

THREE MURDEROUS MINDSETS THAT KILL COLLABORATION AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM?

In today's complex, fast paced workplace leaders collaborate to complete major jobs. Few have everything they need without obtaining additional resources from groups inside and outside of their organization. [Dr. Karen Y. Wilson-Starks](#), President and CEO of [TRANSEADERSHIP, INC.](#) defines [collaboration](#) as "Working with others to co-create win-win results". With competing agendas and resource constrained environments, collaborations are often difficult to achieve. [Dr. Karen Y. Wilson-Starks](#) identifies three mindsets that derail successful collaboration efforts.

1. Advocacy Mindset

Doug is a plant manager for a Global US based manufacturing company. The CEO challenged all company leaders to increase cost savings. Doug knew he had the strategy to save storage fees by using a semi-vacant warehouse for products awaiting shipment. Despite regular site visits with his plant manager peers and the Supply Chain manager, his idea fell on deaf ears. When people didn't listen Doug spoke louder and longer until finally he was tuned out. What kept others from appreciating his truly good idea? Doug was a victim of the advocacy trap. Instead of listening he became a talking head, presenting solely from his perspectives. When leaders lead with advocacy, others batten down the hatches and protect their turf. Instead of seeing a win for the organization they see a win for Doug and a loss for themselves. In the end, no one wins and the status quo is maintained.

2. Me and Mine Mindset

Scott leads a team of PhD-level scientists who create specialty electronics products for a niche client. The rest of the company produces more basic electronics parts. The schedulers and plant managers don't like to retool assembly-line production for Scott's materials because his runs require significantly more time and financial resources; limiting production of other parts. When Scott visits the plant he focuses on his needs, his clients, their priorities and what Plant resources he wants. Although he doesn't intend to come across as self-focused, the Plant sees him as demanding and inflexible concerning his production goals. Scott is often frustrated when unable to negotiate for as much time on the machines as he thinks is necessary to properly serve his client.

3. Assumption Mindset

Those who adopt the Assumption Mindset believe they already know what the other person is thinking or wanting, resulting in a fixed mindset. Sue, a Chinese woman based in Shanghai is the Asia Pacific Human Resources Vice President for a Global Financial Services Firm. Akihiro, an older Japanese man in Tokyo is her direct report. Recently the company decided to standardize processes throughout all geographic regions of the company. Historically, Japan has used its own methodologies for getting things done, so whenever Sue asks Akihiro to implement a new global strategy, he agrees but then doesn't. Sue then applies more pressure, gives more detailed implementation instructions, and reiterates the change rationale. Akihiro is well-respected in the organization and has a successful track record. What is causing the impasse? Sue believes Akihiro doesn't implement because he doesn't understand the rationale, know how to implement the new approaches, or won't rock the boat. Her perseverative beliefs entrench and commit her to a failed influence strategy.

These situations flow from one-sided mindsets where leaders fail to see others as potential partners and co-creators. False lines of battle are drawn as though each represents separate warring enemy camps. How did we help these clients obtain better results? In each case we helped the clients go beyond obvious differences to find common ground. Here are some of the strategies they practiced.

(Click for [Collaboration Video](#) and [Collaboration Worksheet](#))

THREE POWERFUL CO-CREATION ACTIONS

1. Listen to Understand

In order to move to a different place or to create something new you have to understand the current conditions and constraints. The three murderous mindsets of Advocacy, Me and Mine, and Assumption keep leaders from full inquiry and exploration of options and opportunities. Once Doug learned to listen, he discovered the interests and priorities of his partners and effectively led the group to a collective and creative approach for using the semi-vacant warehouse.

2. Separate Listening from Decision-Making

Business leaders are problem solvers at heart; however, rushing the process often impedes progress. When Scott started listening to his plant managers he learned how his requests adversely impacted others. He modified his requests so that everyone got what they needed. As he obtained insight, he listened to understand and later moved to problem solving. Scott learned to schedule separate listening sessions during which he did no problem solving. When his partners shared freely, overall creativity was enhanced. Later during joint problem-solving, more and better ideas emerged and the best outcomes were co-created.

3. Use Your Resources to Help Partners with Their Agenda

When Scott understood that his plant partners were incented for volume production and that his runs represented low volume, he was able to give credit to his plant partners and cast them in a favorable light. When Sue learned that Japan had some legitimate differences that required unique approaches, she was able to use her influence to negotiate for policy exceptions.

Effective collaboration and partnership are built on a foundation of respect and trust that comes from listening and understanding deeply. Collaboration is a mutual exercise of co-creation where everyone gives and receives. The enemies of this process are the mindsets that focus on a single agenda rather than the expansive possibilities of co-creation.

Click here to see a brief [Collaboration](#) video and learn more about the TRANSLEADERSHIP, INC. approach to partnership. Click here to download a free [Collaboration Worksheet](#) to help think about and plan co-creation opportunities.

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