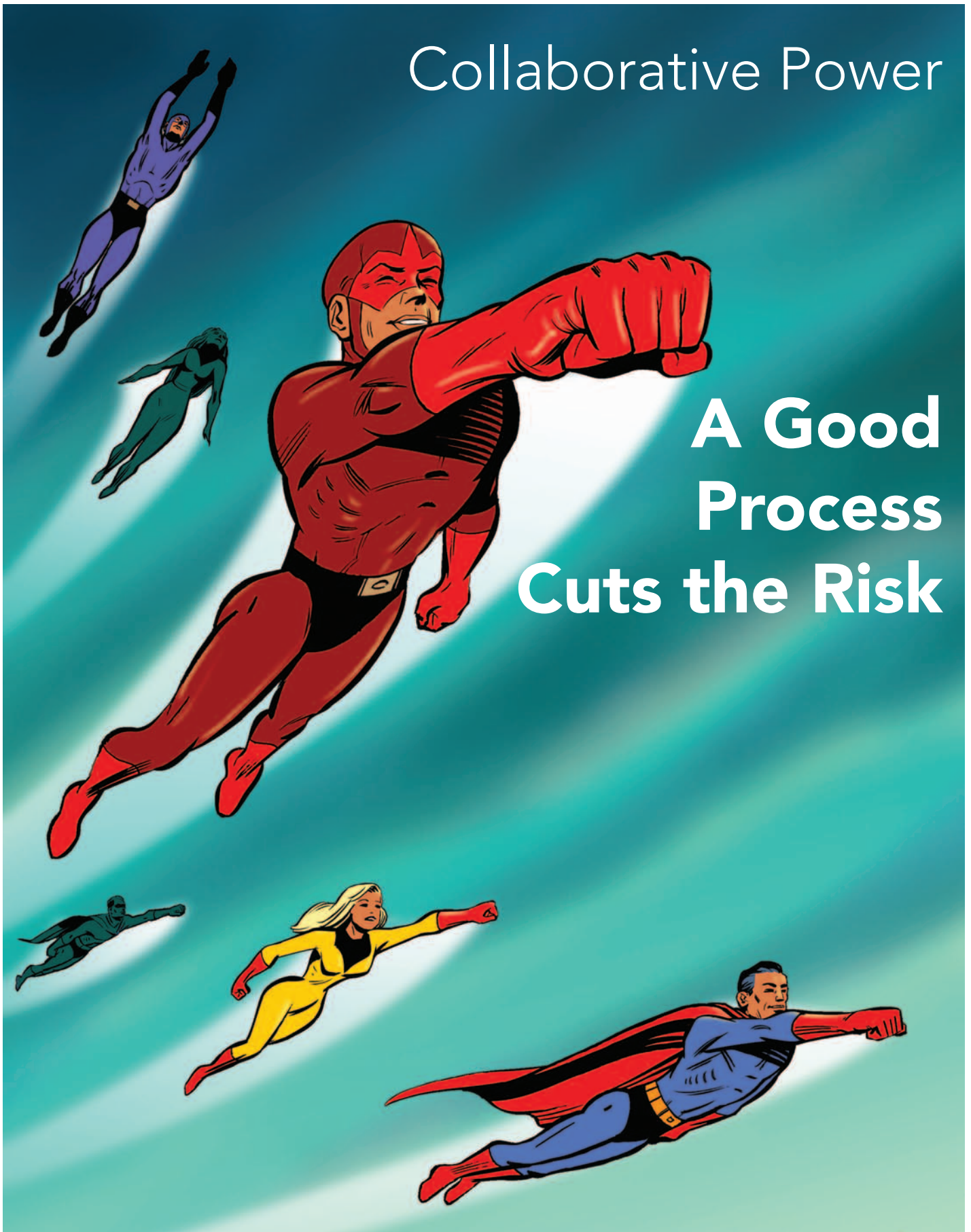


Collaborative Power

**A Good
Process
Cuts the Risk**



Credit unions often require collaboration among senior management team members, most often in support of strategic planning goals. The task of bringing together a team and producing innovative solutions is challenging, but successful teamwork is essential to the growth of the organization. Senior management teams often fall short in their efforts to constructively explore differences and develop solutions, not because they lack the dedication, but because they don't have the skills to make successful collaboration a reality. Here are some guidelines to cut the risk of process failure when senior managers work together to solve problems:

Know the Process

There are three main functions that occur in collaborative meetings: brainstorming ideas, making decisions, and presenting information. Often these tasks get mixed up and some people are generating ideas, others are making decisions, and yet others are still focused on presenting information. At the outset of any meeting, it must be clear what process is to be used, and when or whether transition will occur between functions. Be sure all parties are on the same page. This is the most important action to ensure a collaborative team environment that delivers results.

Participate Equally

It is important to hear all ideas during discussions. Ensure complete participation so the team can benefit from all viewpoints and areas of expertise. The best thinking comes when everyone knows his or her ideas will be heard in a respectful manner. This is not about being "fair," but about leveraging the team's talent to get the best end result.

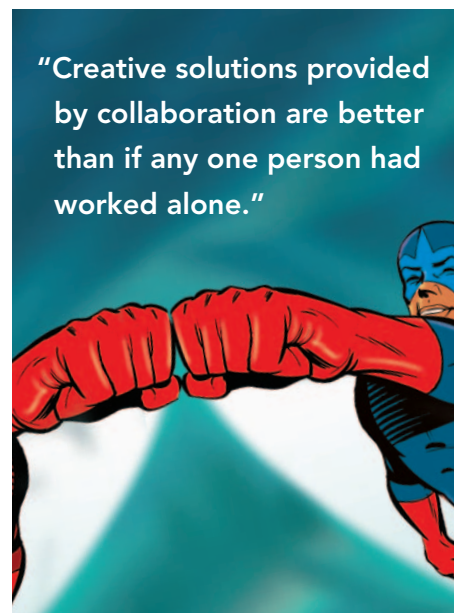
Communicate

Make a concerted effort to communicate changes that affect the team. No one likes surprises or feeling like things are happening behind their back. Open and timely communication lowers

resistance and provides team members the opportunity for final decision-making.

Begin With Purpose

It is important to spend time discussing the objectives and purpose of the work efforts. Once a clear understanding is achieved, it is up to each team member to ensure he or she is in alignment with the purpose or mission.



Establish Team Rules

Even teams that have been working together for a long time need to have practices and rules established regarding how they will work together, what they can expect from one another, and how the work will be done. Keep records of the work as it is completed and display it where everyone can see the results and progress made. Establish procedures for brainstorming ideas, resolving conflicts, and solving problems. When teams have a clear understanding of the rules, they can focus on what is to be done.

Evaluate and Celebrate

Build into your project timeline a review of how the team is working together and what is being accomplished. Look for opportunities to restate the mission or purpose and to call for stronger

participation. Identify what went well and what needs to be improved going forward. Recognize and reward yourselves when milestones are achieved to your satisfaction.

Mix It Up

Some people think best when they have time to ponder alone, and others prefer the creative energy of a good debate. Some need pictures to capture a concept and others need historical evidence and data. Your group members will be diverse in how they problem-solve and process information. Establish flexibility in your processes to allow time for individual thinking as well as group discussions. Encourage team members to be vocal about how they process information most effectively and work to accommodate their various needs.

Team Diversity

When you bring senior management teams together to solve a problem or innovate solutions, there will be a wide range of knowledge, ideas, motivations, histories, biases and personal styles. True collaboration means that you value the diversity of the team. Creative solutions developed through collaboration are better than those any one person is likely to develop working alone. This is what makes collaboration at the senior level important. Learning the skill of effectively working with others who are different from us is in the best interest of the organization.