



The background image shows a woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a red top, standing and presenting to a group of people seated at a long wooden table. Two large screens behind her display data. The left screen is titled 'IMPORTANT MARKETS FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES' and features a donut chart and a table. The right screen is titled 'GROWTH IN EMERGING MARKETS' and features a bar chart comparing 2018 sales and 2020 forecasts for various countries.

# 12 HABITS OF HIGHLY COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

**BY JACOB MORGAN**

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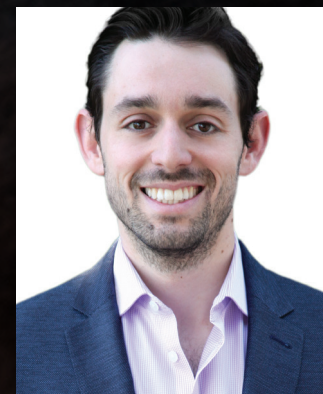
Lew Platt, former HP CEO, said, **“If only HP knew what HP knows, we would be three times more productive.”**

This quote speaks volumes about the importance of creating collaborative organizations — those where people can connect and engage with each other and with information anywhere, anytime and on any device. The benefits of creating this type of an organization are vast, including creating a more engaged workforce, tapping into the collective intelligence and wisdom of the entire company, improving innovation, reducing content duplication and breaking down silos. In fact, today, it's hard to find any type of an established organization that isn't using some form of collaboration technology to get work done. These technologies include everything from web-conferencing solutions to internal social networks to project- or task-management platforms.

Virtually every executive today will tell you that collaboration is a crucial component of the future of work, so it's no wonder that so many organizations around the world are investing in better technologies and strategies to connect their people and information. This idea isn't new, and most organizations don't need to be convinced of its value. Instead, they need to understand how to become successful with their collaboration initiatives.

Collaboration is simply the action of working with others to produce or create something. This can be a product, a service, a proposal or anything else. The concept is simple, but companies often struggle to embrace it. If the two of us are in a room, collaboration is easy. But if you start to increase the number of people, spread them out all over the world and then try to change their behavior by getting them to share information instead of hoard it, you'll soon start to see problems arising. How do you take people — in some cases thousands of them, working in multiple locations and time zones — and get them to collaborate with each other? It's not always easy, especially when many corporate cultures don't encourage or support this type of behavior. Technology alone can't solve the problem. So, then, what should organizations be doing? How can they go about developing the strategies and picking the best technologies to make this type of a collaborative organization a reality?

Over the past few years, I've had the opportunity to interview and meet with organizations around the world to learn what the successful ones are doing when it comes to collaboration. It turns out there are 12 things that the top organizations are focused on.



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# WHAT ARE THE 12 HABITS OF HIGHLY COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZATIONS?

1. Focus on individual benefit over the corporate benefit
2. Put strategy before technology
3. Listen to the voice of the employee
4. Learn to get out of the way
5. Lead by example
6. Integrate into the existing workflow
7. Create a supportive environment
8. Measure what matters
9. Be persistent
10. Adapt and evolve
11. Remember that employee collaboration also benefits customers
12. Understand that collaboration makes the world a better place



# 1

## FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT OVER THE CORPORATE BENEFIT

When most companies deploy collaborative technologies (or any technology, for that matter), these organizations tend to focus on the value that these technologies can bring to the company as a whole. You hear messaging along the lines of, “At ACME, we are rolling out a new technology to help with corporate alignment, improve productivity and help add value to our stakeholders.” While these benefits are very real, the problem with focusing on them is that they don't mean anything to the employees, especially within larger organizations. Instead, organizations must shift their focus to the employee benefit. For example, will these new technologies allow for flexible work options? Will work become more engaging and fun? Will employees get more recognition in front of their peers and managers who are also using these same technologies?



### **EY** **215,000 employees +**

Set up focus groups to get at the real reasons behind the opinions.

### EXAMPLE

EY (formerly Ernst & Young) has over 215,000 employees around the world. Before deploying a new collaboration platform, EY held focus groups, interviews and discussions with employees who were using various collaboration technologies (that were not necessarily sanctioned by the company). The EY team spent considerable time learning what employees wanted and why. This feedback was built into both the technologies that were deployed and also into the messaging around the launch.





## 2 STRATEGY ALWAYS COMES BEFORE TECHNOLOGY

The number of organizations that deploy technology before understanding whether it fulfills a need is consistently surprising. Many reasons abound for this lack of understanding. Perhaps the individuals making the buy know little about the subject area, so they don't really know what tools will serve their company's needs. Perhaps the decision was made purely based on a technology checklist that didn't consider any use cases. Or maybe the budget was in danger of disappearing if it went untapped. No matter the reason, such behavior needs to stop.

It's like walking into a hardware store, buying the shiniest (and priciest) tool around and then taking it home to try to fix all of your structural problems. Many organizations fall for the bright shiny object, only to find out that the technology they've acquired and deployed really doesn't help get things done. Instead of buying the expensive tool, first take a walk around the house to see where the problems are— taking an inventory of the tools you'll need to solve those problems. Understand the “why” to understand the “how.”

### EXAMPLE

The former CEO of Unisys, Ed Coleman, noticed a huge shift in how technology was impacting how employees worked, and, as a result, made collaboration one of the company's top priorities. Before deploying any kind of technology, the company identified specific areas where collaboration could solve its problems. These areas included the inability to find and connect with subject-matter experts, inefficient new-hire onboarding and overcoming a cultural mindset of hoarding, versus sharing, information. All of this was understood before focusing on technology implementation.

➔ “Before deploying any kind of technology, the company identified specific areas where collaboration could solve its problems.”





# 3

## LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE EMPLOYEE

We have all heard the popular mantra, “listen to the voice of the customer,” but what about listening to the voice of the employee? Organizations spend valuable time and resources looking outward, often forgetting to look at the very people who service those customers. Executives like to think they steer the ship, create the strategies and build the products, but it’s the employees who execute on all these fronts. Listening to the employee is critical, especially when it comes to deploying collaborative technologies in the workplace. Employees will provide feedback and share their voices on everything from technology enhancement to process improvement. It’s crucial that your organization listen to the men and women who stand on your company’s front lines.



“listen to your employees, shut up and do what they say.”

### EXAMPLE

T-Mobile has a saying goes something like, “listen to your employees, shut up and do what they say.” Organizations like T-Mobile understand that when employees are heard, customers will be heard. Listen to employees to decide what type of collaboration technologies you actually need, and then leverage those technologies to scale this concept of listening to the voice of the employee.





## 4 LEARN TO GET OUT OF THE WAY

Imagine for a second that I'm your company's CEO. We walk by each other in the hallway and I say, "Tomorrow you can wear any color you want, as long as it's black," you'd probably be at a loss for words, not to mention worried about my mental health. Yet this is the message many employees hear at countless organizations that are trying to deploy collaborative technologies: "We want to become a collaborative company that can adapt to the future of work. As a result, we are investing in strategies and technologies to help empower our employees. However, when using these collaboration platforms, please don't mention our company products, don't create your own groups unless you get permission, use only company-approved devices and get permission before posting anything."

Ok, that last one might be a little extreme, but you get the point. Why bother with openness and collaboration if you are going to police everything that your employees do? That goes completely against the very spirit of collaboration. Learn to get out of the way and allow employees to use technologies in the manner that they find most valuable.

### EXAMPLE

CEMEX is a building-materials company with over 45,000 employees. It was seeking a way to drive innovation and collaboration by connecting its people. Often, when companies launch collaboration efforts, they start in a metaphorical "dark room" that nobody knows about. In order to "get out of the way," CEMEX launched its effort with 5,000 employees and then granted additional seats to any employee who wanted them.



#### **CEMEX** **45,000 employees +**

Include any employee in the initiative that wants to participate.



# 5

## LEAD BY EXAMPLE

If you want to fail quickly and assuredly, avoid leading by example. The business world requires a combination of “can-do” and charisma that is particularly applicable when it comes to collaboration and the use of new technologies. Organizations often deploy collaborative technologies with the assumption that employees will quickly jump on board. Managers may request that employees use the tools or, worse yet, mandate their use without using the tools themselves.

Fast forward a few months, and managers wonder why adoption rates are so low. “We gave employees these great tools and they aren’t using them, clearly they don’t see value in them,” the common refrain goes. But why should employees use these tools, if the managers themselves do not? One would think organizations would understand this simple concept, but it’s something that most companies struggle with. Managers can be very powerful motivators in getting employees to adopt new tech and in encouraging desired behaviors.



### Oce 20,000 employees

Allow internal thought leaders to be agents of change.

## EXAMPLE

Oce is based in the Netherlands. Prior to its Canon acquisition, the company had around 20,000 employees. The corporate culture at Oce was such that those who used any type of collaboration technology to ask for help or to admit they didn’t know something were perceived as incompetent. To fix this, Oce recruited a few brave managers and leaders who were ok with making themselves vulnerable in front of others. When other employees saw that these managers were changing their behavior, other employees became much more receptive.





## 6 INTEGRATE INTO THE EXISTING WORKFLOW

Chances are, you're already pretty busy at work. You're working on multiple projects, attending meetings and traveling. You're probably also using many different online platforms, databases and other applications that your job requires. The last thing you want is another piece of technology added to the list. This is why it's so important for collaboration platforms to be integrated with the rest of your work — not standalone or siloed. Think of these platforms as collaborative operating systems, where you go to get all of your work done and from which you can access everything else you need. To make that a reality, you just need to do two things: 1) understand how your employees work and 2) integrate collaboration technology into the way they work.

### EXAMPLE

TELUS, the Canadian telecommunications company, has done a great job of this. Employees at TELUS are given a unified technology experience that integrates their collaboration platform with other technologies that employees need to use such as expense software and web conference solutions. This means that instead of constantly visiting new sites with new usernames and passwords, employees get one unified experience.



“...instead of constantly visiting new sites with new usernames and passwords, employees get one unified experience.”





# 7 CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Many organizations fall into the “online-dating syndrome.” They represent themselves one way online, when the reality is quite different. For those who have tried online dating in the past (like yours truly), you will know exactly what I mean. You look at a person’s profile — they are your ideal height, have a successful career and appear to have a winning personality. You think to yourself, “This is exactly what I’m looking for in a person!” But when you meet, you don’t even recognize them. They are several inches shorter, are not the fun-loving type they described in their profile, have no personality to speak of, let alone a winning one, and live in their parents’ basement (not that there’s anything wrong with that).

This dissonance happens to organizations, as well. They say they want to be open and collaborative, so they give employees a few new tools, offer some training and claim that it’s so important to their future way of work.

At the same time, everyone sits in cubicles, must wear a suit and tie to the office, has to work from 9 to 5 or later, falls within a strict hierarchy, must get approval to buy pens and undergoes evaluations on the stack-ranking system, where the lowest-performing employees are let go.

So if you’re a company that wants collaboration, don’t just pay lip service to it. Change the physical space where employees work by removing cubicles, provide education and training opportunities on collaboration that people will want to attend. Maybe include Friday “lunch and learns” or weekly virtual discussions run by a well-loved manager, remove stack ranking, and rethink how employees are hired and incentivized. Ask yourself, “What does our organization need to do, and how do we need to change to create a culture of collaboration?”



“...I found all of the employees wearing suits and ties, sitting in eight-foot tall cubicles with grey painted walls...”

## EXAMPLE (of what not to do)

One of the world’s largest grocery retailers once called me in to talk about collaboration. They wanted to create a collaborative and open environment for their employees. When visiting the office, I found all of the employees wearing suits and ties, sitting in eight-foot tall cubicles with grey painted walls, accompanied by an eerie silence that made you feel like something bad was going to happen. This is not a supportive environment for collaboration, and regardless of how much you invest in technology, the problem will not be solved.

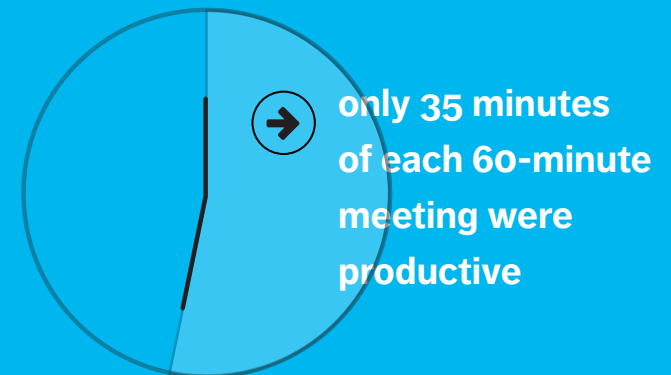


## 8 MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

All sorts of things can be measured when it comes to collaboration and technology. Most collaboration platforms offer their own analytics and have the ability to add on or integrate with advanced analytics providers. But more isn't always better, and too many options can paralyze decision-makers. Many organizations often wonder what they should measure. There are a couple of approaches that organizations take. Some measure everything, some look at activity metrics, some look at hard numbers, others look at soft metrics and still some look at absolutely nothing. I have found that many progressive organizations adopt a hybrid approach. For example, they will look at activity metrics, such as how active employees are, hard numbers — such as cost savings — and soft metrics, such as employee engagement.

### EXAMPLE

No stranger to the science of optimizing business efficiency, a multinational business-services firm had determined that only 35 minutes of each 60-minute meeting were productive. The company found varied reasons for the inefficiency, including attendees dialing in late, difficulty connecting to calls and flaky collaboration technology. After performing some complex calculations, the company was able to determine the cost of the unproductive minutes, and set out to restore 10 minutes of productivity in each meeting. After integrating a new, carefully selected collaboration-technology platform, the company achieved its goal. The result? An impressive savings of \$150 million per year.

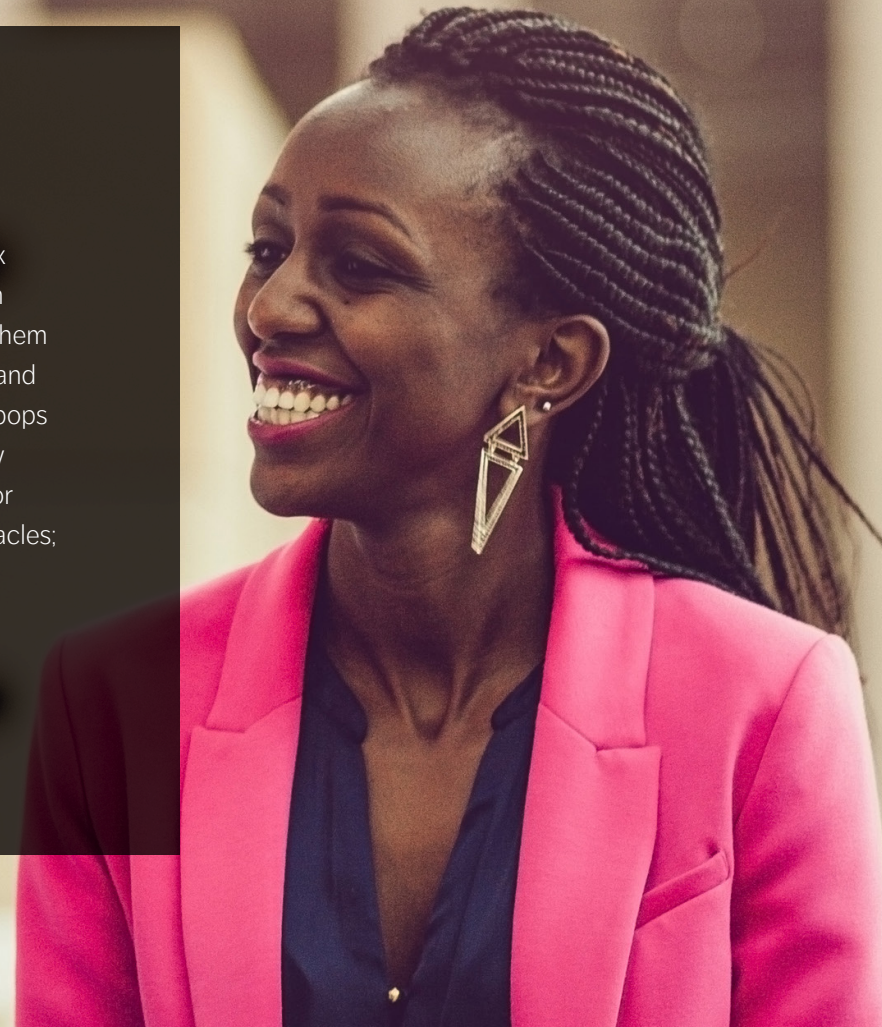




# 9

## BE PERSISTENT

Think about a time to you learned how to do something, such as play a sport, drive a car or fix something around the house. Chances are, you didn't get it right the first time. Likewise, when children learn how to walk, they always stumble and fall down. As a parent, you don't look at them and say, "Well, maybe walking just isn't for you." Instead, you encourage them to get back up and try again. That is an example of persistence. You don't stop when one obstacle or roadblock pops up, because, I can assure you, there will be many. These obstacles may manifest as budgetary constraints, non-supportive managers, poor technology choices, lack of employee adoption or almost anything else. Stay focused on your objectives and don't get discouraged by the obstacles; get creative where needed to tackle them.




“How can we not invest in collaboration when our largest customer thinks we should?”

### EXAMPLE

An employee (we'll call him Fred) at one of the world's largest logistics companies was struggling to get budget for a collaboration initiative, even though many employees supported the investment. After many months of frustration, this employee went to one of its largest customers and said, "don't you think that if we improved collaboration internally that it would also help you?" Naturally, the customer agreed. Fred went back to his executive sponsors and said, "How can we not invest in collaboration when our largest customer thinks we should?" Shortly thereafter, budget was granted to make the investment.





# 10 ADAPT AND EVOLVE

Bruce Lee once said: "You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water, my friend."

This is essentially how organizations need to approach the future of work and collaboration. Technology will always change. In a few years' time, we will once again see technology disruption in our organizations. This can be expected to be a constant trend, which means that organizations must learn to adapt to the coming changes. Collaboration and the future of work are not end states—they are ongoing journeys without a definite end. Successful organizations are able to stay on the cusp of technology in several ways.

## EXAMPLE

Accenture has almost 400,000 employees around the world. It, like many other organizations, is being forced to adapt to new technologies and behaviors. Recently, the company hosted its first town-hall discussion between its CEO and Chief Human Resources and Leadership Officer, who were thousands of miles away from each other. They were beamed into the same location via hologram! Regardless of what comes your way, your organization must be ready to adapt and evolve.



### **Accenture** **400,000 employees**

Introduce new technologies by showing rather than telling.



# 11 REMEMBER THAT EMPLOYEE COLLABORATION ALSO BENEFITS CUSTOMERS

Much of the conversation around collaboration in the workplace is focused on the employees. Naturally, this makes complete sense. But what many forget is that employee collaboration also has a dramatic impact on the customer. Consider a scenario in which a customer sends you an “issue” that you need to resolve. Whether it be on the phone or via email, the typical approach is to look through some online scripts, databases or resolution logs to help your customer. Basically, you are on your own trying to solve the customer’s problem. If you don’t know the answer to the issue, it gets escalated. By the time a solution is presented, well over a week can go by.

Now imagine you had access to your entire organization. A customer comes to you with an issue that you don’t know how to solve. You post this on your company’s collaboration platform, where many people can come forward with responses, or connect subject-matter experts using real-time collaboration solutions to determine how to address the issue. Not only will the responses be more accurate and in-depth, but the response time will also dramatically decrease. Being able to tap into the collective intelligence of your organization is a powerful thing. There are several ways that employee collaboration can benefit the customer.



## Emerson Electric 100,000 employees

Foster a culture of collaboration through customer-driven intelligence.

## EXAMPLE

Emerson Electric has over 100,000 employees around the world. As a result of its employee collaboration efforts, team members are able to respond to customer issues faster and more accurately. This is possible because employees are able to tap into the collective intelligence of the organization to solve problems, instead of being forced to deal with customer issues on their own.





## 12 UNDERSTAND THAT COLLABORATION MAKES THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

Creating a collaborative organization affords tremendous benefits to employees, including the ability to leverage flexible work environments, reduce work duplication, make it easier for employees to get their jobs done, improve engagement and create greater senses of fulfillment, alignment and accomplishment in the workplace. Think about how this translates into personal benefits for employees. For the first time, organizations are able to invest in something that not only positively impacts the lives of employees at work, but also outside of work. As a result, employees should:

- Have more time to spend with friends and family
- Notice a reduction in stress
- Feel happier at work and at home
- Have fewer arguments with spouses
- Enjoy their jobs more
- Have a better quality of life overall

### EXAMPLE

It might sound idealistic, but many of the employees I have spoken with whose organizations are making these investments are noticing the above benefits in their lives. That's a powerful thing. Thanks to technology, work is no longer a place we go, it's something we can carry with us, regardless of where we are. As a result, employees see greater work-life integration, where we can bring our lives with us to work and our work home to our personal lives. The lines are blurring. Collaboration technologies make it easier for us to work and live in this new connected world.

➡ “Thanks to technology, work is no longer a place we go...”





# GET STARTED

When it comes to your collaboration efforts, remember to focus on the 12 habits of highly collaborative organizations:

1. **Focus on individual benefit over the corporate benefit**
2. **Strategy always comes before technology**
3. **Listen to the voice of the employee**
4. **Learn to get out of the way**
5. **Lead by example**
6. **Integrate into the existing workflow**
7. **Create a supportive environment**
8. **Measure what matters**
9. **Be persistent**
10. **Adapt and evolve**
11. **Remember that employee collaboration also benefits customers**
12. **Understand that collaboration makes the world a better place**

From reading this book, one thing should become very clear: Every company has its own unique approach to collaboration. Although the 12 habits might be common, each company defines these habits its own way. For example, not every company will measure the same things or have the same types of people leading by example. The goal is to learn from what these other companies have done and to take some of their ideas and examples and see what you can do inside of your own company.

**Find out how Prysm large-format LPD displays and visualization software can help your company become highly collaborative: [www.PrysmSystems.com](http://www.PrysmSystems.com)**





## ABOUT JACOB MORGAN

Jacob Morgan is a trained futurist and one of the world's leading authorities on leadership, the future of work, and employee experience. He speaks in front of tens of thousands of people each year and his content is seen over a million times a year. Jacob is the best-selling author of five books: *Leading With Vulnerability* (Wiley 2024), *The Future Leader* (Wiley 2020), *The Employee Experience Advantage* (Wiley, 2017), *The Future of Work* (Wiley, 2014), and *The Collaborative Organization* (McGraw Hill, 2012). He speaks at over 50 conferences a year including TED Academy which is one of the largest TED events in the world. In addition, Jacob provides advisory and thought leadership services to various organizations around the world. You can learn more and get access to all of these resources by visiting: [TheFutureOrganization.com](https://TheFutureOrganization.com)

## ABOUT PRYSM

Prysm is a leading provider of large-format Laser Phosphor Displays (LPD), known as the LPD 6K Series, and Prysm Application Suite, a cloud-based, interactive visualization solution. Prysm solutions enable individuals and teams to see and interact with all their data, content, and applications on displays of all sizes. By providing these always-on digital canvases, Prysm engages audiences, ignites innovative thinking, drives decisions, and transforms content into experiences. Customers using the LPD 6K Series benefit from interactive large-format single panel displays that offer a panoramic image uninterrupted by seams or bezels. Customers using the Prysm Application Suite software benefit from an open, enterprise-grade interactive visualization solution that integrates with existing tools and scales to hundreds or thousands of users.