

## Questions and Answers: Evan Rosen

### **Why did you choose now to write *The Culture of Collaboration*?**

Business models are being realigned around collaboration and the nature of work is changing. A lot of business practices and principles are based on relay-race or pass-along approaches to work and interaction. New capabilities and tools allow everybody to come together in real time to work and make decisions. So to unlock the potential of incredible value, practices and principles must catch up with capabilities.

### **Why do you call the book *The Culture of Collaboration*?**

New tools for collaboration are becoming available, but tools have limited utility without the culture to support them. You can have the best processes, systems, tools and strategies in place. But collaboration will fall flat without the culture to support the intention. Culture includes regional, organizational, business unit and functional cultures.

### **How is work shifting?**

We are experiencing the deserialization of work and interaction. Simply put, we can now come together spontaneously in real time to collaborate and make decisions regardless of our function, level or role. That's a big change. The old way was I do my part and pass the work product to you. You do your part and pass it on to somebody else. Or I email you for your input or approval. You email somebody else. Now we can all hash it out together on the fly. This creates value by letting people make better, faster decisions and by enhancing product and service development.

### **Are most organizations collaborative?**

Most companies say they collaborate, but few collaborate effectively. Effective collaboration is about maximizing time, talent and tools to create value. There are three levels of collaborative companies: highly-collaborative, in transition, and non-collaborative. The biggest group is in transition. Companies in this group want to collaborate and may even have pockets of collaborators, but the challenge for them is instilling the Culture of Collaboration throughout the organization.

### **How does globalization tie in with *The Culture of Collaboration*?**

At many companies, teams include people from multiple countries. Within large enterprises, it's the rare team that is confined to a single location. The advantage is that the work product may reflect broader input and reach. Uniting geographically-dispersed collaborators requires high-impact tools plus collaborative principles and culture.

### **What was the inspiration for *The Culture of Collaboration*?**

Back in 1999, BMW invited me to its design center in Munich. The company was preparing to launch the X5 Sports Activity Vehicle. The X5 was the first BMW vehicle produced through telecooperation, which BMW defined as technology-supported collaboration and communication allowing globally-distributed teams to design and produce a product. The automaker realized at the time that the shift went well beyond tools and systems. Telecooperation would change the nature of work and the culture of BMW's organization. BMW's experience was an early manifestation of *The Culture of Collaboration*.

### **Why is breaking down barriers important to collaboration?**

Most organizations struggle with silos. Engineers speak the same language and prefer interacting with engineers. They're less likely to interact with sales people. The marketing group rarely has contact with facilities people. Breaking down those barriers can turbo charge collaboration.

### **What is the relationship between hierarchy and collaboration?**

All organizations have hierarchy. However, collaborative teams and organizations keep hierarchy in check. As new tools take hold in organizations, the culture needs to catch up. Is it OK to connect spontaneously through IM with your boss's boss or with your direct report's team member? The old thinking was no. The question organizations should ask is whether encouraging all levels to collaborate on the fly adds value.

### **Is there a role for competition in a collaborative culture?**

Companies must compete. But there's a difference between internal and external competition. The right kind of external competition makes sense. However, internal competition can breed fear and suspicion. Star cultures that pit people against each other squander resources and can lose focus. Ultimately, the Culture of Collaboration creates greater value.

### **What are some highly-collaborative organizations and what makes them collaborative?**

Well, the book looks at more than a dozen organizations in a range of industries. Boeing, Toyota and The Dow Chemical Company stand out. In the health field, the Mayo Clinic is a leader. Then there's DreamWorks and Industrial Light & Magic doing animation and special effects. In the non-profit realm, the Myelin Repair Foundation is reinventing how scientists conduct medical research. What makes all of these organizations collaborative is culture.

### **Are you collaborative?**

I spent my early career in television news, which at its best is a highly-collaborative pursuit. Photojournalists, reporters, producers, assignment editors jointly create value, often in real time. So reporting for television for me was collaborative. There's a perception that writing a book means you go off into a corner and work by yourself. The reality is that the best writing involves input and ideas from editors, interviewees and many others in real time. If you wait until you've written a draft to get input, it's too late. Working with editors and colleagues, I use videoconferencing, web conferencing, and other tools so that we can see and annotate a manuscript in real-time. An author also collaborates with book designers, cover designers, a web team, marketing and publicity people.