



Risk & Danger

- RISK & DANGER, *L. DONOSO BACH*
- THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF MEDICAL TREATMENTS, *A. FREEMAN*
- IMPROVING RISK LITERACY, *M. JENNY*
- HEALTHCARE & ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT, *P. KEADY*
- CYBER INFECTION CONTROL, *J. MUCKLOW ET AL*
- BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY THE SOLUTION TO HEALTHCARE'S DATA WOES?, *S. KLEIN ET AL*
- WEARABLES RISK, *J. BOCAS*
- RADIOLOGY SPECIALTY AT RISK? *S. BAKER*
- RISKS OF CONTRAST AGENT ADMINISTRATION, *H. THOMSEN*
- WHISTLEBLOWING IN HEALTHCARE, *P. WILMSHURT*
- WHY I BECAME A RADIOLOGY WHISTLEBLOWER, *S. CHOWDHURY*

FUTURE OF IMAGING, *P. SIDHU*

THE LATEST IN BREAST IMAGING, *G. FORRAI*

SERVANT LEADERSHIP: A JOURNEY, NOT A RACE, *L. BELTON ET AL*

HOW TO ENERGISE COLLABORATIVE THINKING, *D. MAGBOULE*

PROTECT YOUR MEDICAL DEVICE SYSTEMS, *ECRI*

MEDICAL DEVICE SECURITY

TESTING LABS LAUNCHED, MEDICAL STUDENTS & EHR USAGE *L. ROBSON*

5 BUSINESS ANALYTICS TOOLS TO IMPROVE OPERATIONS, *J. SCHWARZ*

LAB AUTOMISATION & NEW REVENUE DOORS, *S. POLHILL*

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH INNOVATION, *P. KAPTEIN*

REVOLUTIONISING CARDIOVASCULAR MEDICINE, POINT OF CARE

FOUNDATION, *D. HILMI*

NEW INDICATIONS FOR CORONARY CT ANGIOGRAPHY, *V. SINITSYN*

ULTRASONOGRAPHY IN CLINICAL PRACTICE: NEW ROLES FOR AN OLD ACTOR?, *S. S. ÖZBEK*

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION, *R. WAKILI*

PERSON-CENTRED APPROACHES, *C. WRIGHT*

AFRICA HEALTHCARE FEDERATION, *A. THAKKER*



How to energise collaborative thinking: 5 tips to trash bad habits

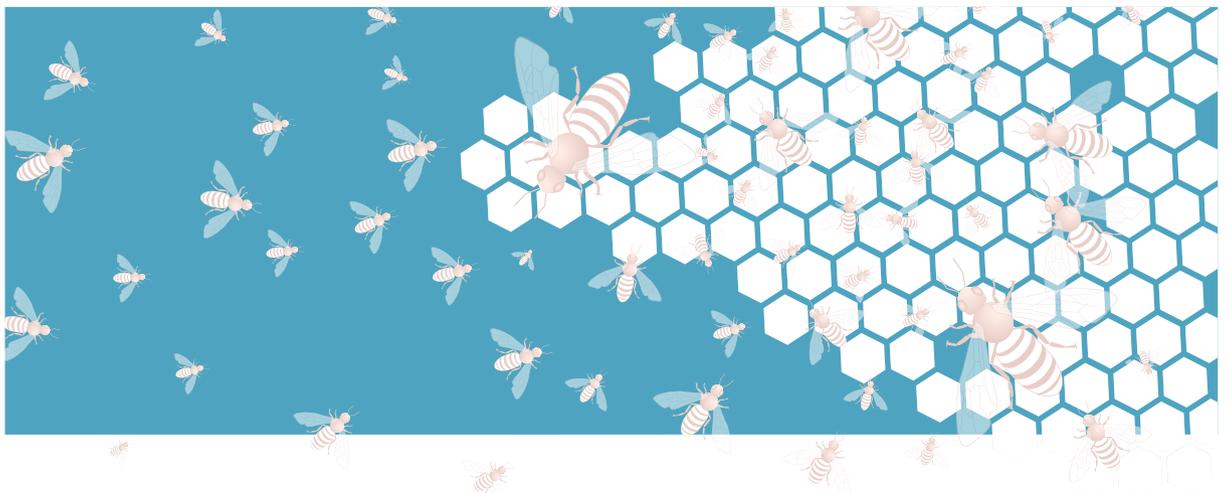
For better team cooperation and project success, 'collaborative thinking' could be the way to go.



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Two heads are better than one". This couldn't be more accurate. I've always been a fan of working in a collaborative way: involving your team, sharing your thoughts and ideas with as many people as possible and getting different perspectives and inputs. Because it's all about perspectives - and the more you get, the more constructive feedback you come across, the more solid your idea or project becomes.

No one has ever achieved anything alone. If you work on your own, if you don't have a team behind you, it's likely that you won't succeed.

Unfortunately most organisations nowadays, whether it's a multinational corporation or a hospital, tend to be very hierarchical and fragmented into specific and specialised departments. Paradoxically, in a further digital, globalised and data-driven world, most medium-big sized projects demand distinct departments and several regions to work together under certain (pre)established objectives.

This is why more organisations are turning to collaboration tools and techniques - many of which are frequently used in start-ups and young companies with more flexible structures and organigrams - in order to improve their results and efficiency. Some are thought to directly increase productivity by up to 30%! This, in turn, means less risk and wastage, and consequently higher Return

on Investment (ROI).

Wastage is a common issue across healthcare organisations. Whether it is linked to wasting paper or radiological film when the hospital could be working in a full digital environment, or simply by misdiagnosing and forcing the patient to repeat or go through further and unnecessary exams, this poor streamlining of operations is a heavy management burden with serious financial and sometimes human setbacks.

Many of these outcomes could be avoided through collaborative thinking - by joining forces of representatives from several departments that are directly or indirectly concerned by the process, and together trying to reach new solutions to tackle a specific challenge. Again, in such a cross-disciplinary case, it is perspectives that matter.

Dealing with highly technical issues demands even more points of view across all fields to find simplified answers and overall consensus.

Here are a few tips to start implementing collaborative thinking into your workplace:

Create the habit

Start by gathering your team and other departments once a week or fortnight to update them on ongoing projects or announce new ones. Ask for their feedback,

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let them share what they are working on and be constructive. Whether it's via a conference call or in a physical meeting, as long as you don't monopolise the microphone, you'll see your team exchanging ideas and becoming motivated sooner than you'd expect.

Be human

If you are launching a new project or dealing with an existing one, and the only way you involve your team is by sending out a long e-mail and ccing everyone, then you're not doing it correctly. When emails get too long, or have too many people copied in, then it's time to pick up the phone or meet in person. Don't hide behind the screen; technology will never replace the warmth and transparency of face-to-face human relations.

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ANYTHING ALONE”

Get everyone involved from the start

When companies start a new project, they tend to rely on just a few people or departments to kick it off, and slowly get other people involved along the way. But experience tells me that you'll probably get resistance from these people and a huge lack of motivation to participate in a project that is already half-way drawn up. Always get everyone involved when starting a project, whether they'll play a small part in it or officially come across the project within six months of its launch. Align objectives and make them feel part of it by getting their input from the start.

Through technology or in person, just collaborate

Adopt IT. It's worth it. There are several technological tools and software that are collaboration enablers, but you can also add games, brainstorming techniques and other dynamics that promote this when meeting in person, such as the ones we use for co-creation at Torke CC. The productivity and efficiency you get out of it is invaluable, and people enjoy it and have fun. Not only are you making a huge impact on your team, you are getting results and leading change in your organisation.

Above all, give your team a voice, and listen

This is the first step for collaboration. It is an attitude, a way of working. It's all about communicating, listening and giving (and asking for) constructive feedback. If you make this a simple routine on your way of working with and amongst your team, you're in the right path to guarantee collaborative thinking as being the foundation of all processes and assuring successful results in your future projects. ■



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