

Collaboration: Know Your Enthusiasts and Laggards

What You Will Learn

Collaboration has captured the attention of organizations seeking a competitive edge in a challenging economy. Executives and managers want to know who stands to gain the most from collaboration, and the real benefits.

Cisco conducted one of the first comprehensive studies of the factors associated with successful adoption of network-based collaboration. This paper details the results:

- The most enthusiastic users are managers in for-profit companies who have been in their position for several years—but less than a decade.
- Favorable cultural factors include role modeling by senior leaders, formal collaboration processes, training, and rewards.
- Organizations of all sizes and in all industries experience benefits from collaboration.

You can use the study results to maximize your return on investment from collaboration tools. One way is to implement business practices shown to lead to more enthusiastic collaboration. Another is to identify and then support employees who are most likely to benefit.

Collaboration in Today’s Work Environment

Collaboration is a process that brings people and information together to accomplish a common goal. What’s new today is that in a connected world, people no longer have to be in the same location, time zone, or culture to collaborate. Tools such as videoconferencing and web sharing enable collaboration across distance. And blogs, wikis, and shared workspaces enable collaboration across time boundaries (Table 1).

Table 1. Collaboration Tools Enable People to Share Information Across Distance and Time Boundaries

Traditional	Web 2.0	IM Chat	Shared Workspace	Electronic Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voicemail • Email • Fax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wikis • Blogs • Intranet publishing • Internet publishing • Social networking sites • IPTV • Internet forums or discussion boards • Project extranets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant messaging • Text messaging • Online chat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision control or document review • Knowledge management systems • Electronic calendars • Online spreadsheets • Application sharing or co-browsing • Workspaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference calls • Video conferencing • Telepresence • Web or data conferencing • Electronic meeting systems

Who Collaborates and Why

Previous knowledge of collaboration habits did not include the personal or cultural factors that influence success. Is today’s collaborator more likely to be a BlackBerry-toting new college graduate who works for a startup technology company, or a manager in a large consumer-products company? Is the primary motivation for collaboration to increase personal productivity, improve business processes, or come up with innovative product ideas?

In December 2008, Cisco conducted the first formal segmentation study of collaboration tool users. Our objective was to understand how today’s workers collaborate, which tools they use, and how they believe those tools affect productivity, innovation, and cost savings.

The survey studied 800 people in a wide variety of U.S. medium-sized and enterprise organizations who:

- Spend at least 20 percent of time at work using a network-connected computer
- Use a mobile phone or handheld device
- Participated in two collaborative activities within the past month

The researchers conducted a segmentation analysis, separating individuals into distinct groups based on a large set of attitudinal and behavioral variables.

Finding 1: Collaborators Fit into Four Distinct Segments

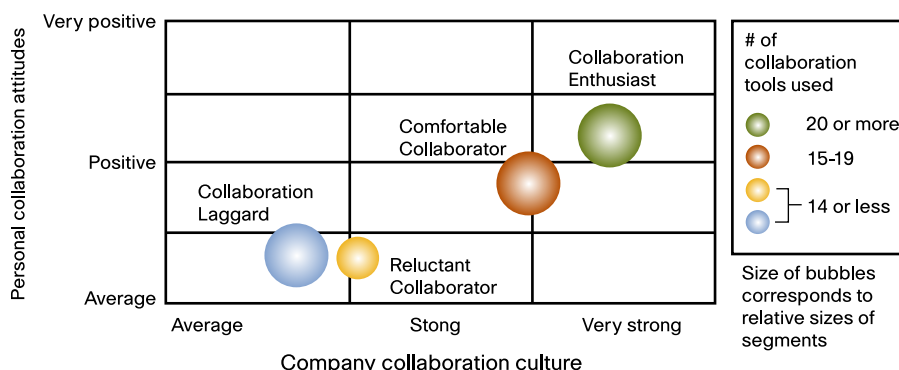
Employees' collaboration habits and attitudes placed them into one of four segments: Collaboration Enthusiasts, Comfortable Collaborators, Reluctant Collaborators, and Collaboration Laggards (Table 2). People in the first two segments regard collaboration as essential to their work and, not surprisingly, reported the greatest productivity and innovation benefits. The most enthusiastic users are managers in for-profit companies who have held their jobs for 3 to 10 years. Figure 1 shows the relative size of each of the four segments.

“The most enthusiastic users are managers in for-profit companies who have held their jobs for 3 to 9 years.”

Table 2. Four Collaboration Segments, Based on Habits and Beliefs

Variable	Segment			
	Collaboration Enthusiast	Comfortable Collaborator	Reluctant Collaborator	Collaboration Laggard
Job type	Manager	Supervisor	Individual contributor or supervisor	Individual contributor or supervisor
Organization type	For-profit	For-profit	Mix of for-profit and not-for-profit	Mix of for-profit and not-for-profit
Typical role	Administration, engineering, IT, or communications	Engineering or IT	Specialist or professional	Sales, operations, or marketing
Years in job function	6-9	3-5	1-2	16+ years
Tools used	Mean = 22 Uses tools at work and at home	Mean = 16 Uses more traditional tools than Enthusiasts, including email, conferencing, and calendaring	Mean = 11 Tends to collaborate only with those at the local site	Mean = 11 Tends to collaborate one-to-one Company may not provide many tools
Collaboration attitude	Essential to job	Essential to job	Useful but not essential	Useful but not essential
Organizational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has formal collaboration processes • Rewards collaboration • Tracks collaboration effectiveness • Provides tools and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has some formal collaboration processes • Provides tools and training • Does not necessarily reward collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less likely to have formal collaboration processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to have formal collaboration processes • May not provide tools and training • Does not directly reward collaboration

Figure 1. Personal Attitudes and Corporate Culture Help Define the Segments



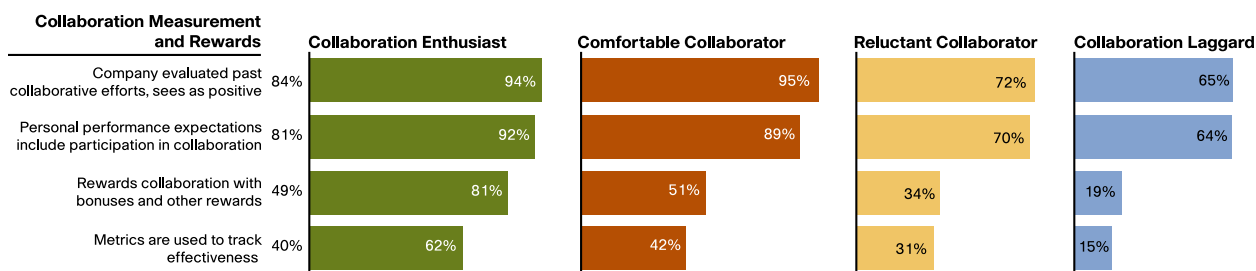
Finding 2: Organizational Culture Is Important in Successful Collaboration

For organizations that are planning investments in collaboration tools, the most valuable study result may well be that organizational culture influences success as much as the collaboration tools themselves. Important success factors include:

- **Executive participation:** More than 90 percent of Enthusiasts and Comfortable Collaborators agreed that their management team serves as a good role model for using collaboration tools. In contrast, only 65 percent of Reluctant Collaborators and 57 percent of Laggards agreed.
- **Formal collaboration processes:** Examples include weekly group conference calls or blogging requirements. Far more Enthusiasts (86 percent) and Comfortable Collaborators (63 percent) said their companies had a formal collaboration process in place than did Reluctant Collaborators (54 percent) and Laggards (29 percent).
- **Effectiveness tracking:** About 40 percent of study participants (more for active collaborators) said their organization used metrics to track collaboration effectiveness. Examples of metrics include travel cost savings, time to market, and speed of issue resolution.
- **Direct rewards:** The level of collaboration is directly correlated with rewards (Figure 2). About half of all respondents said their company rewards collaboration with bonuses and other rewards. Enthusiasts and Comfortable Collaborators tended to say their company has personal performance expectations that include participation in collaborative efforts such as performance review processes.

“Cultural factors influencing collaboration include role modeling by senior leaders, a formal collaboration process, tools, training, and rewards.”

Figure 2. Including Collaboration as a Personal Performance Expectation Influences Uptake



- Tools and training:** Not surprisingly, the most successful collaborators responded that their organizations provided collaboration tools and the training needed to use them effectively. Enthusiasts (95 percent) and Comfortable Collaborators (94 percent) more often said the technical tools that support collaboration were in place at their company than Reluctant Collaborators (73 percent) and Laggards (46 percent). The pattern is similar for training: Enthusiasts (90 percent) and Comfortable Collaborators (92 percent) were far more likely to say that they and members of their workgroup had received the necessary training to use collaboration tools effectively than Reluctant Collaborators (71 percent) and Laggards (49 percent).

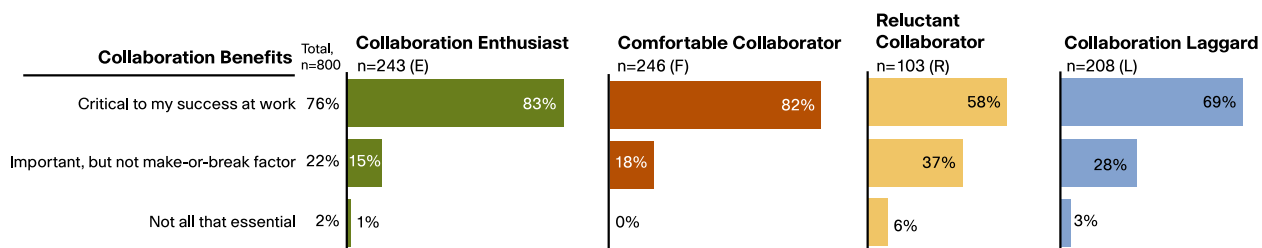
Finding 3: Employees Regard Collaboration as Influencing Success

Major study findings include:

- The vast majority of respondents said that collaboration is critical or important to their success at work (Figure 3).
- Work practices are more collaborative today than they were two years ago, according to 75 percent of respondents.
- Email and phone conferencing remain the most frequently used tools for collaboration. In addition, more than 75 percent use electronic calendaring and web conferencing, 68 percent use video conferencing, and about 40 percent use wikis and blogs.

“Email and phone conferencing remain valued conferencing tools. But times are changing: 40 percent of respondents said they use Web 2.0 tools such as wikis and blogs.”

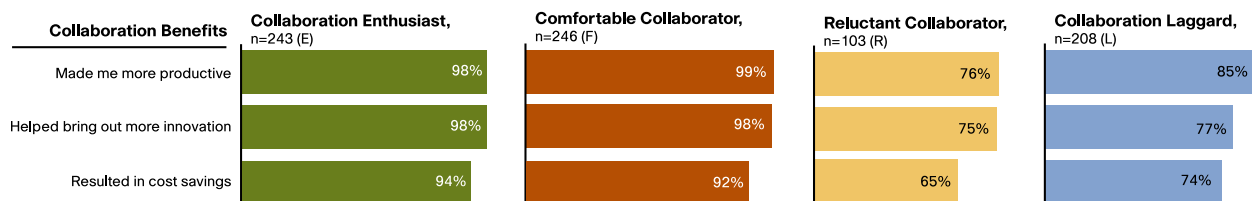
Figure 3. Respondents Agree that Collaboration Influences Their Success at Work



Finding 4: Productivity is the Main Motivation to Use Collaboration Tools

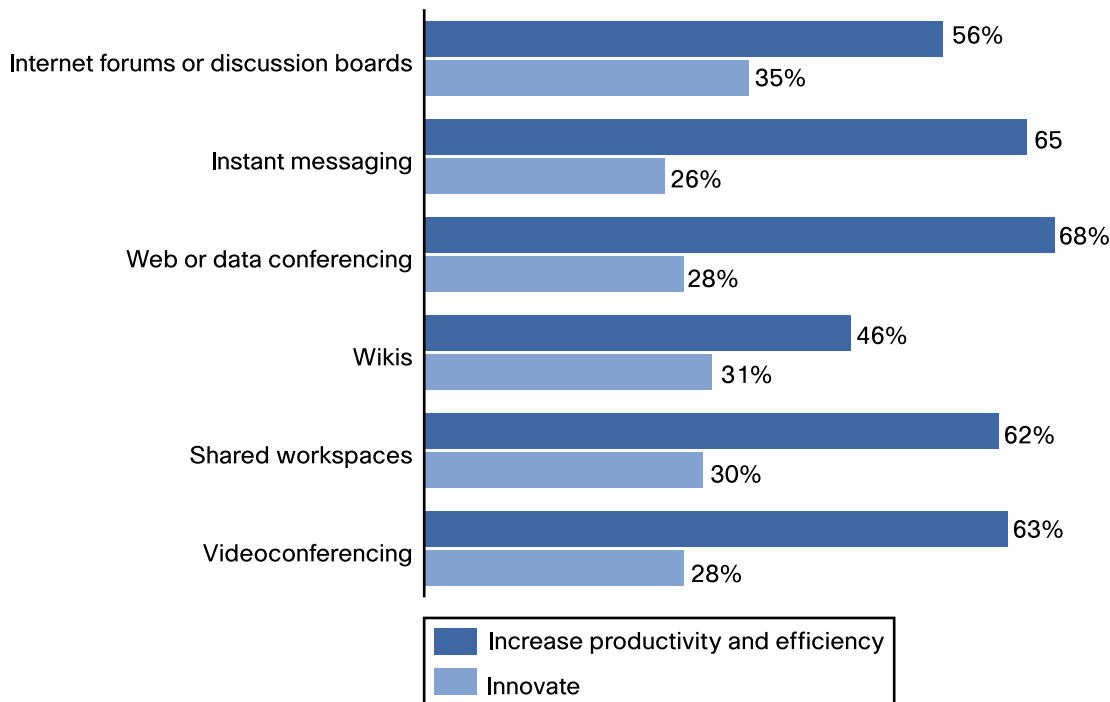
Collaboration has made most respondents more productive and has contributed to innovation and cost savings for their companies (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Perceived Benefits of Collaboration



Interestingly, when asked if they used collaboration tools most often for productivity or for innovation, more respondents said productivity. This finding was true for practically every tool. Figure 5 shows the percentage of Enthusiasts who said they used tools for productivity and innovation.

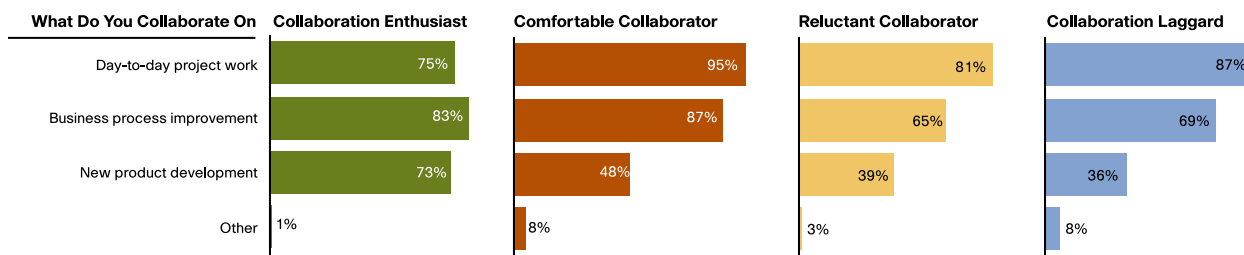
Figure 5. Collaboration Tools are More Popular for Productivity than for Innovation



The top three uses of collaboration tools are daily project work, business process improvement, and new product development (Figure 6). An example of business process improvement is when a salesperson on the phone with a customer can use instant messaging with a colleague to get an answer that helps close the sale.

“The top two uses for collaboration are day-to-day project work and business process improvement, followed by new product development.”

Figure 6. Most Common Uses of Collaboration Tools



Finding 5: Collaboration Is Useful in Organizations of All Sizes

The study contradicted Cisco’s expectations that collaboration is more prevalent in large enterprises. In fact, organizations of all sizes appear to experience similar success with collaboration. Nearly half of Enthusiastic Collaborators (44 percent) work in organizations with 500 to 999 employees. We think that the preponderance of mid-

sized organizations in the Enthusiastic Collaborators segment might reflect their more fluid departmental boundaries. It makes sense that employees who have met people in other departments through everyday encounters are more likely to collaborate with them.

Collaboration Success Story: Marketing Campaign

Cisco experienced the benefits of collaboration firsthand when planning its [Five to Thrive](#) marketing campaign, which promoted ways organizations can capitalize on their networking and collaboration investments to thrive in difficult economic conditions. Cisco® collaboration tools contributed to the success of the project by enabling 14 teams to share ideas and coordinate their efforts. Cisco followed the best practices reported in this study by recruiting executive champions and implementing a formal collaboration process, including weekly meetings using Cisco WebEx™ and Cisco TelePresence™ services.

The campaign was launched in just eight weeks, about 10 weeks faster than a typical Cisco marketing campaign. Success measures like website visitors, repeat visits, and inquiries far exceeded the norm, an accomplishment the team attributes in part to collaboration.

Conclusion

The Cisco collaboration segmentation study suggests that organizations experience the greatest productivity benefits from collaboration when they:

- Recognize that personal attitudes and organizational culture regarding collaboration are as important as collaboration tools.
 - Begin by introducing collaboration tools to people and groups meeting the characteristics of Enthusiasts and Comfortable Collaborators. These people tend to be managers or supervisors, have held their job position for 3 to 10 years, and are already using Web 2.0 tools at home.
 - Encourage executives to model the desired collaboration practices.
 - Reward collaboration by including it in performance reviews, offering rewards for successful outcomes, or both.
 - Implement formal collaboration processes.
- Provide the tools, IT support, and training needed to support collaboration.

For More Information

- To read collaboration blogs, visit: cisco.com/go/collaboration
- To get answers to your questions, real-world advice, and access to experts, visit and participate in the Cisco Collaboration Community: www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation



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