



The early adopters

A board's eye view with **Anna Bateson**

We are often told that the past was about ownership and control and that the future is about collaboration and empowerment.

Boards are busy learning to design and direct organisations in what Don Sull at London Business School called 'The New Normal'. Some industries have already trodden this path.

need has also driven collaboration. Impacted by the combination of a patent cliff, which removes exclusive supply of drugs and thin product pipelines, many organisations are responding to what is termed a 'global drug development crisis' by collaborating in a range of different relationships. From drug discovery, through manufacture, marketing and sales, new business models and partnering behaviour involve multiple organisations choosing to work together.

bioscience campus, pioneer a unique culture to drive early stage biotech, pharma and medtech developments. The site was designed to foster collaboration and interaction between tenant companies in the hope that the combination of opportunity and cooperation would breed innovation and commercial success.

In addition to being driven by a real business need, the role of technology is critical in enabling collaboration, whether it is through the co-location of socio-technological systems such as the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst or through the provision of instant, global connectivity provided by the internet. The convergence of communications and information technology has certainly impacted behaviour, as all stakeholders become better informed and so their expectations rise.

The political and social agenda

Learning to collaborate is not just an issue for business. Political systems in democratic nations have also been adapting to the decline of two party systems since the 1950s. University College London's European Institute and Constitution Unit provides a hub for research, collaboration and information on Europe and the European Union. It has tracked the rise of a coalition of two or more political parties as the prevalent model of government employed by countries across Europe. Each of these political systems is learning to communicate with the more consolidated voice of its electorate, who now make contact with political parties and government through social media and the activity of lobby groups. It is perhaps interesting to note that this year's party conferences in the UK were attended largely by business interest groups and the media, while electorate attendance declined.

The publication of the Leveson Inquiry report has highlighted the parameters of appropriate collaboration between the media, politicians, the public and public bodies, such as the police service. As the first review of media standards to be instigated in response to public demand, the power of collaboration to aggregate the public voice into a power to be reckoned with is well illustrated. The 'Hacked Off' campaign has used social media to lobby Prime Minister, David Cameron to implement the Leveson recommendations. Within three days, the initiative had gathered more than the 100,000 signatures required for the issue to be considered for public debate.

Political agendas will increasingly be expected to anticipate and respond to powerful communities collaborating around issues. Regulating and legislating for all situations is neither possible nor culturally acceptable.



The cost of collaborative failure can be high.

For many decades, the shipping and airline industries have had to co-ordinate their activities. Driven by the business need to transport people and cargo globally, individual players have collaborated, linking systems and sharing information, before the birth of the ubiquitous world wide web. As the airline industry consolidated, strategic alliances such as Star and One World were formed of multiple partners.

In the pharmaceutical industry, business

Secretary Vince Cable has recommended that the UK Government provides support for the pharmaceutical and aerospace industries. These industries are both differentiated from the majority by the very long timelines involved for them to achieve a return on the investment of substantial sums in the development of innovative solutions, be they drugs or new generations of aircraft. Initiatives such as the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, the UK's first open innovation

Guilty by association

Collaboration can involve risk to personal and business reputations. Not only our own actions, but those of the people we associate with, are subject to scrutiny. This may always have been true, however, in a digital era we find that a permanent verbal, written and visual record of most conversations is stored somewhere. Many employers scan virtual records for information on potential employees to establish whether they are suitable. Universities and educational establishments do the same for potential students. Both operate filters which include not only the individual, but also those in their networks.

Businesses are held legally and morally responsible for the actions of the organisations they collaborate with. Levels of liability are determined by the chosen structure of the relationship. The cost of collaborative failure can be high. The most recent cost which BP faces after the Gulf of Mexico disaster is to be banned by the US Government from bidding for future drilling blocks.

In the world of politics, Ministers are finding that they are liable for the actions of the special parliamentary advisors with whom they collaborate. The Leveson Report has found that there is no credible evidence to demonstrate that former Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt was biased during the controversial BSKyB bid, but it did find evidence that he failed to properly supervise his special advisor, Adam Smith.

The governance implications

Collaboration is necessary in order to operate in a complex and dynamic world. Creating collaborative business relationships involves choosing appropriate structures and investing in the development and maintenance of common purpose. In collaborative business relationships, the reputation of all parties may be impacted by the behaviour of any party. The upside and downside risk associated with collaboration is potentially significant.

Situationally Intelligent™ boards regularly review the health of their business collaborations and ensure that their strategic risk registers include actions to enhance and mitigate events which impact those relationships. ■

» About the author

Anna Bateson is the founder of business consultancy 'Cutting Through The Grey' and works extensively with Boards and business leaders, addressing the challenges of leading strategic change and delivering governance. In collaboration with global expert, Dr Laurence Lyons, she researches, writes and consults on the development of 'Situational Intelligence™'.

Is the writing on the wall for scruffy employees?



With the Metropolitan Police banning offensive tattoos and HMV introducing a dress code, new research by YouGov for HR experts, Croner backs employers who want to smarten up their workforce. Almost half (49%) of British adults surveyed agree that it is unacceptable for front line workers to have a non-professional appearance.

Croner, part of global information services business Wolters Kluwer, commissioned the research after it found an increasing number of employers were contacting its employment advisory service with questions on how to handle staff appearance issues.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, over a quarter (28%) of people surveyed say it is more acceptable for front line workers such as shop assistants and bar staff to

have a less than 'professional' appearance, while far fewer said it is more acceptable for nurses and police officers (4%).

However, when asked what would put them off approaching a shop assistant, the main offender was scruffy clothes (48%), ahead of tattoos (21%) and facial piercings (37%).

Louise Barnes, a Senior Employment Consultant at Croner says: 'In the last ten years or so people's attitudes to what they should wear, and how they look for work, have changed. As a result employers have adopted a more casual approach with measures such as dress down Fridays. However, our survey demonstrates that we have reached the point where some employees are unsure of the acceptable boundaries and are failing to meet the standards their bosses want.'

'As our research shows, it is really important for customer-facing staff to look presentable, particularly at this time of year when the footfall at shops such as HMV dramatically increases. Our advice to employers facing problems of employee appearance is to think about what image their business wants employees to portray. What is acceptable at one company may not be right elsewhere. Whatever an employer decides they must consult with their employees to make sure they do not have an adverse impact on, for example, one particular sex or race, or individuals holding a particular religion or belief.'

Croner offers the following best practice tips for employers wanting to implement a dress code policy:

- Regularly review and keep up-to-date any code on appearance. Social norms regarding appearance evolve constantly and any code should be updated to reflect this.
- Ensure that any code on appearance is properly publicised within the organisation.
- Make sure the code is consistently applied throughout the organisation.
- No regulations governing appearance should have an adverse impact on one particular sex, race or individuals of a particular religion or belief.
- Consider the impact of any code on any traditional or religious dress, and be able to justify the code on business grounds in view of such factors.