

## **Beyond Cooperation**

by **John C. Maxwell**

When a group of soldiers found themselves locked away in a German prison camp during World War II, they easily could have waited out the end of the war there. Or, they might have made a few small attempts to free one or two people.

At one such camp, however, the goals were much bigger. These prisoners organized themselves around the collective goal of freeing 250 soldiers in one night. Their story became the basis for the 1963 movie, "The Great Escape."

Imagine the teamwork required to pull off such an ambitious goal. Groups of prisoners had to engineer and dig tunnels, build supports from wooden slats, dispose of dirt, create bellows to pump air into the tunnels, and light the tunnels.

According to one list, the supplies included 4,000 bed slats, 1,370 battens, 1,699 blankets, 52 long tables, 1,219 knives, 30 shovels, 600 feet of rope and 1,000 feet of electric wire.

In addition to finding materials for the tunnels, each escapee would need civilian clothes, German papers, identity cards, maps, homemade compasses and emergency rations.

Everyone had a job, from tailors to pickpockets to forgers. There were even teams that specialized in distracting the German soldiers.

"It demanded the concentrated devotion and vigilance of more than 600 men - every single one of them, every minute, every hour, every day and every night for more than one year," John Sturges, who directed the movie account, once said. "Never has the human capacity been stretched to such incredible lengths or shown such determination and such courage."

To pull off such an elaborate mission, the soldiers moved beyond cooperation and into collaboration. You see, there's a difference between cooperation and collaboration.

Cooperation is working together agreeably. Everybody sits down, and they're agreeable. Collaboration is working together aggressively; and there's a world of difference between those two.

There are four changes needed to become a collaborative type of a player:

1. **Perception.** You need to see teammates differently; you need to see them as collaborators, not as competitors.
2. **Attitude.** As a team player, you need to be supportive, not suspicious, of teammates, because if you trust others, you'll treat them differently - you'll treat them better.
3. **Focus.** A collaborative type of team player concentrates on the team, not himself or herself. Cavett Roberts said it right: "True progress in any field is a relay race and not a single event," so the focus is different.
4. **Results.** You begin to create victories through multiplication.

One is too small of a number to produce greatness. In fact, nothing can be accomplished in a great way without help. You have to learn to collaborate. You have to learn to come together.



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# Priority

Developing Leaders from the Inside Out

When you're developing a team that collaborates, it begins to be aggressive, not just agreeable. And it begins to accomplish a vision that mere cooperation never would allow.

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