

THE STATE OF COLLABORATION REPORT

A multicountry, cross-sector deep dive to identify what workers want and need to be more engaged and prepared for the future of work.



Howspace

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INTRODUCTION

The world of work is at a crossroads.

People have become detached from work and the purpose of what they do. Gallup's report, [The World's Broken Workplace](#), shows that 60% of people are emotionally detached at work, and 19% are miserable. In response, leaders are seeking to transform the workplace—a recent [Deloitte report](#) claims that 61% of executives are now focused on transforming work, double pre-pandemic levels. If people aren't engaged and leadership is focused on transformation, then what isn't working?

Howspace wanted to approach the problem from a different perspective by delving into workers' opinions about how people are actually working together. In order to pinpoint how and where the state of collaboration is impacting workforce engagement and the future of work, we asked 3,000 office workers in Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States for their views. We heard from workers in industries including education, retail, manufacturing, financial services, professional services, technology, healthcare, and the public sector.

In a nutshell, it turns out that Collaboration and Impact sit at the heart of personal values driving worker engagement. These factors represent what workers need from leadership and what they desire in their everyday work. However, they don't believe that these areas are valued or being developed, which causes them to turn off and [check out](#).

THE KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- Workers want greater purpose and meaning at work, ideally with measurable impact.
- Since the pandemic, workers feel transformation and change has focused on structure and not enough on how people actually work together.
- Workers enjoy and believe in collaboration but sadly don't believe their work environments will become more collaborative.
- Workers want a greater voice at work but feel they aren't heard.
- Workers don't have faith that leadership will become more human centric and collaborative.
- While executives rank worker adaptation and reskilling as top priorities, workers don't feel equipped for the future of work.
- Recent investments in technology aren't seen as helping with how people actually work together.

Howspace has defined Collaborative Impact as a key factor that will drive future success for both individuals and for organizations of any size. Collaborative Impact results when people come together around a shared purpose to learn and collaborate, ultimately unlocking the group's potential for positive solutions and progress toward a common strategic goal.

Based on this research, we have identified the five most important drivers needed to achieve Collaborative Impact including:

1. Collaboration
2. Purpose
3. Human Centricity
4. Learning and Development
5. Technology

This **State of Collaboration Report** explores the data behind the gaps and needs in order to unlock a new way forward for how we work that leads to engagement and success.



COLLABORATION MUST SERVE

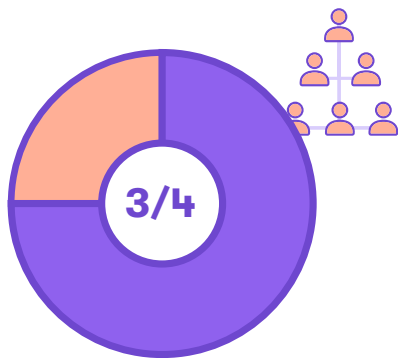
**as an organizational value and function as
a top-priority everyday working practice**

1

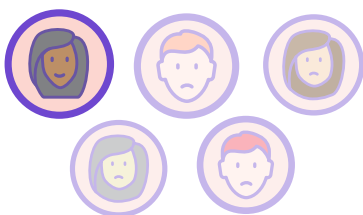
COLLABORATION MUST SERVE AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE AND FUNCTION AS A TOP-PRIORITY EVERYDAY WORKING PRACTICE.

Collaboration is the biggest untapped resource.

Not surprisingly, since the pandemic businesses have made structural changes to advance working practices during a time of an unparalleled level of remote work. The pandemic panic may have encouraged leadership to focus more on structural change to maintain control and status quo in times of uncertainty rather than investing in changes to enhance collaboration for workers to have freedom to work in modern new ways.










More than **3/4 businesses** have **changed their structure** to adapt to new ways of working













Only 1 in 5 state that their organization has reviewed its structure to create more collaboration

Most organizations have made Investments in structural enhancements, but they are not supporting strategic decision making.

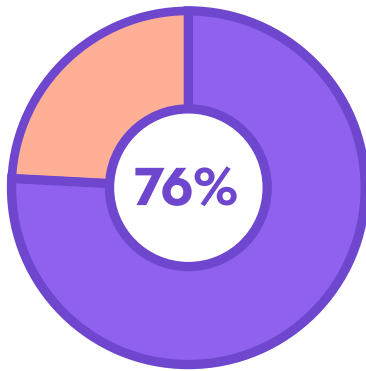
	The structure of my organization has changed over the last 18 months to adapt to new ways of working.	We have not changed how we collaborate to inform strategic decisions or it has gotten worse.
Denmark 	70.7%	53.7%
Germany 	75.7%	51.1%
Finland 	71.4%	46.5%
Norway 	76.6%	60%
Sweden 	81.3%	48.5%
United States 	70%	45%
United Kingdom 	81.8%	46.1%

Views within industries show that the public sector, retail, and education specifically are not benefitting from enhanced collaboration.

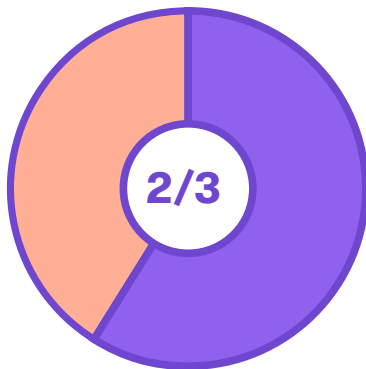
	The structure of my organization has changed over the last 18 months to adapt to new ways of working.	We have not changed how we collaborate to inform strategic decisions or it has gotten worse.
 Public sector	83%	67%
 Consulting	83%	37%
 Education	73%	50%
 FSI	83%	39%
 Healthcare	76%	43%
 Legal	80%	47%
 Manufacturing	77%	47%
 Retail	65%	53%
 Science & Pharma	83%	48%
 Technology	76%	44%

People work to work together.

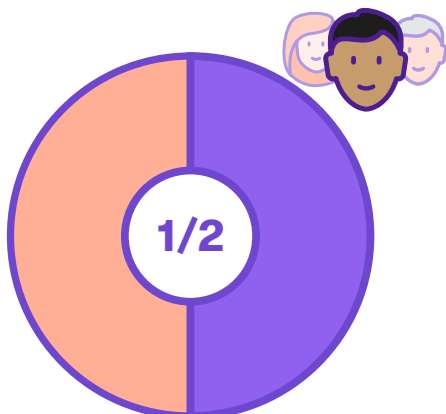
People like working together and need it to be core to their life at work. For this reason, the focus on structure over collaboration is likely a contributing factor to workforce disengagement. Workers said they greatly value and enjoy collaboration. However, despite the belief that the workplace needs to change how it collaborates, they do not anticipate progress toward enhanced collaboration systems or practices.










76% of workers say they enjoy collaboration












Nearly two-thirds of employees believe their organization will not change the way it works and collaborates, but believe it needs to



Middle management/emerging leaders (ages 30-35) feel most strongly, with just over 50% saying that they will need to collaborate more to be good at their jobs

	I enjoy collaboration and feel I am good at it.	I feel I should collaborate more to be effective in the next 5 years.
Denmark 	82.9%	58.5%
Germany 	72.8%	41.9%
Finland 	76.8%	50%
Norway 	76.7%	43.3%
Sweden 	75%	43.8%
United States 	77.8%	45.9%
United Kingdom 	76.5%	47.6%

The industries that felt most strongly that they needed to change the way they collaborate include:

 Education	35%
 Manufacturing	32%
 Healthcare	30%
 Retail	30%
 Public sector	25%
 Science / Pharma	25%
 Tech	23%
 FSI	21%
 Consulting	15%



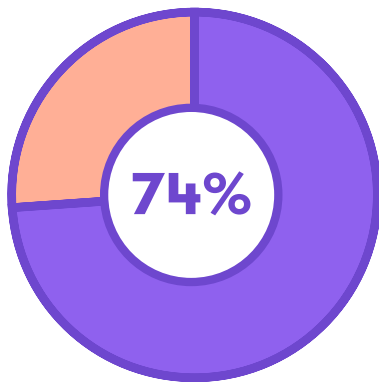
**A STRONG PURPOSE
MUST UNIFY AND DRIVE**
how people work together

2

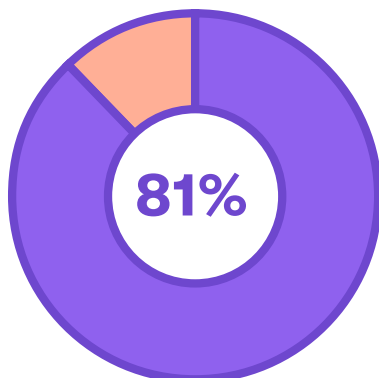
A STRONG PURPOSE MUST UNIFY AND DRIVE HOW PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER.

Organizations that have shared values and a defining purpose have the most engaged workforce, especially those that arrive to their purpose through open discussion and collaboration. But purpose only goes so far—workers increasingly want to see how their role and participation contributes to a bigger impact in order for work to feel worth the effort.

Engaged employees expect a strong purpose from their employer and have a deep desire for their role to contribute to impact.



74% of office workers say that company purpose is important.



81% of workers want to be contributing to a bigger impact.



1 in 3 state their company purpose is clear, but the impact is not measured and they would like it to be.










The size of a company also makes a difference. Of the companies with <100 employees, 1 in 3 feel their companies are most purposeful, with a desire for impact. In contrast, for those with 500-1000 employees, only 1 in 6 hold the same level of belief. This could indicate that, in smaller enterprises, employees are closer to a more participative leadership and/or that larger companies could be older companies with outdated or more complex employee engagement capabilities which are proving ineffective.

The age of employees presents another interesting finding. Older employees seem to have more belief that the leadership has purposeful values and a desire for impact. 66.14% of 18-24 year olds agreed, compared to 82.35% of those who are 65-69. Seniority could have greater proximity to leadership, or younger workers are more sceptical and are seeking greater voice in feeding into purpose.

Purpose matters to workers, but some don't believe leadership has this same view.

	The higher purpose of my company is important to me.	I don't believe that my leadership has purposeful values and a desire for impact.
Denmark 🇩🇰	80.5%	24.5%
Germany 🇩🇪	77.4%	17.4%
Finland 🇫🇮	76.8%	19.7%
Norway 🇳🇴	80%	13.3%
Sweden 🇸🇪	73.4%	17.2%
United States 🇺🇸	71.1%	19.3%
United Kingdom 🇬🇧	74.7%	17.7%

While people from all sectors reported that purpose matters to them personally, the low belief in leadership holding the same values is alarming. The public sector is twice and even sometimes three times more likely to not believe that its leadership has purposeful values. Charity, retail, and manufacturing also all roughly double that of consulting, science & pharma, and FSI.

	The higher purpose of my company is important to me.	I don't believe that my leadership has purposeful values and a desire for impact.
 Public sector	81%	27%
 Charity	80%	15%
 Consulting	77%	7%
 Education	85%	9%
 FSI	70%	9%
 Healthcare	79%	12%
 Manufacturing	68%	21%
 Retail	68%	16%
 Science & Pharma	83%	8%
 Technology	71%	10%



THE FUTURE OF WORK
can only be human centric

3

THE FUTURE OF WORK CAN ONLY BE HUMAN CENTRIC.

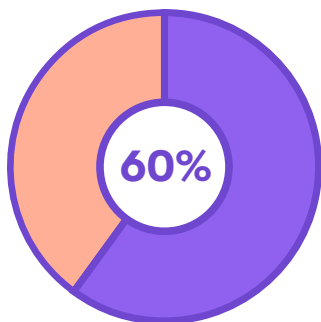
Workers want to contribute to impact and desire a greater voice at work, but they are losing faith in leadership to adopt a human-centric working model and don't feel their voice is considered.



Nearly 1 in 4 workers place “having my voice be heard” higher than training as what they want most from their employers



Only 1 in 10 employees strongly agree that their voice is heard.













60% of employees believe the model of leadership will remain the same or become less human centric.

The pandemic and shift to remote work resulted in many organizations doubling down on systems and technology as a potential solution for greater inclusion. This has not proven effective.

Despite new systems introduced during the pandemic, workers feel they are losing their voice within the workplace.

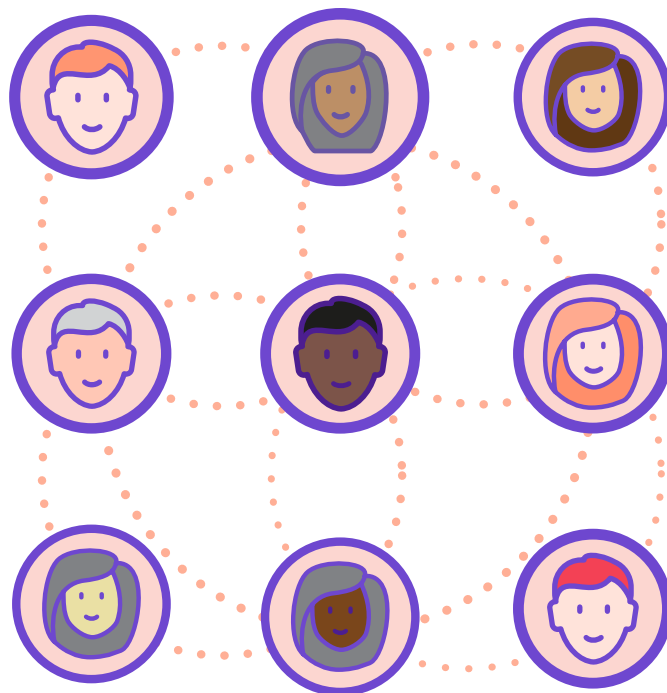
	My voice within my organization is the same or less significant since the pandemic:
Denmark 	80.5%
Germany 	80.4%
Finland 	82.2%
Norway 	80%
Sweden 	78.2%
United States 	80%
United Kingdom 	77.6%

Across industries, most workers don't feel heard. Many feel strategic decision making and collaboration is worsening, and there seems to be little belief in this changing for the better.

	My voice within my organization is the same or less significant since the pandemic.	We have not changed how we collaborate to inform strategic decisions or it has gotten worse.	I feel my leadership won't change or will become even less human centric.
 Charity	87%	67%	53%
 Public sector	70%	67%	72%
 Consulting	74%	37%	51%
 Education	82%	50%	58%
 FSI	76%	39%	60%
 Healthcare	81%	43%	59%
 Manufacturing	80%	47%	58%
 Retail	84%	53%	58%
 Science & Pharma	79%	48%	61%
 Technology	81%	44%	60%

Top-down hierarchies don't work in today's hybrid and purpose-led world of work. Soon everyone will be involved in making and shaping decisions that impact them, which requires a new model of collaborative leadership that is strong in transparency, empathy, and inclusivity. Leaders must become more adaptive themselves in order to build adaptive businesses founded on mindsets that center experimentation and innovation. This shift in mindset will then help create the supportive environment needed for wider collaborative practices.

Organizations that ensure human centrality sits at the heart of working practices will become the most sought-after workplaces. Embracing a listen-learn-and-adapt approach with methods for different kinds of people to meaningfully contribute to strategic decision making will result in agile businesses and engaged workforces.





COLLABORATION IS AN ASSET
that should be fueled through
learning & development

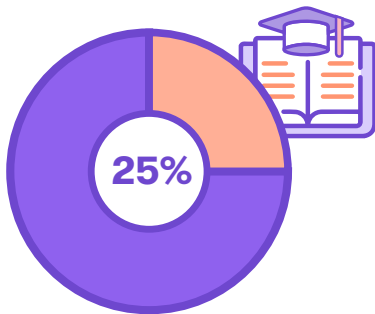
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COLLABORATION IS AN ASSET THAT SHOULD BE FUELED THROUGH LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

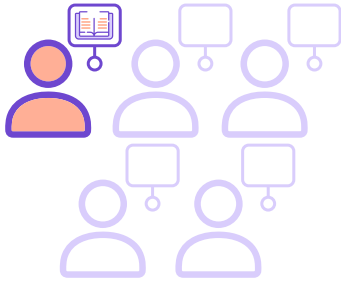
Collaboration is clearly the key to future resilience and organizational adaptability. Equipping the workforce with enhanced skills for collaboration is a tremendous opportunity for learning and development.

As collaboration moves to the forefront, L&D must embrace collaborative learning both as a systematic approach and a means to equip workers for collaborative ways of working.

According to a [2021 Deloitte study](#), 72% of executives said that the ability of their people to adapt, reskill, and assume new roles was one of the most important factors in their ability to navigate future disruptions. However, workers have a different perception.



Only 25% of employees strongly agree that they are learning enough to progress at their jobs







Less than 1 in 5 are receiving training relative to the future of work












Despite new systems since the pandemic, workers feel they are losing their voice within the workplace.

Charity	33.33%
Civil Service/Government	21.69%
Consulting	28.07%
Creative arts	41.94%
Education	28.29%
Financial Services & Insurance	30.74%
Healthcare	30.07%
Hospitality	26.32%
Legal	18.18%
Manufacturing	25%
Media	22.73%
Retail	24.34%
Science & Pharma	32.54%
Technology	25.22%
Telecommunications	35.59%

Working across silos is still a newer way of working in most sectors. Investing in interdepartmental training, specifically to foster wide collaboration capabilities, is something many workers across countries and industries feel is important.

		We do not have development focused on interdepartmental collaboration, but we should.
Denmark		34.1%
Germany		42.2%
Finland		53.6%
Norway		33.3%
Sweden		37.5%
United States		35.2%
United Kingdom		37.5%

We do not have development focused on interdepartmental collaboration, but we should.

 Charity	26.67%
 Public Sector	37.35%
 Consulting	22.81%
 Education	33.86%
 Financial Services & Insurance	42.05%
 Healthcare	36.01%
 Legal	38.64%
 Manufacturing	43.06%
 Retail	34.21%
 Science & Pharma	39.68%
 Technology	38.84%



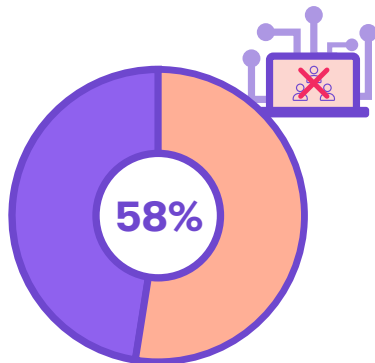
TECHNOLOGY
should empower collaboration

5

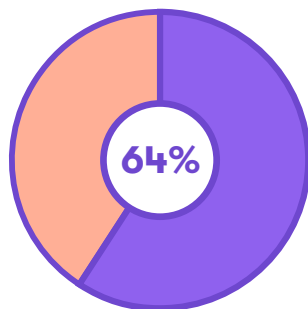
TECHNOLOGY SHOULD EMPOWER COLLABORATION

Technology must equip collaborative work to bring more people to the table and enable them to contribute in ways that work for them while AI will identify key topics to support enhanced collaboration. This will lead to a more inclusive, agile, and informed working environment.

But we aren't there yet












58% of workers haven't had new technology rolled out to help with collaboration














Of those who have, 64% cannot remember the name of the technology implemented



Just under 1 in 3 have found the technology very helpful for collaboration

	I have not had new technology rolled out to support greater collaboration since the pandemic.
 Healthcare	63%
 Retail	63%
 Science & Pharma	58%
 Manufacturing	58%
 Technology	55%
 Charity	53%
 Public sector	53%
 Legal	43%
 Media	45%

Of those surveyed who said that they have had collaboration-focused technology implemented in the last 18 months, it was surprising how few deemed it useful. A quarter of Charity and Legal employees found new technologies very helpful, but only 18% of the tech sector agree.

 Legal	27%
 Charity	25%
 Civil service	18%
 Technology	18%
 Consulting, Creative & Education:	16%
 Telecommunications	16%
 Manufacturing	12%
 Media	11%
 Healthcare, Hospitality & Retail	9%
 Science & Pharmacology	8%
 Financial	7%

In recent years, technology has been promoted as an answer to worker empowerment. However, according to workers, tech introduced to their workplaces seems geared more toward work that can be done independently. We need to change our perspectives on how we use technology and move beyond traditional ideas about how work gets done. We should put workers at the center and develop more methods and supportive tools for both synchronous and asynchronous work.





CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, there have been an abundance of reports that focus on the state of employee engagement, purpose, leadership, and transformation. Our study has arrived at similar conclusions, specifically that workers are demanding more meaning, impact, and improved inclusion. However, our study has also illuminated the importance and role of collaboration in shaping the future of work and employee engagement. With this new viewpoint, we are hopeful that organizations can take practical steps to address this need in order to make Collaborative Impact a driving force for transformation and greater engagement.

Here is a **list of the top 5 aspects** organizations should explore as they begin their quest for greater Collaborative Impact:

1. We must design a new way of working for collaboration to thrive.

Many of today's work and management practices are counterproductive and destructive for collaboration. We need to evolve to a working environment where we value and strengthen our unique capabilities as human beings, specifically our ability to collaborate at work.

Currently workers inhabit narrow roles within overly structured reporting practices. This is causing workers to focus exclusively on their own performance, rather than team-centric collaboration. Structures and systems should support collaboration which is an inherently different management practice than where we are today.

As we move into the future, leadership will need to shift their mindset from structure and control to one of designed collaboration which embraces both synchronous and asynchronous work in a dynamic and fluid environment.

This requires a commitment to make strategy development, business transformation, and daily working practices center on collaboration first with an openness to how and where the work takes place. **Collaboration is natural for humans, and we must shed our overly forced and structured ways of working. The workforce is asking and counting on it.**

2. Determining and living purpose and aligning for impact are mission critical, but they rely on collaboration.

As we've learned, purpose and impact aren't debateable—leaders must embed it in the very fabric of an organization and how it breathes. Today, employee engagement, customer value, company reputation, and stakeholder relations all are all leaning on purpose and impact. But how this gets determined and made into part of the everyday is still new territory for most.

Clarifying an organizational purpose—and living it out to make a positive societal impact—is not something that leaders can or should do alone. Determining a purpose requires deep engagement from everyone and living it to its impact certainly requires the contribution of every worker. These discussions and working time must be considered as important as every other aspect of work with the process kept alive and visible in everyday work and employee development as well.

3. The human centric organization values individual voices and prioritises building relational value.

In many traditional organizations, leaders might say they value employees' opinions, but their actions tell a different story. The workers with the most important and relevant information are often unheard so they work with their heads down. This means whole organizations are operating without the benefit of vital perspectives and knowledge. Invitational leadership is a dynamic shift where leaders integrate and learn from multiple different perspectives in order to inform sense making. By inviting workers into dialog, it ensures that decision makers have the information needed to lead, and also results in an engaged workforce.

Human centricity is relational at its core, yet the world of work has placed less value on developing relationships as a core strength. Transformation is paving the way to a future where AI takes on the burden of repetitive tasks. As humans shift focus to the more complex issues and use more creative thinking, we now need to place more emphasis on how we enable human connections and relationships.

4. Collaboration is learned, not trained— leadership and development has a crucial role in collaboration design.

Learning happens on the job every day, in big and small ways. Workers learn and act on what is important to their roles and performance, not what is told to them in formal sessions. Change and uncertainty are also omnipresent, yet little is done to help workers become more agile. As a result, a new discipline of collaboration design has emerged in order to develop individual collaboration skills and enhanced organizational collaboration capabilities. In this new arena, L&D builds new systems and capabilities for wider collaboration across organizations, while also positioning learning as experimental and part of the everyday in order to build a workforce that is able to handle change.

In this exciting new direction, L&D listens to understand what dialogue is needed to get the best out of people, determines the frequency of collaboration, and puts the emphasis on integrating best practices and learning moments into the everyday. Collaboration becomes an organic, healthy working practice that learns and grows communally all the time.

5. Technology must shift from providing a virtual context to embracing a human one.

The way the world works today is document-centric, with dialog and collaboration taking a backseat. IT systems and management practices focus most on process and reporting which makes people part of a machine where they can't do what humans do best.

However, the icebergs are melting now that workers are starting to leave the workforce and assert their desire to work in a more human-centric environment. The future will be different as technology becomes more transparent and collaboration comes to the fore. Technology will shift from forming the structure of work to becoming a machine that works in the background. There will be a more immersive nature to work in that synchronous and asynchronous events take place seamlessly in rich and fluid environments to provide just enough structure for a more collaborative and adaptive workforce.



COLLABORATIVE IMPACT

As the world continues to transform in unexpected ways, organizations need to be ready to change alongside. We hope this survey has given you a springboard to inspire your entire organization to get involved in moving change forward.

If you're ready to go start making a change, why not give Howspace a try? You can build a free workspace for your organizational development program today.

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