

Soroptimist is a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

.

## SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS, Inc.®

Leadership Tip: Collaborative Leadership


By definition, club leaders lead the direction of their clubs and set the example for where we are headed. Sometimes, it can be easy for leadership to stick with things that made them successful in the past. But, one of the core responsibilities of leadership is to understand when we need to change. We never change for the sake of change. We change when we think change will make us better, stronger, and more successful.

Regardless of how creative, smart and savvy a leader may be; she can’t transform her club without the brain power and commitment of others. No matter what the issue involves, success dictates that the individuals impacted by change be involved in the change from the very beginning.

This is where using a collaborative leadership style comes into play. It's a process in which teams work together toward a common goal. In collaborative leadership, club members work on tasks together, consider problems, while the leader helps the team find the solution.

Some of the benefits of practicing this type of leadership style within your club are engagement, trust, and leadership succession. Members become more engaged because they have a higher participation in the club and trust is built simply by the nature of working so closely with others. Also, new leaders emerge more naturally in a collaborative setting. When others are invited to get involved in a committee or a project or share their knowledge, they start getting their feet wet and become more comfortable stepping up in the future.

Finally, we can't overlook one more important element of a collaborative environment…it’s FUN! Members value being with other like-minded women and working together to accomplish our mission. Building relationships is important and fun; friendship is always a top reason why members join and stay Soroptimists.

Collaborative Leadership in Action

Try the following tips to help you practice collaborative leadership in your club or region:

* Recognize change is accomplished in a team environment, not when one person dictates the process.
* Share information and keep communication lines open.
* Encourage brainstorming because different perspectives can bring about the best possible ideas. Keep in mind, brainstorming is a process and all suggestions should be considered in the early stages.
* Assure everyone in the club has a chance to be heard and positively acknowledge their contributions.
* Promote and model inclusiveness by welcoming new members, making sure they meet others, and include them in discussions.
* Help members make real connections with each other by including teambuilding exercises that encourage trust.
* Solve problems and challenges by actively seeking input from club members.
* Be flexible with rules and responsibilities.
* Address conflicts quickly and fairly by mediation.
* Provide immediate feedback for a job well done or give constructive criticism when necessary.

Remember, collaborative leadership is about creating an inclusive environment where everyone’s knowledge and creativity are put to good use. Because we live in a diverse and complex world, sometimes–especially for Soroptimist clubs–a collaborative leadership approach is the best way to meet our goals.

As Soroptimists, we know women and girls face obstacles and discrimination solely because of their gender. One member alone does not have all the knowledge, information, and resources necessary to address these issues. However, when we collaborate, we are more effectively able to effect change and make a difference.

Put the above tips in practice and give collaborative leadership a try in your club today!

*Sources:*

Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-ideas/collaborative-leadership/main>

Innocentive: Perspectives on Innovation: <http://blog.innocentive.com/2013/11/21/8-differences-between-traditional-and-collaborative-leaders/>