

# SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH DR. GAIL LEVITT

## Collaborating for Innovation and Change: Learning Summary\*



\*Source: *The Truth about Collaborating: Why People Fail and How to Succeed*, Dr. Gail Levitt, BEP Collection on Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior Collection

### **Influencing More Accountability for teams to Innovate and Change**

1. Ensure “collaboration mindfulness” based on the team ground rules of “COIN”:
  - *Committed*: to be willing to collaborate for the best results
  - *Open*: to be willing to consider others’ ideas, even if one does not agree
  - *Invested*: willing to dedicate the time and effort to support all team members
  - *Non-defensive*: able to talk with and challenge others without territorial thinking
2. Create and communicate clear goals that are known and understood by everyone. Instead of getting stuck in the details of “how” and “when,” be sure that everyone understands the “what” and the “why.” Example: “Our goal is to make our customer service process more user-friendly.”

### **Building a Stronger Team Connection for Trust and Commitment to Innovate**

1. Be disciplined about organizing and delivering collaboration as a systematic process:
  - Discovery: explore purpose, people, and perceptions
  - Discussion: exchange information, ideas, and suggestions, based on a clear collaboration goal
  - Disagreement: address objections and differences proactively
  - Agreement: finalize decisions, contracts, responsibilities, actions, deadlines
2. During team conversations, eliminate the word “but.”

### **Expanding Thinking to Create more Innovative Options and Solutions**

1. Help the team become more comfortable with ambiguity: developing “ambiguity tolerance” by stressing the importance of trial and error, listening to feedback, and lessons learned.
2. Implement the “PARTNER approach”:
  - Provide: honest input with transparency for all
  - Acknowledge: individual and mutual interests
  - Reframe: suggestions and objections based on how they affect the goal
  - Tone: should be confident, sincere, and respectful
  - Neutralize: using objective, non-emotional words
  - Empathize: criticize the problem, not the person
  - Responsibility: accountability to the goal is key

### **Applying more diverse approaches for team discussions and idea exchange**

1. **Crawford Slip**: Begin with a general question, and then ask each team member to contribute 10 answers each. The team then reviews the answers and agrees on 1-2 to focus on.
2. **Opposite Thinking**: Enables teams to challenge their assumptions and biases about a problem to help them consider solutions that are not as obvious.

