

Recognizing the Need for Collaboration

Christopher Ken Mays

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION, the first thought that may come to mind is leadership. Without leadership and direction there is no fertile ground for collaborative efforts to flourish. Authors Komives, Lucus and McMahon define leadership as “a relational process of people working together to accomplish change or to make a difference that will benefit the common good.” They assert in the book *Exploring Leadership* that “through collaboration with others, you can make a difference from any place within a group or organization, whether as the titled leader or as an active member.”

ACTE’s membership includes technical educators, administrators, researchers, guidance counselors and others who should all collaborate together for the betterment of the field. The core purpose of ACTE is “to provide leadership in developing an educated, prepared and competitive workforce.” Working together, ACTE’s stakeholders can form and sustain alliances, partnerships, coalitions and working collaborations that will benefit all sectors of career and technical education. We must begin to educate our students, fellow members, clients and constituents about how to effectively collaborate.

Evan Rosen’s *The Culture of Collaboration* puts forth 10 cultural elements that are essential for collaboration:

Trust: Developing comfort with colleagues

Sharing: Letting ideas flow and grow

Goals: Reading from the same script

Innovation: Embracing new approaches

Environment: Physical and virtual

Collaborative Chaos: Making room for the unexpected

Constructive Confrontation: Taking a stand

Communication: Crucial to shared creation

Community: Sharing interests and goals

Value: The culminating element

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As we think about how to collaborate with others and build community, we must review the literature and data on what works best for each individual organization. There have been thousands of articles, journals and books written on building community, forming alliances and developing collaborations. In *The Culture of Collaboration*, Rosen writes that “adopting a collaborative culture can create unprecedented value and leadership within an organization.” He identifies the

following as common attributes of collaborative cultures:

- Frequent, cross-functional interaction
- Leadership and power spread around organization
- People are accessible regardless of their level
- Reduce fear of failure
- Broad input into decisions
- Cross-pollination of people
- Spontaneous or unscheduled interaction
- Less structured interaction
- Formal or informal mentoring
- Tools fit work styles

Collaboration can enhance performance and satisfaction among members, clients and constituents. So we must provide leadership in building relationships among the people and organizations around us to fulfill our core purpose. As we evaluate CTE’s needs, we should expand beyond our own organization and welcome others to be a part of the process. The advantages to sharing new ideas and building a collaborative environment include effective and efficient educational program delivery, professional development across work functions, increased sharing of job knowledge and information, and improved communication among all engaged in the process.

As we begin and continue the process of building collaboration, we must set clear goals and objectives that are specific, measurable and achievable. We must provide leadership that is inclusive, empowering, purposeful, ethical and process-oriented. **T**

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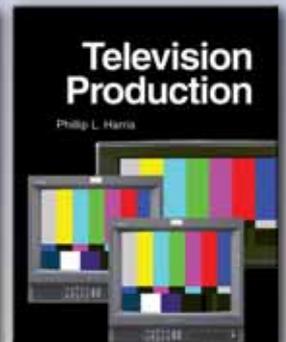
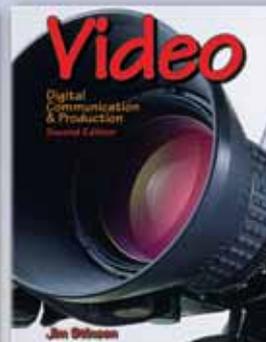
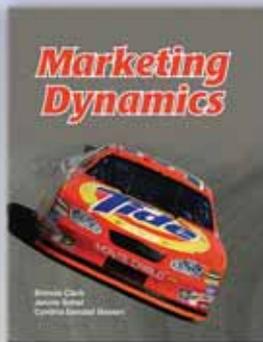
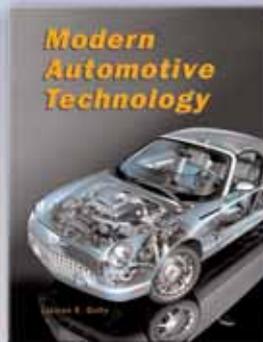
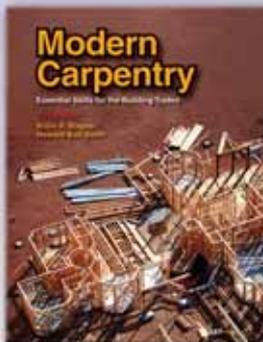
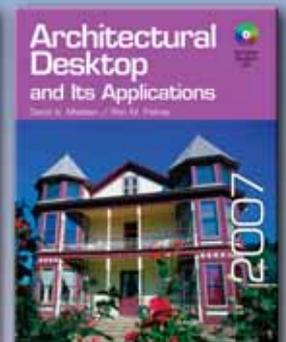
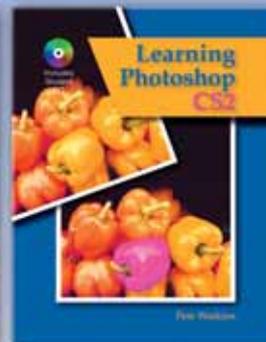
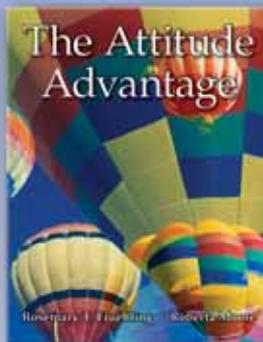
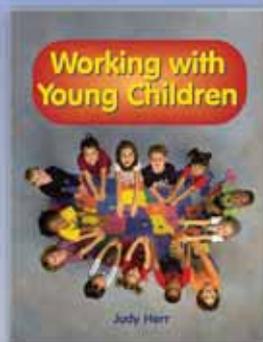
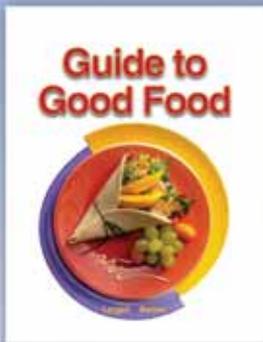
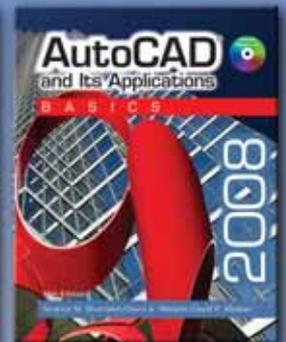
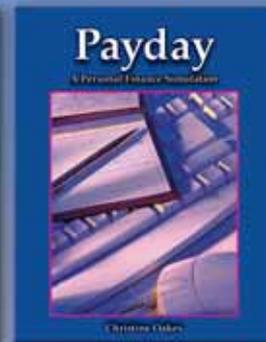
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