January-February 2016)

“Collaboration breaks down when roles and decisions are unclear.”

“Teams collaborate more effectively when people feel safe speaking up.”

“Research shows collaboration suffers when input is concentrated or uneven.”

“*Building A Psychologically Safe Workplace*” (TedX, Amy Edmondson, May, 2014)  
” (Gallup, February, 2026); “*Go, teams: When teams get healthier, the whole organization benefits*” (McKinsey & Company, October, 2024)  
“*Blindspot:Hidden Biases of Good People*” (Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji)

A faded, grayscale image of a city street, likely in New York City, featuring tall buildings and a street lamp. The image is used as a background for the text.

What gets in the way of building a culture of collaboration?

# The Manager's Role

- Model inclusive meeting practices
- Distribute opportunities equitably
- Encourage input and healthy debate
- Clarify goals and decision processes

*Manager moves: Use structured tools, Build small habits, Practice consistently*

# A Few Tips...

## Inclusive Meeting Habits

- Rotate who speaks first
- Use round-robin input
- Pause and invite quieter voices
- Share agendas in advance
- Clarify decisions and next steps

## Sentence Stems

- “Let’s hear from someone we haven’t heard from.”
- “I want to pause and invite other perspectives.”
- “Can you build on that idea?”

# Scenario Discussions

The quiet contributor: A junior employee rarely speaks in meetings but has strong ideas.

- Collaboration issue: Underutilized talent

*In your own words, what's happening in this scenario? Why?  
Have you ever experienced this scenario as a manager?  
What's a manager move to respond to this scenario?*

# Scenario Discussions

The “Go-To” Bias: Same people get stretch assignments.

- Collaboration issue: Over-reliance on a few people

*In your own words, what’s happening in this scenario? Why?  
Have you ever experienced this scenario as a manager?  
What’s a manager move to respond to this scenario?*

# Scenario Discussions

Generational Disconnect: Younger employees want feedback; manager assumes silence = independence.

- Collaboration issue: Misaligned expectations

*In your own words, what's happening in this scenario? Why?*

*Have you ever experienced this scenario as a manager?*

*What's a manager move to respond to this scenario?*

# Mini Consultancies

Think about your own team.

- Where is collaboration breaking down on your team (identify one area)?
- Share your challenge and your assessment of the root cause.
- Share one practice that might address the challenge area.

Group Responses

- Ask clarifying questions
- Provide feedback/recommendations

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Check-out: What's one action you can commit to (or experiment you can run) in the next 2-weeks?

# Connecting the Dots

## Key take-away messages:

- **Applying & Reinforcing Leadership Practices** – sharing and reinforcing some of these practices learned today with leaders in my sphere.
- **Breaking Down Silos Through Collaboration** Global or cross-functional collaboration is being undermined by silos. The question is: how do leaders consider their own goals in relation to others', and create conditions for genuine cross-team connection?
- **Upward Coaching / Influencing Up** — where is the line between coaching your leader and overstepping? Find balance with senior leadership without eroding trust or positioning.
- **Shift from Protection to Clarity** — recognizing when defaulting to a protective posture — managing what surfaces rather than creating the conditions for honest dialogue. The shift is toward *clarity as a leadership move* rather than containment.
- **Values in Action: The Gap** There's a meaningful gap between an organization's stated values and how they actually *show up* in ways of working. The opportunity is to locate that gap honestly — where are we struggling? — and then elevate from there.

# Large Group Discussion

Building blocks: Challenges in building a culture of collaboration.

- **Time Constraints** Leaders are navigating competing demands that limit their capacity to invest meaningfully in collaborative practices — even when the intent is there.
- **Balancing Support with Capacity** — There is a tension between wanting to show up for your team and what is sustainable.
- **Company Values & Alignment** — Organizations articulate values around teamwork, yet the gap between what is stated and how it actually shows up in day-to-day ways of working remains a persistent challenge. The question is: where is the alignment, and where are we falling short of best-in-class?
- **How Do We Do Better?** The opportunity is not just identifying the gaps — it is committing to the practices, structures, and leadership behaviors that close them.

# Wrap-up and next steps

**Submit** survey responses

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**Schedule** monthly coaching meetings with your coaching partner

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**Look** for opportunities to apply principles from today's session in your day-to-day

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**Connect** with your coaching partner and ask about ways they can apply or have applied the session principles

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**Next session:** Friday, May 8, 2026, Emotional Intelligence (ES/DM/CG/Fellow)

**THANK YOU**