

COLLABORATIVE Practice Tips

A monthly bulletin from the CP Cal Practice Excellence Committee

The Practice Excellence Committee is pleased to offer tips to help you increase your Collaborative cases and achieve *practice excellence*.



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Working with Team Members with Whom You are Unfamiliar

People tend to be creatures of habit and Collaborative professionals are no exception. Many of us have had a Collaborative practice for years. Some are new to the discipline. Whatever your situation might be, it is likely that you have developed a routine; that you have a list of go-to Collaborative colleagues whom you like, trust and with whom you work well.

But the popularity of Collaborative as an ADR option is growing. Both potential practitioners and the general population are becoming increasingly aware of this method of resolving disputes. More professionals are becoming Collaboratively trained and entering the field. It is increasingly likely that in the near future you will be working with one or more team members with whom you are unfamiliar. This can certainly affect team dynamics and perhaps even affect the outcome of the case for a client.

That being said, below are some suggestions and ideas to consider when you find yourself on a team with one or more members whom you simply don't know.

Tip #1

Schedule some one-on-one social time. The best way to feel comfortable with a new acquaintance is to spend time getting to know him or her. Ideally that time will be away from the office and in a social setting--for example, lunch or coffee. Some subjects to talk about with such people include:

- What brought them to Collaborative?
- What was their most interesting professional case/challenge?
- What do they like most about their practice area?

The answer to these questions can tell you a lot about the person.

Tip #2

Join a Committee. A great way to get to know your colleagues is to volunteer to serve with them on a Collaborative committee.

Tip #3

Ask a Third Party. If you have a colleague you know is acquainted with your new team member or a new member of your group, ask him or her about them. Has he/she worked with them before? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Tip #4

Explore his or her Collaborative 'Style.' Every professional approaches the Collaborative process differently. Don't presume that your style will be the same as the other person's. Try to avoid conflict or surprise by reviewing the protocols and discussing the following in order to come to a consensus:

- Should the entire team be included in all communications? If not, how will it be determined when to include all or exclude some team members?
- Should clients be included in all communications? How will this be determined?
- Will the law be discussed at the meetings or will the attorneys meet with their respective clients separately?
- Who will run the meetings?
- How will the team prepare for meetings?
- What is the procedure/protocol for communicating with clients if a team member has a question?
- Are different professionals charging the clients differently?

Following these suggestions will not only create more harmony within the team, they will also result in a better Collaborative experience for both you and, more importantly, your clients.





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