Collaborating Across Boundaries in a Messy World

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Your Messy World
Big Ideas

In what situation did your fire agency need another department, outside agency or other stake-holder group to collaborate with you but there was little effective collaboration?

What specifically hindered collaboration with the other group?
Drivers of “Disruption”

“What are the mega-forces disrupting local government, including the fire service?”

Drivers of Disruption

- Permanent fiscal stress
- Structures, processes, & rules oriented toward static world
- Technology
- Demographic, generational, value, political, & economic shifts
Drivers of Disruption

- Problems are complex, difficult to solve, emotion-laden, & divisive
- Power is diffuse ("veto" power)
- No one institution can solve any problem
- Citizen mistrust in all institutions including govt

Leading in Disruptive World

- Leaders must cross boundaries & engage others as partners
- Tech skills become quickly obsolete
- Learn-how becomes as important as know-how
- Leaders must focus on securing partners, experimenting, getting it “roughly right,” & fixing things up along the way
“Are we learning as fast as the world is changing?”

Gary Hamel

Collaboration
What Collaboration Is Not

- Collaboration is not...
  - Better communication
  - Cooperation
    - Seeking assistance from others so you can achieve your individual or unit goals
    - “If you help me, I’ll help you”

Collaboration

- Collaboration is...
  - Two or more people or groups working on shared goals to create something better
    - Often involves diverse actors with diverse ideas
    - Requires giving up some control & becoming somewhat vulnerable
    - Cannot force someone to collaborate
    - It’s messy
The Big Challenges

- What are **2-3 critical challenges** facing your Fire Dept in the next 3-5 years?

The Nature of the Challenges

- **Technical challenges** ("tame")
  
  Solutions are known & can be addressed through management

- **Adaptive challenges** ("wicked")
  
  Solutions are unknown, often involve value conflicts, & require leadership at all levels
The Essence of Leadership

“Leaders do not force people to follow—they invite them on a journey.”

Charles Lauer

Avoiding “Buy-In”
Day Workers in Brea

- Redeveloping downtown was #1 priority
- Day workers congregating in downtown
- Council wanted to use police enforcement
- Organized diverse staff team
- Proposed jobs program at community center
Day Workers in Brea

- Expanded team
- Started conversations with stakeholders
- Identified issues & concerns & addressed them
- Framed issue differently for different groups
- Proposed Job Center pilot
- Pilot passed 3-2

What’s the Frame?

- How do we frame issue of “Job Center for Day Workers” for different groups?
  - Merchants
  - Day workers
  - Police Dept
  - Faith-based community
  - City Council
Tips

1. Model collaboration
2. Focus on the “why”
3. Develop relationship & rapport before requesting collaboration
4. Calculate costs of not collaborating
5. Start authentic conversations

“Real listening is a willingness to let the other person change you.”
Alan Alda

Tips (con’t)

6. Integrate the interests of other stakeholders in the proposal; get everyone’s fingerprints on project
7. Frame issue differently for different groups
8. Pilot everything
9. Celebrate progress
10. Debrief the experience & learn as you go
11. Seek guidance from “dream team”
Resources

- Simon Sinek, TED.com talk, “How Great Leaders Inspire Action”
- Frank’s Career Compass advice columns
  - “Leadership is the Art of Conversation”
  - “Taking Smart Risks”
  - “Story-Telling—A Powerful Way to Lead & Communicate”

Resources (con’t)

- ICMA Coaching Program
  - [www.icma.org/coaching](http://www.icma.org/coaching)
  - Webinars
  - One-to-one coaching
  - New training videos & resources
  - Career Compass columns
“Only One Thing”

- “Starting tomorrow, what is one thing I can commit to in my own sphere in order to promote collaboration?”

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