

Understanding Design
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Module - 06
Start of Section 4
Lecture - 34
Principles of Collaboration

So, does a designer need to have some special qualities to be a good collaborator?

I am so glad you asked. I like to highlight 10 principles that can help you build high performance teams.

In fact, these 10 principles are part of your course assignment for this fortnight. So, you will be applying them while you work.

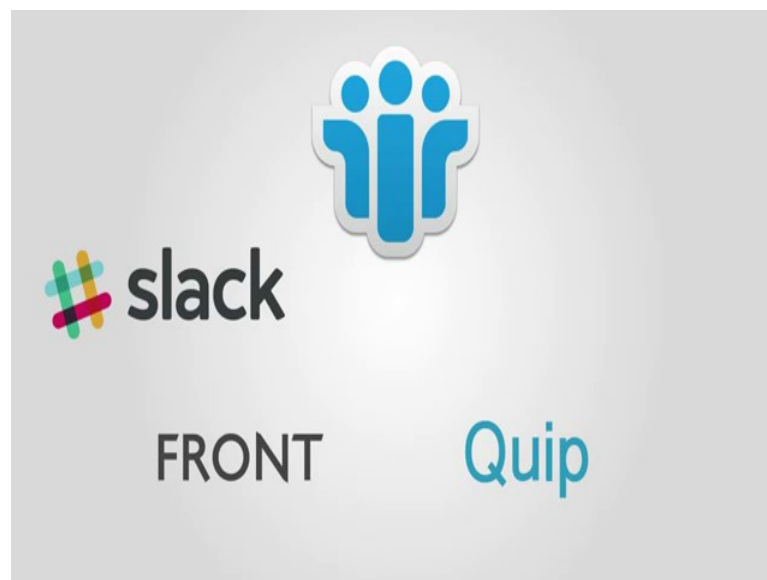
For now we will just run through them to get a basic sense. So, let us say you have a project with a specific design goal or outcome; and you have managed to put together an appropriate team with the required skills a team of say lets 5 members. We are going to look at our 10 principles now. We might call them best practices or we could refer them as rules of thumb. Today collaborations and interactions have moved online, team members can see each other's work and are expected to respond with rich interactions, critical inquiry and clear communication as part of their online collaboration.

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So, the first principle is using online collaborative tools. There are several popular online collaboration tools available.

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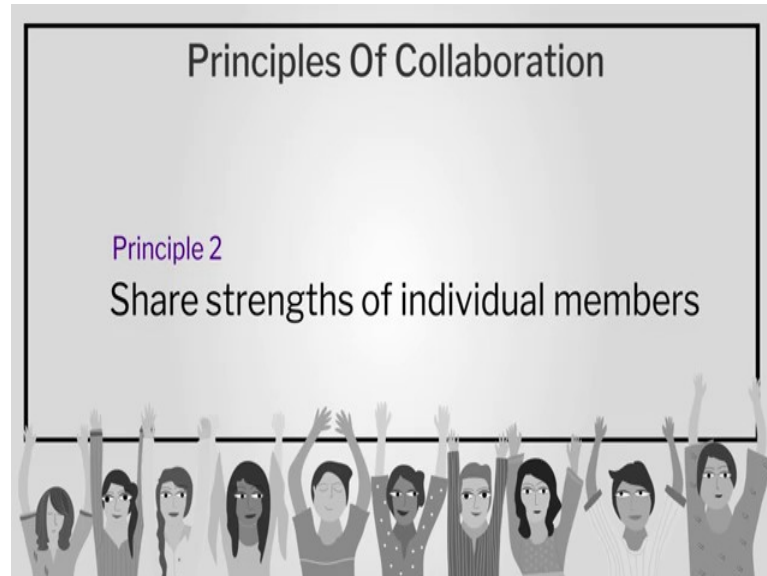
These include Slack, IBM lotus connections, Front, Quip, Dapulse.

Are these very expensive?

Some are proprietary; others like slack are based on free and open source software and cost nothing at all. The choice depends on what you need to use it for.

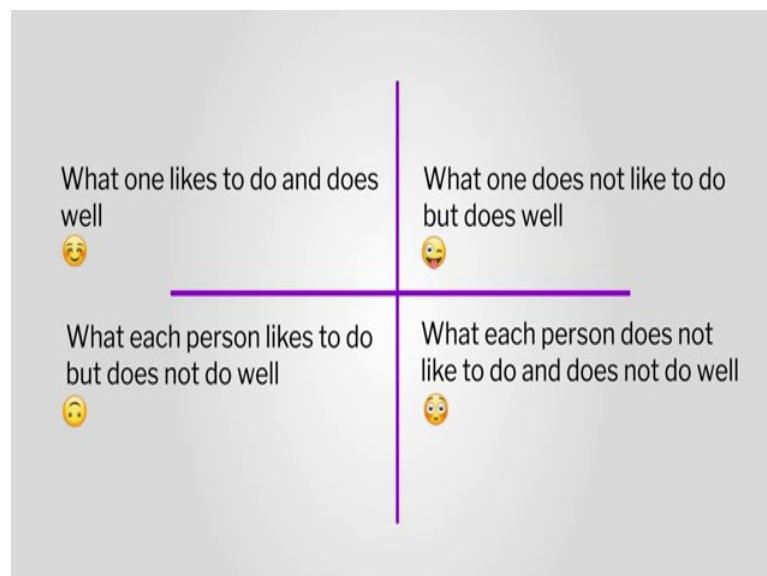
You can look up articles on the net that compare different choices, decide on the features you need and select one that is offered by a trusted provider.

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The second principle directs members to begin by sharing their individual strengths; they identify who will need help of what sort and from whom and on what aspects of the task? Here is an easy way to find out individual strengths and challenges.

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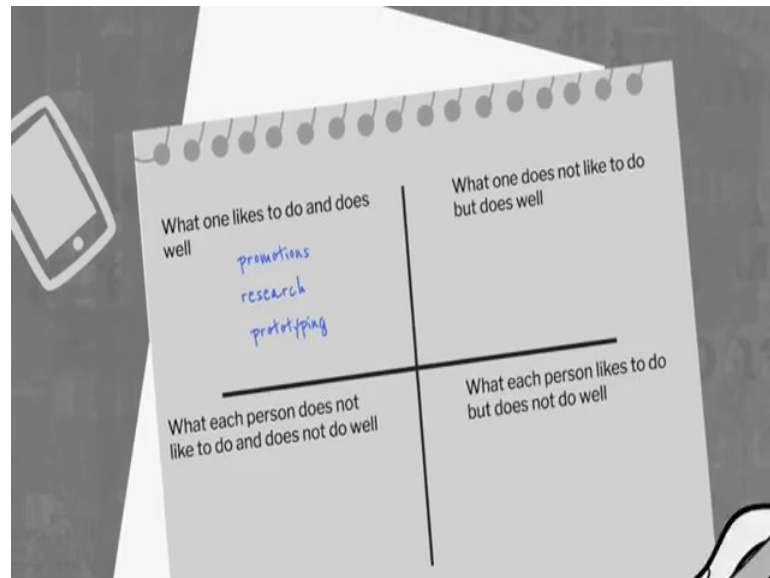
Examine this matrix. While filling in four quadrants, the team members will discover - What one likes to do and does well; What one does not like to do but does well; What

each person likes to do but does not do well; and What each person does not like to do and does not do well.

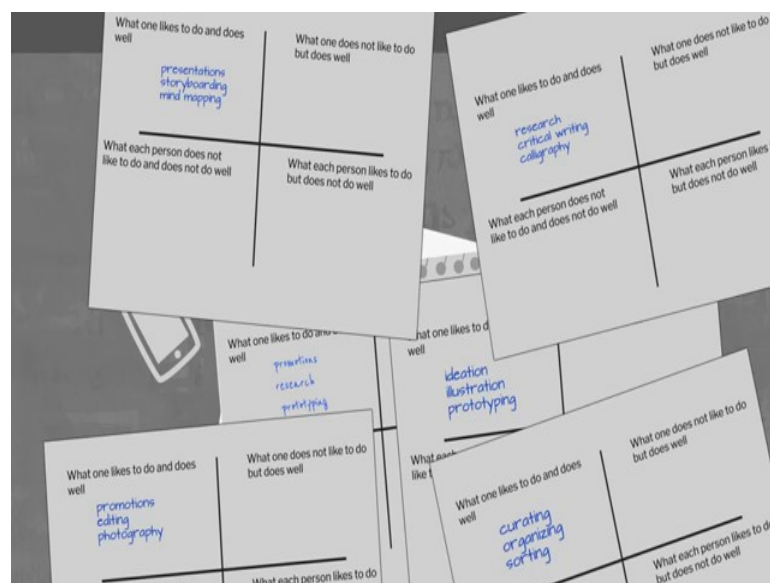
That seems to cover all the possible preferences.

Yes, jot down at least five things in each quadrant.

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After each member fills in the quadrants compare them and list the strengths and challenges of each member of the team, it becomes very clear which member loves doing

something and does it well. But, more importantly tasks a person does not like to do or does not do well are also very evident.

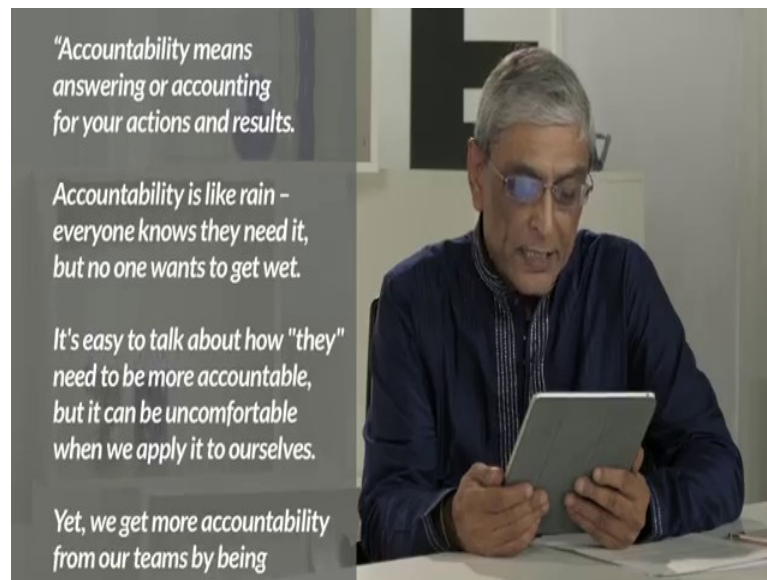
If I may add we need to grapple with this question. How will we as individuals and as a team hold ourselves accountable for deadlines shared results and overall quality.

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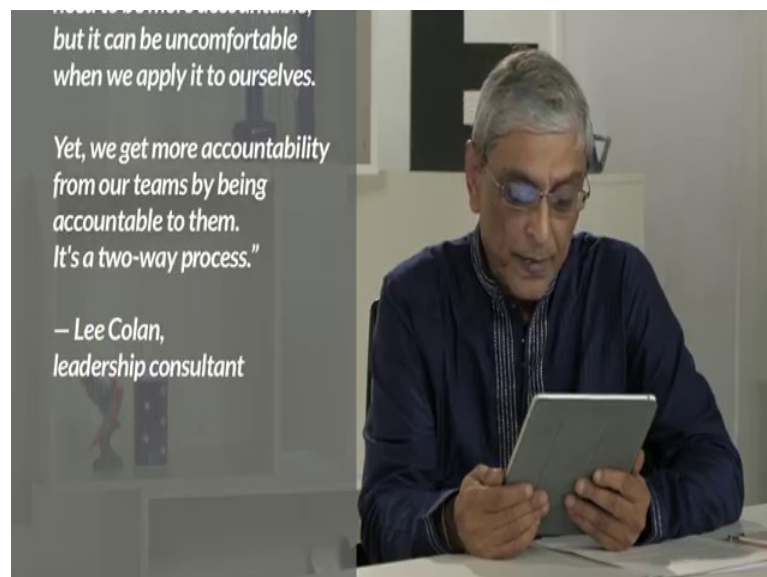
The 3rd principle is- Speak the language of commitment. Have a thorough discussion about the meaning of teamwork. Teams often fail when members do not pull their weight when they are not accountable and do not really collaborate at all. This is what Lee colan, a leadership consultant says.

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Accountability means answering or accounting for your actions and results; accountability is like rain everyone knows they need it, but no one wants to get wet. Its easy to talk about how they need to be more accountable, but it can be uncomfortable when we apply it to ourselves.

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Yet, we get more accountability from our teams by being accountable to them its a two way process.

Accountability starts at the beginning of the process if we wait until the end, then we will just be putting out fires. Leaders and team members should be able to agree on the answers to a basic question how will I know if I have met expectations. And let us remember that human communication is often not very precise. But when we collaborate, we need to be crystal clear and have measurable improvements and define milestones we want to achieve in order to succeed. Accountable leaders help their teams by communicating 4 Ws.


Oh what are these?

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What, why, who, and when; what actions needs to be taken?


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Why is this **action**
important

Why is this action important? You must link the action to the bigger picture so that the person understands.

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Who is
responsible!

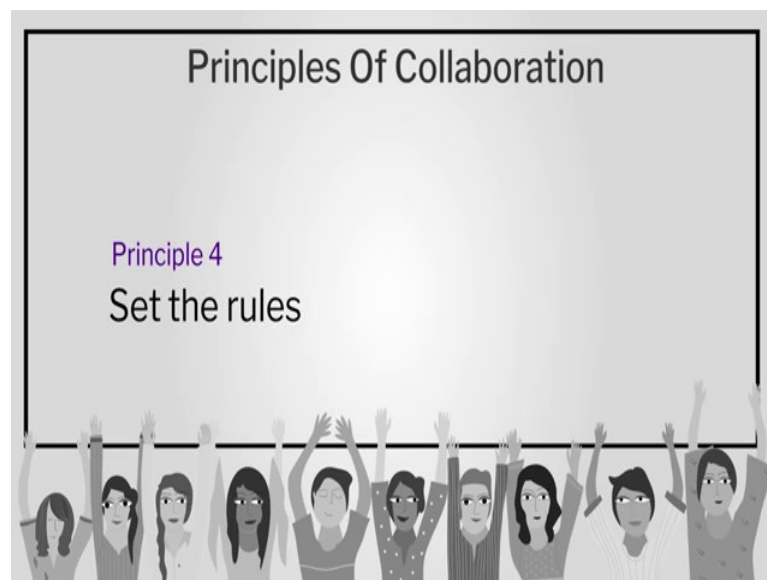
Who is responsible? This must be clear so that there is no passing of the buck.

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When must be the task completed? Be specific about when you want results, saying next month or by second quarter is too vague.

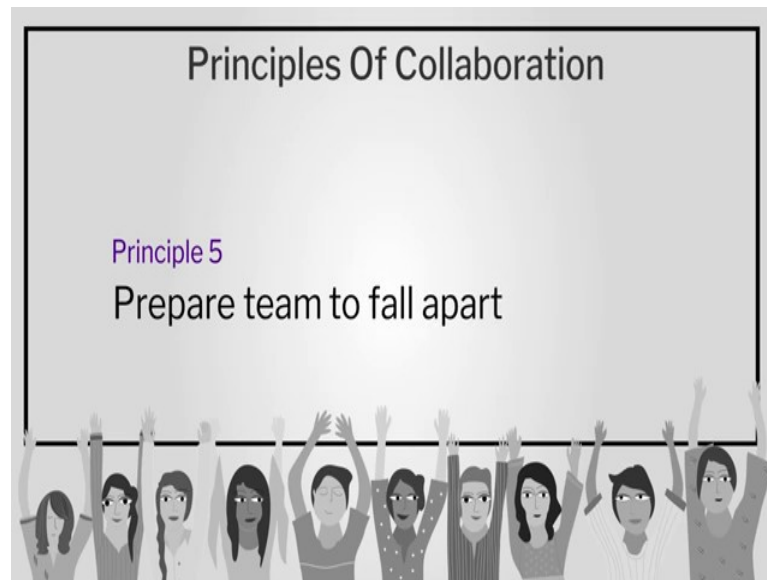
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The 4th principle is set the rules. Have members agree on norms or a contract which defines each person's role. Have specific remedies for situations in which members do not live up to the agreements.

For those who seem incapable of teamwork, but whom you cannot do without, you might have to make special arrangements to accommodate them, but this should be the exception not the norm.

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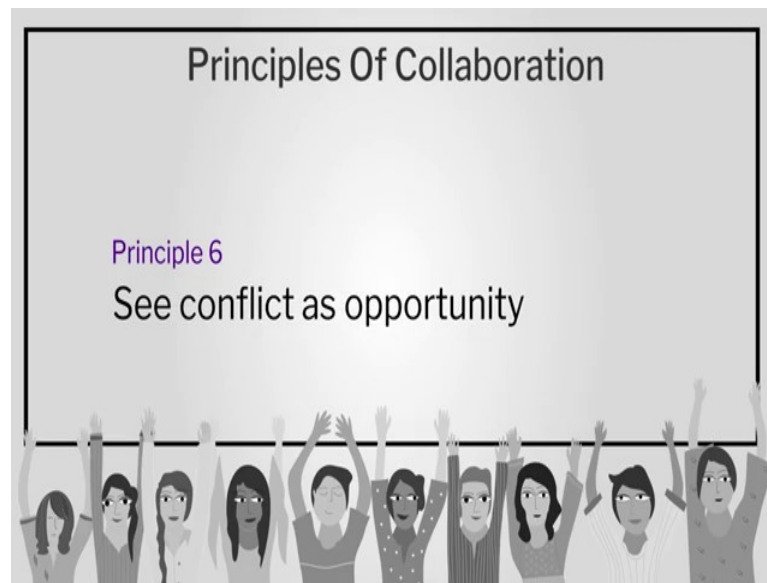
The 5th principle is- Prepare yourself to fall apart. Yes, that is right it is essential that the team members feel safe to take risks and communicate openly. And yet things can and often do go wrong. Teams may start off feeling inspired and unified, but later discordant personalities emerge agreements get broken and suddenly everything is turned upside down.

Prepare your team members for this process and if productivity is going down, help them become aware of this. Reserve time in each team members' schedule for people to sort out any differences and to regroup and reassess how things are. Let us setbacks not become a reason to give up, but to learn from mistakes made. Remember how sports team win games and at times lose badly. Should they, should you, should we give up then?

Of course, not; but, there are times when a collaboration breaks down irretrievably. Should not you know when to call it a day, cut your losses and maybe start again with a new team.

Of course Nina. In dire situations that may be the only option left, anyway your question brings me to my next principle.

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The 6th principle directs us to see conflict as opportunity. No one likes conflict, but this is the exact point when team members learn the ways of conflict resolution. They are going to need it to work together in the future. We must all learn the language of constructive feedback and the golden rule of good listening. Are you really listening or just waiting to air your own response?

Often one can avoid difficulties later by having team members practice these methods at the beginning of a project.

Ever see red, it is called being defensive and turns out it is the single greatest inhibitor to true collaborations. Jim Tamm an expert in building collaborative workplace environments advises us on getting out the red zone and cultivating a green zone attitude.

Just follow the link to the next tab to see the video.