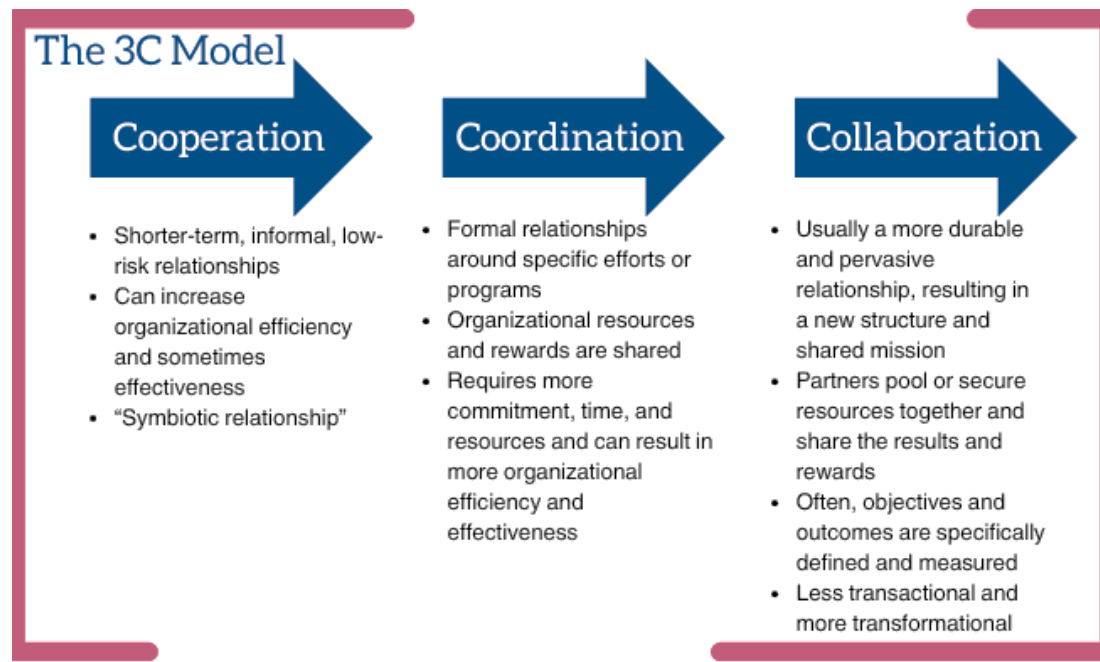


Back to Basics

The difference between Cooperation, coordination, and collaboration



Cooperation, coordination, and collaboration form a continuum of working together, moving from independent tasks with loose alignment to deeply integrated, joint creation.

Cooperation

- Definition: Working separately by dividing tasks and sharing information to help each other achieve individual or loose goals.
- How work is done: Everyone does their own piece independently and combines the results at the end.
- Trust and communication: Requires low trust and minimal, informal check-ins.
- Example: Two coworkers write separate chapters of a handbook and email them to a manager to staple together.

Coordination

- Definition: Aligning and synchronizing separate actions, schedules, and resources so that independent work flows smoothly without conflict.
- How work is done: Roles remain distinct, but timelines and dependencies are managed in an organized way.
- Trust and communication: Requires moderate trust and structured, formal communication.

- Example: An IT department upgrades office computers on the same day the facilities team replaces old desks, avoiding blocked pathways.

Collaboration

- Definition: Uniting people to co-create something entirely new that cannot be done alone.
- How work is done: The group dives in together, sharing risks, brainstorming, and jointly owning the final outcome.
- Trust and communication: Requires high interpersonal trust and constant, real-time dialogue.
- Example: A design team and software engineers live-editing a prototype, shaping and approving features as a unified unit

COOPERATION	COORDINATION	COLLABORATION
• Loose connections, low trust • Tacit information sharing • Ad hoc communication flows • Independent goals • Adapting to each other or accommodating others actions and goals • Power remains with organisations • Resources remain with organisation • Commitment and accountability to own organisation • Relational timeframe short • Low risk/low reward	• Medium connections, work-based trust • Structured communication flows, formalised project-based information sharing • Joint policies, programs and aligned resources • Semi-interdependent goals • Power remains with parent organisations • Commitment and accountability to parent organisation and project • Relational timeframe medium-based on prior projects	• Dense interdependent connections, high trust • Frequent communication • Tactical information sharing • System change • Pooled, collective resources • Negotiated shared goals • Power is shared between organisations • Commitment and accountability to network first and community and parent organisation • Relational timeframe—long term (3 years) • High risk/high reward

Explanation : Collaboration, coordination, and cooperation

Every day, organizations expect teams to navigate between coordination, cooperation, and collaboration, each representing different levels of complexity and requiring different skills. They exist on a continuum—explore the definitions and differences:

- ✓ Coordination is the orchestrated efforts of individuals or groups to align or synchronize separate actions. They exchange relevant information and resources in support of each other's distinct goals. In other words, people coordinate (align/sync) distinct efforts (such as IT

upgrading computers and facilities changing out desks) to create more efficiency, but they remain independent.

- ✓ Cooperation is the coordinated efforts of a group of two or more people to perform their assigned portion of an agreed-upon shared process or task. They are dependent on each other to execute a mutual objective. People co-operate to perform their portion of a shared task as planned. For example, IT works with Finance and Shipping to purchase and deliver new computers on time.
- ✓ Collaboration is the mutual engagement of a group of two or more in a co-creative effort that achieves a shared goal or vision. They are interdependent, with each unique contribution essential to the whole. People co-labor in an act of creation, and the input of all the contributors changes the result. An example would be several people and departments working together to shift an organization's culture.

Coordination only requires basic communication and planning skills (though many people still need help). Cooperation requires a clear process for execution and accountability. And collaboration requires advanced skills: building trust, creativity, innovation, and mindful process for conflict resolution.

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