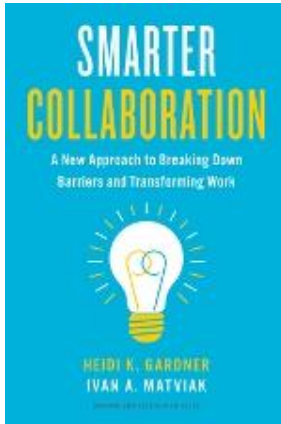


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: **Smarter Collaboration: A New Approach to Breaking Down Barriers and Transforming Work**¹

Author: **Heidi Gardner + Ivan Matviak**

Publisher: Harvard Business Review Press

List Price: \$30 Format: Hardcover, 320 pages

Publication Date: 2022 ISBN: 978-1-64782-274-3

Reviewer: **Kevin Darbelnet, PMP**

Review Date: December 2022

Introduction

Heidi Gardner is a distinguished fellow at Harvard Law School and a former McKinsey consultant. She is an expert on collaboration and was named Thinkers50 as a Next Generation Business Guru. She collaborates on this book with Ivan Matviak who is a senior executive in the global financial services. He's also an advisor to private equity firms and Bain Consultant.

This book is a collaboration with these two recognized leaders and looks to highlight how to break down barriers in effective collaboration in effort to transform work and build Smarter Collaboration capabilities.

Overview of Book's Structure:

This book is an easy read focused on improving collaboration effectiveness by bringing forward practical implementation tools and that are supported with useful industry use-cases.

4 Key Parts

- 1- The Case For Smarter Collaboration
- 2- Assessing Your Collaboration Starting Point
- 3- How-To's and Use Cases for a Smarter Collaboration
- 4- Troubleshooting Collaboration Challenges

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The use case examples focus on M&A, Industry Sector lens and Outside partners. There is a slight tilt towards professional service firms in a number of examples, but the context is still translatable across industries including manufacturing

Highlights

The first part of the book builds the case for the importance of collaboration as an enabler of improved business performance. Many organizations today recognize the importance of collaboration in delivering their strategic goals and annual business results, but many are struggling with over-collaboration or ineffective collaboration across business units, functions and project teams.

In part 2, the book proceeds to help you determine your company's collaboration performance baseline with practical diagnostic approach. The importance of enterprise-wide collaboration both internally but also externally is highlighted here along with the assessment of team and individual level collaboration performance drivers.

With an understanding of the baseline and the opportunities, part three shares useful How To's and various use cases for smarter collaboration. In this part of the book there is a focus on the "Who" and the "How" of Smarter Collaboration and includes focused chapters on enhancing collaboration through hiring and M&A, through outside partnerships and through a sector lens. Chapter 6 (Paying People to Collaborate) presents an interesting three-part system on how to build smarter collaboration into an organization's performance management program and help organizations bring improved alignment to company strategic priorities including collaboration as an enabler.

The final section of the book, Part 4, is a troubleshooting guide with useful watch-outs to keep in mind that undermine collaboration performance. This includes a chapter on how mismanaged diversity and inclusion can undermine collaboration as well as how pressure and an over-committed can negatively impact the performance of collaborative teams.

Highlights: What I liked!

1. The Overcommitted Organization – This collaboration challenge introduces the concept of multi-teamers. That is, those people that bring a deep knowledge in their area of specialization towards supporting teams and complex projects that require a high degree of expertise. This multi-teaming approach makes sense strategically and is not uncommon, but organizations are not doing a good job of accounting for the number of initiatives these specialized resources are tied to. This undermines team cohesiveness while contributing to burn-out and employee turn-over as these resources dip into and out of too many simultaneous projects. The other consequence is an inter-connecting the fate of otherwise independent projects. It's a hidden cost and enforces the

importance of effective enterprise project portfolio management with a particular focus on resource allocation.

2. Goals and Performance Metrics That Foster Collaboration: Ambitious, Annual Cross-Silo Organization Goals, Team-Based Goals, Individual Goals and Collaborative Building Blocks

Thoughts: Given the clear importance on more effective collaboration, is the organization culture driven to foster this behavior through its performance management structure. Often, goals and department metrics undermine collaboration. This part of the book presents a great framework on building performance objectives that are well connected to the organization's strategic priorities and collaboration as an enabler to realize this large strategic ambition.

Who might benefit from the Book?

All organizations are currently tackling the acceleration of change due to hyper-competitive environments or business performance improvements that are compelling bold transformation or strategy agendas.

Given the importance of collaboration on cross-functional project teams, Project managers or Scrum masters, in particular will benefit from this book as they look to improve team collaboration and cohesiveness in their projects.

Conclusion

This book is a practical read with many useful insights and tools that help break down and address the underlying challenges behind ineffective collaboration. This is impactful reference in today's world given the acceleration of change in industry, which is accelerating many business transformation agendas along with large portfolios of change initiatives or projects that are all hinging on effective collaboration to delivery targeted benefits. Smarter Collaboration enables the delivery of critical business results and ultimately can serve as a competitive advantage to those organizations that recognize its importance and make it a key capability development priority.

For more about this book, go to: <https://store.hbr.org/product/smarter-collaboration-a-new-approach-to-breaking-down-barriers-and-transforming-work/10535>

About the Reviewer



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Kevin Darbelnet is a former Director of R&D for Nestle Waters where he spent over 17 years accelerating large industrial scale projects. He is a seasoned project leader with a track record of designing highly automated manufacturing facilities, both greenfield and brownfield projects to support a fast-growing business. He also led and delivered a large portfolio of new product innovation projects as he oversaw the Innovation Program as the company transitioned to private equity ownership as BlueTriton Brands. His experience includes leading or supporting re-organizations and capability investments projects as well as Merger & Acquisition initiatives. He has been a passionate advocate for a disciplined yet streamlined approach to project management in support of strategy and transformation execution.

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