COLLABORATION: WHAT IS IT TO YOU?

Benefits:
Helps clients clarify what they mean by 'collaboration'
Leads towards the identification of measures of effective collaboration
Supports the design of efficient and purposeful collaborative space

Inputs:
Views, experiences, stories from a range of employees on collaboration via 1:1 interviews and small group discussions

Outputs:
Communicable, consistent, coherent messages on
   a) What collaboration is and is not for a specific organization
   b) What collaboration yields in the organization (and how it will be measured)
   c) What forms of workplace design are likely to optimize the type of collaboration and the required yield from it.

What it does:
Leaders tend to feel that collaboration is 'a good thing', and that open work space will benefit collaboration.   The prevalent assumption is that along with a desire to reduce real estate costs comes a benefit of increased collaboration.

Unless there are explicit discussions around what collaboration is/is not and what the measurable benefits required from it are, it is almost impossible to design a workplace that will deliver to expectations.

Addressing the questions in the worksheet enables leaders to agree a) what a good collaborative experience will feel like to employees and how it can be described b) what benefits good collaboration will bring to the organization c) what they need to do in terms of both workplace design and organizational capability development to achieve high levels of productive collaboration.

How it works:
1. Propose a definition of collaboration: e.g. Collaboration is about working with one or more people to **achieve a goal**, such as collectively creating content, brainstorming, etc. Ideally, all perspectives are equally respected, brought together to leverage the group's shared mind. (Steelcase, June 2010)
2. In either 1:1 interviews or small focus groups (up to five people) facilitate a discussion around the questions in the worksheet.
3. Capture the answers to the questions either as narrative, visuals, or a combination on cards or post notes or in some other form that can be analyzed. (For example if captured as straight narrative the analysis could be done via a text analyzer like Nvivo).
4. Analyze the answers – looking for patterns, themes, actionable ideas, etc.
5. Sort the information into actionable areas
6. Develop segmented messaging around these and disseminate the messages.

NOTES: The questions in the worksheet are current state. You might want to ask them in relation to the ideal state as well (or instead).   The questions are about collaboration and not about an individual's preferred work style. You may not want/need to ask all the questions.

COLLABORATION: WHAT IS IT TO YOU WORKSHEET

Collaboration is about working with one or more people to **achieve a goal**, such as collectively creating content, brainstorming, etc. Ideally, all perspectives are equally respected, brought together to leverage the group's shared mind. (Steelcase, June 2010)

Work:	People:
1. What specific tasks that you do in your work process require collaboration? 2. What type of output comes from the collaboration? E.g. new product, improved process flow, decision made … 3. Give me an example of a collaboration that went well. 4. What contributed to this success? 5. How could it have worked even better?	1. Who do you talk with about your work? 2. How do you talk with them e.g. face to face, email, IM, sharepoint, etc. 3. How necessary is it for you to collaborate with other people to get your job done effectively? 4. What makes it easier to collaborate with people? 5. Give me an example of someone you think is good at collaboration. What makes them so?
Informal organization:	**Formal organization**:
1. What are the unspoken rules around people and workspace? E.g. is it ok to interrupt? Are you expected to be always available? 2. What are the unspoken assumptions around where work gets done e.g. in the office, at client sites, at home 3. How conducive is the informal workplace to getting work done? 4. What would make it easier to get things done in a smarter way? 5. What informal norms stand in the way of getting things done?	1. What is your organization's definition of collaboration and its stated benefits? 2. What are the formal policies around where work gets done? 3. What are the rewards and recognitions for individual work and collaborative work? 4. What measures are tracked for collaboration? 5. What tools and systems are provided for collaboration?

Reference

Steelcase. (June 2010). *How the workplace can improve collaboration.* A Threesixty Publication, 360steelcase.com.