

Chapter 1

Collaboration

Changing the World

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Collaboration. What do we mean by collaboration, and why would a book on sales training start with a chapter on collaboration?

The reason is simple. Collaboration is all around us. Frequently still in the concept stage, often not fully understood, and sometimes awkwardly situated between rhetoric and reality, collaboration is nonetheless steadily emerging as the new model or paradigm for individuals and groups working productively together. It is becoming the preferred method for successful sales and customer relationships.

From *Newsweek* and *Time* to *Harvard Business Review* and *Fortune* to *The Futurist*, articles abound promoting collaboration, “the collaborative mind-set,” and “the collaborative advantage.” Collaboration is being recommended for applications ranging from relationships between individuals to relationships between organizations to relationships between and among nations.

What is collaboration? Where does it come from? What does it mean? Where is it going?

Collaboration is the most promising approach for building productive, long-term relationships, both personal and professional. As an approach, collaboration is based upon interdependent needs. To be interdependent, the needs of one individual do not have to be exactly the same as the needs of another; they must, however, be so aligned that when one individual benefits, both benefit, and if one individual is harmed, the other is also harmed.

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The perception of interdependent needs allows for (1) a driving motivation to achieve an optimal return for both, or all, parties involved; (2) a high level of implicit trust; and (3) a sharing of power. The seller and the buyer must have this collaborative mind-set to be successful.

Where did collaboration come from as a term, as a concept, and as an approach for building productive, long-term relationships? If you search through books and articles from 20 years ago, you will find no mention of collaboration other than in reference to musical composers. Under the headings of conflict resolution, negotiation, interpersonal communication, professional selling, management, and leadership, there is no mention of sharing power, no mention of interdependent needs, and no mention of collaboration.

Twenty years ago Acclivus R3 Solutions launched an intensive, ongoing study of relationships in the workplace. The initial focus for this study was the process of negotiation, particularly business-to-business negotiation, between a sales or consulting professional and a customer or client. The study evolved into an effort to determine (1) the optimal form of a working relationship and how to build it, (2) methods for preventing damage to the relationship during negotiation and conflict resolution, and (3) approaches for strengthening the relationship through the negotiating process.

What Acclivus R3 Solutions discovered was a form of working relationship vastly more productive than competition, and with potential considerably beyond that of simple cooperation. We discovered collaboration—a higher level of relationship, communication, and negotiation.

Collaboration is the best approach, not for every individual or organization and not for every relationship, but for those individuals and organizations that want to work together as partners toward the achievement of optimal results.

Collaborative relationships are built, not simply formed, and alignment of needs requires continuing effort. Most of us have more experience as competitors than as collaborators, and there is a strong tendency to follow our competitive instincts—especially under pressure. Because collaboration is a relatively new way, it is not always the most comfortable or natural way.

Collaboration, though, provides us with the opportunity to escape the bounds and limitations of the traditional supplier/customer, consultant/client, and manager/individual contributor relationships. Collaboration is truly working together. In order for salespeople, sales teams, and companies to be successful in this new environment, we must focus on building and achieving a true collaboration between ourselves and our customers. With this mind-set, instead of being perceived as one of many vendors, you are seen as a collaborative partner, changing the way you do business.

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Biography: Randall K. Murphy is the founder and president of Acclivus R3 Solutions, a global performance development and consulting organization. He is the primary author and architect of the 17-program integrated curriculum utilized by clients of Acclivus R3 Solutions. He introduced the concept and application of the word *cocreate* and gave the word *collaboration* meaning in the organizational workplace. He conceived the Consultative Approach and has taught more than 30,000 professionals and managers in workshops worldwide.

Leading organizations in more than 80 countries worldwide rely on Acclivus R3 Solutions to assist them with the training of their sales, support, and service professionals, managers, and executives.

Selling Philosophy: The Consultative Approach

Target Industries: Computer hardware and software, consulting and financial, telecommunications, medical equipment, manufacturing, consumer products

Best Sellers: R3 Sales Excellence, Inside R3 Sales, Acclivus Sales Negotiation, R3 Service, R3 Strategic Sales Presentations, Acclivus Coaching, R3 Interaction, MAPS (Major Account Planning and Strategy) TP&M (Territory Planning & Management), AIM Services

Sales Tip One: First diagnose, then prescribe.

Sales Tip Two: Plan your opening; the opening sets the stage for the entire meeting.

Sales Tip Three: Qualifying is forever; anything and everything can change.

Product One: R3 Sales Excellence

Product Two: R3 Service

Product Three: Acclivus Sales Negotiation and Dr. Azul (online follow-through)