



VANNESSA MCCAMLEY

CRACKING THE CODE OF BRAIN-FRIENDLY COLLABORATION

by **Vanessa McCamley**, Leadership and Performance Consultant, Coach, Facilitator, Author and Keynote Speaker

Ask any leader if their organisation values collaboration and you will likely get an affirmative response. Ask whether the firm's strategies to increase collaboration have been successful and you may receive a different answer.

WIRED TO CONNECT

Humans are born to connect regardless of whether they have introverted or extroverted personalities. We are emotionally and cognitively hardwired for connection and belonging. Connection gives us purpose and meaning.

We all have different mental maps. No two brains are the same. Yet we often assume we are on the same page as other people and the information in our brain is known to others. What may seem common knowledge or rational thinking to you is based on your experiences, beliefs and learnings. Every person's journey, no matter how similar, is different.

Therefore, communication is one of the toughest skills to master, because we all interpret things

differently. We could look at our favourite painting or hear our favourite song and give it a meaning different from the meaning another person would attribute to it.

THE OUTCOMES OF COLLABORATION

A collaborative work environment facilitates a very fruitful exchange of perspectives and collective creativity.

To accomplish a shared objective, a group of people collaborate in the workplace by sharing their ideas and expertise. Workers are more productive and feel more connected to the business when they have an opportunity to contribute and make a difference. They also find it easier to brainstorm ideas, solve a problem or deliver work on time.

Teams can solve issues more quickly and effectively when employees with diverse ideas, viewpoints and specialities collaborate to discover novel solutions. When people think outside the square, innovative and creative thinking comes alive with purpose.

INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

Focus on strengths

Explore the full range of people's abilities. Be mindful not to let someone's differences, your own biases and neurodivergence blind you to the unique contribution each person may be able to offer.

Rather than searching for skills gaps, appreciative enquiry lets you consider what people do well. You can then find ways to apply these strengths to other parts of their job and ultimately to your organisation.

Once you have the right mix on your team, focus on these strengths, allow everyone to perform to their strengths, be flexible with roles and focus areas. Continue to invest in learning and development of team members' strengths in alignment with the goals of the organisation, and leverage technology advantages.

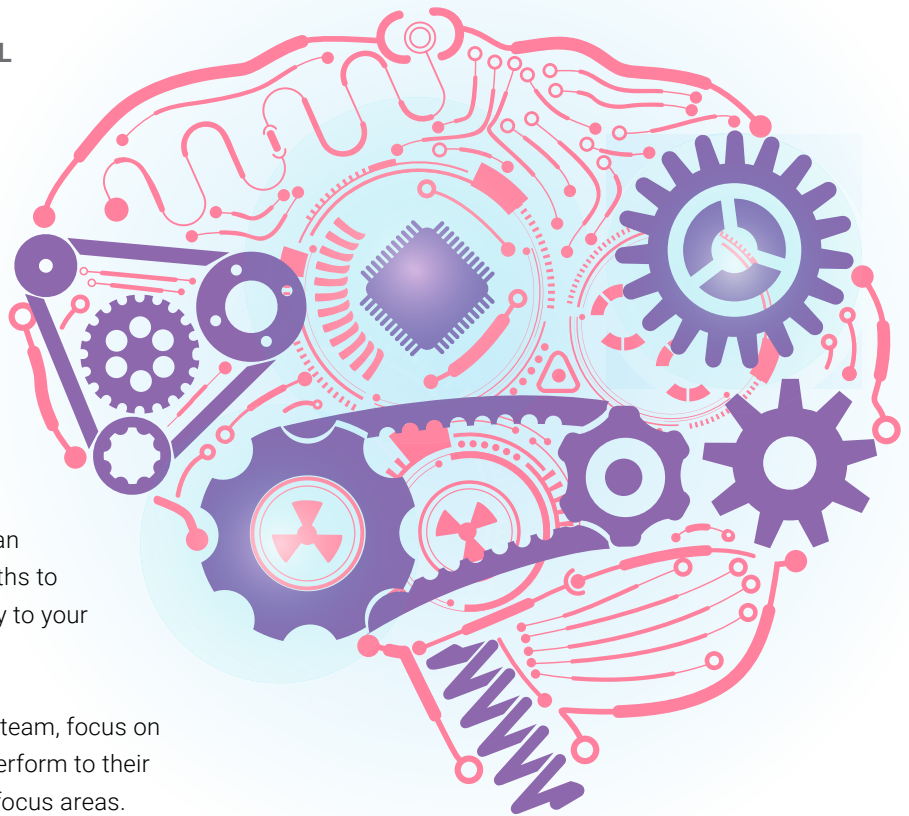
Communications

Understand each team member's preferences for receiving communication and the best way to prioritise what is most important. Communication considerations include the right mix of visual, auditory and written communication. It is also important to know what kind of language your people perceive as threatening and avoid such in favour of language they perceive as rewarding and want more of.

Communicating how each person's strengths fit within the organisation's purpose makes a difference, because most people want to contribute and feel a part of the company culture.

Regularly check in

Make sure you check in regularly with your team members. This has become more important than ever with the growth of remote working and hybrid workplaces. Starting and continuing conversations



with staff about the challenges they face and pairing them with others—internally or externally—who have relevant experience and strengths can help expand their thinking and help them feel supported.

Where and when your team do their best thinking

For decades work was mostly undertaken in an office and between 9:00am and 5:00pm. Then COVID-19 forced large scale remote working and many people discovered they could be more productive outside traditional work hours. Others noticed they were most efficient working in small increments of time.

There is an optimal way to work, but it differs for every person. It is important to know when and where your people do their best work and to gain buy-in on the best times to bring people together to exchange ideas. It is also important to provide detailed agendas ahead of time stating the problems to be solved and the desired outcomes so team members have time to digest these and develop their ideas at the times and in the places they do their best thinking.

Art of listening

The art of listening is the art of discovering what the speaker thinks about something. When employees listen to one another they learn from one another. A free flow of ideas that is truly listened to can create a workplace where employees are constantly learning from each other. Listening encourages respect and builds trust.

Dealing with conflict in brain-friendly ways

Conflict is an opportunity for growth. The best way to resolve conflict is to see it as such and to truly listen by asking open and insightful questions that seek understanding. For example, by saying: "I am curious about the valuable insights you just mentioned, can you please elaborate your ideas and experiences on solving X, Y, Z or what learnings could be valuable in setting this up for success?"

At one of my clients the two leaders of the IT team—the head of security and the head of enterprise applications and operations—were not seeing eye to eye, impacting the performance and productivity of the whole IT team.

I used PRISM Brain Mapping, a neuroscience behavioural tool that identifies existing behavioural wiring (habits) and highlights the parts of the brain people are tapping into. I showed these two leaders how to leverage their capabilities and strengths, individually and within a team environment, to recognise their strengths and be objective.

Knowing how people think and function can change the lens of perception and the stories we tell ourselves. Through a coaching program these two have improved communication and appreciation of how their individual strengths can enable them to work together effectively. They do not need to like each other to be more collaborative and produce better outcomes from their teams.

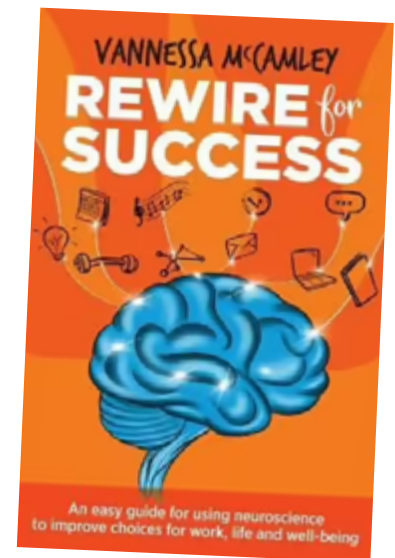
Leveraging brain-friendly tools and models has helped many of my clients' teams and organisations to collaborate effectively, reach their goals and fulfil their purposes. Reach out to chat about how I can help.

ABOUT VANNESSA MCCAMLEY

Vannessa McCamley is a leadership and performance expert specialising in neuroscience practices that help individuals and businesses grow in meaningful ways whilst delivering measurable results in healthy ways.

She has a passion for helping people and businesses to overcome obstacles and enabling them to reach their strategic goals. She brings a strong background in IT security and more than 20 years' business experience to working with individuals at all levels and from several industries.

She is the author of REWIRE for SUCCESS – an easy guide to using neuroscience to improve choices for work, life and wellbeing.



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