



Burst Group Summary:

Mobilizing, Supporting, and Working with Collaborative Mission Leaders (1 of 3)

Burst Groups are facilitated learning conversations that take place over 2 - 3 weeks. Led by Mark Avery, this Burst Group explored key characteristics of collaborative leaders, their value, and how leaders can best support and work with them. This is the first of three discussion summaries.

What are the Key Characteristics of a Collaborative Mission Leader?

Networkers & Connectors:

“CLs are always making connections and linking people with common interests. You hear them say ‘You should talk to X’ or ‘Have you seen the Y article.’ They are highly relational and gain other’s trust quickly.” - Katharine T.

“CLs know lots of people outside the organization well enough to grasp what they do, their expertise, and passions.” - Ellen L.

“CLs make conscious efforts to connect and meet with people from diverse backgrounds, interests, organizations, and theologies. They are the ‘go to’ people in an organization or network because they know key people or who to talk to and can open doors.” - Shantanu D.

“CLs typically have a role that connects what God is doing inside an organization with what He is doing outside of it.” - Mark A.

“CLs maintain a diverse and expanding network of relationship because he/she thinks and works relational rather than organizational.” - John B.

“CLs are boundary spanners...gathering and transferring information from disparate parts of an organization. They are especially important for implementing organizational change efforts that meet the needs of different groups. They are collectors of various ways people are handling the topic at hand.” - Dave H.

“CLs are the source of ‘out of the box’ ideas and tend to be the first to bring in good or bad news about changes in the environment.” - Mark A.

Big Picture / System Thinkers:

“CLs focus on the vision and maintaining the collaboration that achieves it, rather than seeking the glory and recognition of the parts that achieve it.” - Chris G.

“CLs have the ability to focus a vision and influence change within a defined group or community. But they realize that true collaboration has to allow a vision to emerge out of the collective rather than be set and controlled by the leader.” - Jay M.

“CLs are ‘impact-focused’ instead of organizationally-focused and look at achieving the greatest impact by connecting organizations instead of focusing only on their own organization.” - SasConradie

“The vision may not be original to CLs, but they come to own it and are able to get others to do the same voluntarily and with a sense of joy.” - Shantanu D.

“CLs look for Kingdom opportunities to make a macro impact for the glory of God.” Don W.

“CLs walk a difficult line between perceived organizational need and the larger Kingdom picture.” - Ron W.

Learners / Synthesizers / Sense-Makers:

“CLs say ‘Yes’ to anything having value. They know it is a matter of connecting and cultivating the people, ideas, and resources to make things work.” - Jerry M.

“CLs are always scanning the horizon for new and different ideas, practices, and possibilities.” - Dan D.

“CLs are very good at processing information and making them useful to multiple audiences.” - SasConradie

Learners / Synthesizers / Sense-Makers:

“CLs are interested in many things, see emerging trends early, and start working on the possibilities they see -- often without permission.” - Henriette S.

“CLs are sense-makers because they work in a world that is constantly changing. This ability to make sense of the changes is a key marker of a CL.” - Mark A

“CLs have a broad understanding of many issues [and how they relate to each other] instead of a detailed focus on only a couple.” - SasConradie

“CLs are willing to relearn new perspectives and set aside what they and others want to see. They put themselves in many contexts. They work to make sense of the new “reality”, deal with ambiguity, and adjust to the new contexts.” - Nydia G.S.

Facilitative and Inclusive Leaders:

“CLs are not just networkers. Effective CLs are “all in” taking responsibility alongside others to achieve an objective. They initiate, guide in consultation with other participants, and morph with the collective will as the group heads towards a common desired destination.” - Jay M.

“CLs don’t always achieve the same kind of results as traditional leaders because much of what they do enables others to achieve. [Their results are often not accomplished as fast, are not as visible, and credit is shared]” - Jim H.

“CLs bring people together in trusting relationships around a clear vision, outcomes, and a common purpose.” - Daniel D.

“The CL sees the potential gain of being inclusive and is willing to take the risk of broadening the circle of participants” - John B.

“CLs are like the mortar or nails in a house connecting everything together. They need to be at peace in being in this role.” - Chris G.

“The role of the CL is to help the community find its voice and direction...and to create an environment that attracts a thriving community.” - Jay M.

“CLs have to be comfortable planting the seeds they think will help a group solve a problem and later seeing someone else take the credit.” Mike S.

“CLs are able to catalyze direction and ideas and empower others to own and develop the details. They work the detail but release authority to allow the energy of those most gifted in the work.” - Don W.

“CLs have to live with the tension of a wide range of views -- and possibly contradicting views -- while not getting worked up, holding up their own view, and the ability to dialogue without needing to convert others to their point of view.” -Shantanu D.

“CLs set aside their own opinions and desire to win people over and instead find value in creating a new space where multiple viewpoints can co-exist, and people can [deeply] listen to each other...” Dave H.

Excellent Communicators & Translators:

“CLs are fluent at multiple levels of communication and language across organizational, ministry, and cultural boundaries.” - Chris G.

“CLs understand the language of the legacy organization but is fluent in the language of collaboration and systems. They are adept at translating ideas into the context of the hearer.” - Don W.

“CLs are persistent and tenacious when they see a future others don’t yet see. They are willing to repeat, retell, and communicate in any way they must to those who will listen.” - Daniel D.

Additional Traits:

“CLs don’t care who gets the credit and don’t have a need to be a ‘company insider’.” - Mark A.

“CLs have a solid sense of self that does not rely on much emotional support from others...” - Chris G.

Effective CLs have high emotional and social intelligence that allows them to engage with all kinds of people.” - Daniel D.

“CLs have a broad range of life / ministry experience to fully grasp and appreciate the breadth of requirements in a project and to be able to connect the elements needed by the project over time.” - Chris G.

“CLs are prayer warriors. The work is not about them or human effort. It is about obedience, listening to the Holy Spirit, and serving God and His kingdom purposes above all else.” - Daniel D.

Collaborative Leader Challenges:

“CLs ‘Outside the Box’ thinking is sometimes not appreciated if in practice they stray too far from the organization’s goals.” - Jim H.

“CLs need to feel a sense of freedom to act without too many constraints from their backers / donors, but with a view to focus on the goals agreed with them and the others they are collaborating with.” - Chris G.

“Organizational leaders at times do not appreciate what the [collaborative / network leader] does for the Kingdom.” - Ron W.

“CL’s need to be okay with being misunderstood. They only have so much time and so many connections that they can maintain. This can lead to people feeling left out, or manipulated despite their best efforts.” - Chris G.

“CLs are interested in many things and can become bored easily. They can quickly move onto the next trend before accomplishing what they initially set out to do or [easily become over-committed]” - Henriette S.

“CLs can make a lot of mistakes [because they are willing to try new possibilities]. They need humility, a learning posture, and the ability to fail forward and adjust.” - Don W.

“CLs work within the strange tension between completing the goals agreed to by fellow Kingdom collaborators and the altruistic self-denial of their own need to succeed at their goals.” - Chris G.

“CLs in boundary spanner roles hold a great deal of relational and informational power and influence. This can also be a burden and this role goes unrecognized. The flipside however is that brokers and boundary spanners can also become bottlenecks.” - Dave H.

“CLs don’t fit into an org chart easily, which makes the admin / management folks uneasy because they sense I am useful but don’t fit into a traditional role.” - Mike S.

“A true collaborator will eventually feel uncomfortably bound by the expectations (KPIs or ROIs) of any group or organization they are aligned with, if that organization does not primarily exist to promote some sort of collaborative responsibility.” - Jay M.