

Mid + Early Labs/Industry Building Collaborations

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Collaborations Take Different Forms

- They may start informally, based on mutual interest, or be mandated by others
- They may be formal or informal
- The goal(s) may be very specific and tangible or very exploratory and/or vague
- Your role may be as leader or participant
- In all of these cases, there are keys to success!



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Collaborations Work When ...

- There is a shared vision / purpose / goal
- The team has the right balance of people and skills
- The team has enough resources, including time
- The team has working processes and procedures – for meetings, deadlines, etc.
- Psychological safety!



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Building a Shared Vision

- What is the desired goal or outcome?
- What are the challenges that must be overcome to reach that goal?
- What are the skills and strengths of the team, and how can they be effectively leveraged?
- What resources will be provided to reach the goal, and are they realistic ?
 - Is there enough time, the right mix of talent, and a commitment by management to see it through?



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Identifying Team Strengths

- Assess the team skills and filling in the gaps
- Find roles that grow individual team members
- Develop a plan to deal with setbacks and avoid the blame game
- Reward reasonable risk taking and allow for minor setbacks
- Seek input before sharing your plan to avoid weak spots
- Acknowledge your own weaknesses and mistakes, and share what you learned from them



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Mind the Gap

- Will the work require collaboration across differing time zones and geographies?
- Will the work require collaboration across different companies and work cultures?
- Will the work require shared tools, training, and upgrades as the team grows and evolves?
- What are the risks posed by the tools, environments, and infrastructure that currently exist?
- How can intellectual property be protected?
- What aspects of compliance (federal, regulatory, organizational) must be addressed?



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Create Realistic Milestones

- Differentiate between must, want, and nice-to-have feature sets
- Develop a test or validation plan and a contingency plan
- What aspects of the team effort can be automated?
- Avoid feature creep, stick to the schedule
- Celebrate team milestones and successes



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Create Psychological Safety

- The team lead sets the tone and culture for the rest of the team to follow
- Building trust means you allow people to make mistakes and fail, but also to learn from them
- Instead of asking “why aren’t you completing your tasks”, you ask “are you OK, and how can I help?”
- Normalize encouraging people to ask for help
- Encourage people to share their knowledge and REWARD IT
- Advocate for your team and be willing to let them move on to better roles



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Small group discussion

- Please get in groups of 3 - 4
- If you have an issue related to collaboration that you want to talk about, please do that. Otherwise, consider the scenario below.
- **Scenario:**

Share a time when you felt ignored and blocked in a team setting and contrast that with a time where you felt heard and supported. How engaged and motivated were you to take risks or work harder?



Summary

- Build a shared vision and update regularly
- Identify team strengths with room for each individual to grow and succeed
- Mind the gap in aspects broader than just deliverables over the short-term
- Create realistic milestones and celebrate them
- Create psychological safety to build trust



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Resources

- Simon Sinek – “Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe”
- Adam Grant – “Are You a Giver or a Taker?”



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Final Thoughts

- Are there other aspects of how to build effective collaborations that we didn't mention?
- Are there red flags that you should be aware of when building collaborations?
- What problems have you faced in building collaborations?
- Any other questions?



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