



WORKPLACE COLLABORATION: KEY TO SUSTENABLE ENTERPRISE SUCCESS IN NIGERIA'S MANUFACTURING SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This study examined workplace collaboration and its relationship with enterprise success in the manufacturing sector of Nigerian economy with special emphasis on the south -south region which includes only Bayelsa and Rivers State. The data is obtained using structured questionnaires administered to an accessible population of 75 top and middle level managers within five (5) selected manufacturing organizations, recognized and registered with the manufacturers association of Nigeria (MAN) Rivers/Bayelsa State branch and operating geographically within River State in which the study was domiciled. The findings of this study “workplace collaboration” proves that the success of an organization depends on how they are able to work in team to produce a valuable product, their communication level with their customers, their relationship with other organizations to perform better and how they relate with the host community and their immediate environment. Therefore, management of the manufacturing sector in the Nigeria economy should encourage community collaboration to bridge the hostile gap between them and the environment. Social network collaboration is also critical for the formation of a broad-based followership and interdependence among all actors. Team and enterprise collaborations as well are essential for building a united workforce that ultimately results in organizational productivity.

JEL Classification

M12, M54

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern day business operations, the performance of business is strictly measured by the productivity achieved in form of profit. Productivity of business organizations can be highly fostered by division of labour and specialization in conjunction with team work, groups as well as collaboration. It is because of this reason that Hansen et al, (2004) says “when you stand alone; the chances of withstanding challenges and overcoming are low. But when there’s unity, victory is certain and overcoming challenges is possible”. Valentine, M. et al (2012) define collaboration as those behaviours that facilitate effective member interaction with team defined as a group of two or more individuals who perform some work related task, interact with one another dynamically, have a foreseeable shared future and share a common fate. In our present society, the continuity or existence of business organizations solely rely on how productive they are doing. Our enterprise culture is that of collectivity not individuality. There are evidences of disarray in industries because the pursuit for individual’s goals tends to derail the pursuit of organizational goal. This development tends to undermine total enterprise productivity. It is therefore our

intention to use this study on workplace collaboration to address the workplace disconnect. Collaboration is a process through which a group of people constructively explore their ideas to search for a solution that extend one's own limited vision.

This assertion becomes true with Bill Clinton word in (2009) which says "we all do better when we work together. Our differences do matter, but our common humanity matters more". Today, as business move at an ever increasing rate, working in isolation puts companies at a disadvantage which is why visual meetings, which engage everyone in the room are important. Collaboration leads to the innovative solution and results that business needs to succeed. Collaboration exists in diverse ways and in each of these types of collaboration, new ideas are generated and explored. However, collaboration is not just a single event or even something easy to do effectively without practice. Collaboration is a process that continues and better over time. The more a group of people collaborate, the more significant the working relationships become more comfortable and fluid, teams are better able to share and discuss ideas, which means the result will be increasingly successful, this is true with the words of Paul Farber in a lesson on direction in (2013) where he uses Senora Roy's word which says "we can accomplish more together than we would dream possible working by ourselves". Organizational productivity on the other hand is determined by a broad range of factors, some can be evaluated quantitatively, while others require a qualitative, analytical approach. When assessing productivity, it is important to fully understand each of the key drivers that impact productivity. In addition to evaluating each driver individually, it is necessary to determine how well these drivers work together and function as a whole. Changes to one drive might and probably will have effect on others. Effective assessment involves understanding how each drive contributes to overall productivity. With this, it is important for all employee of an organization to know from the very beginning the aim, mission and vision of the organization. This is done when synergy is achieved through the levels and culture of collaboration in the workplace. (Salas, et al, 2008)

It is evidently clear that lots of studies have made some contributions on employee productivity using other evolving indices but the thrust of this research is critically to evaluate strategically social and economic bonding dimension to the search for improved productivity on the parts of employees to enhance a sustainable enterprise success especially in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. The test of workplace collaboration becomes the further approach in resolving the issues of loafing and disconnect in enterprise bonding.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Collaboration means the interdependent components of performance required to effectively coordinate the performance of multiple individuals; as such, it is nested within the broader concept of team performance. According to Bryson, et al (2006) collaboration is the process through which group of people constructively explore their ideas to search for a solution that extends one's own limited vision. According to Xyrichis, et al (2008) collaboration, teamwork, formal group is the combination of people's effort, ideas, discussions put together in order to achieve organizational aim and increase productivity. According to Gradja, (2004) collaboration is a big theme in business today for a reason of

building a team oriented workforce. People thrive in an environment that frees them to collaborate. The first step to getting started is equipping each team member for robust participation. There are many ways to cultivate a collaborative environment which include: *Communication of company's expectation*: it is clear that collaboration is the minimum standard. Defining roles and responsibilities within the team is necessary. Every team member should understand their position and what is required of them. In a collaborative environment, every team member takes responsibility for good outcomes. Every member need to know that they are accountable for customer satisfaction and productivity of the organization. *Setting Team goals* - There is need to ensure concise, measurable goal are set on a quarterly basis. Getting the team to focus on goals will keep individual efforts aligned with desired outcomes. Willingness to re-evaluate goals is needed.

All goals should be published in the organization's handbook or vision book and each team member should be acquainted with this. For team members to know if they are achieving these goals, each quarter, the outcome of goals should be published to make them more focused and transparent. *Fostering a creative atmosphere* - this is done by allowing team members to question and brainstorm in a non-judgmental framework. Encouraging the team to look at obstacles as being conquerable - nurturing a "can do" company attitude. *Building Cohesion*: it is important to include every person on the team in as many large decisions as possible. Creating a means of communicating current work flows to avoid duplication of effort. Initiate daily team huddles where each team member shares what they will be accomplishing. This keeps everyone on the same playbook and enables team members to re-direct their efforts as needed. *Knowing One Another* - different personality dynamics, skill sets out and experiences are present in every team. It is worth the effort to have each member complete a simple personality profile. Share the results and openly discuss likes and dislikes with regard to communication, tasks and personal focus. It is necessary to utilize insight discovery to provide personality and work style assessment. There is also the need to print the resulting insight on each team member's nameplate. *Leverage team member strengths*: position each team member for success by assigning tasks that play to their respective strengths. Reward both individual and team accomplishments regularly. Collaboration must be consistent and purposeful, with resources dedicated to its success. There might be existence of many superheroes in an organization already; but it is important to build productivity exponentially by getting them to work as a collaborative team. (Austin, 2000)

Social network collaboration is fundamentally changing the way that businesses operate. This shift wouldn't be possible without a range of innovations that have changed the world over the last 40 years. Offices witness a versatile change in 1969 with the introduction of across data networks which were the first terminal that aided communication and makes work more easier within and outside the organization. For the past decades, traditional social network came in the form of bulletin boards, this was the first discussion system where users can connect and share messages that limits communication barrier of many organizations until the emergence of electronic mail, it reshapes the business landscape, breaking down geographic boundaries and fuelling the birth of global corporations. Most social network services are web-based and provide means for users to interact. This include instant messaging, online community where

people can share ideas, post pictures of new work especially those into art and designs for people in the same field with more knowledge to put final touches to their works. (Barnes, et al, 2010). Social network on the other hand have additional features such as creating groups that share common interests or affiliations, upload or stream live videos, and hold discussions in forums. Geo-social networking co-opts internet mapping services to organize user participation around geographic features and their attributer. These networks often act as a customer relationship management tool for companies selling products and services. Companies also use social networks for advertising in the form of banner and text ad. (Kegler et al, (2010).

Team Collaboration: Behind any creative success story, one will usually find a great team, a group of passionate people who raised each other's game. When thinking about productivity, we often focus on the individual, yet it's by optimizing team that we can truly take our projects to the next level.

Working in team as opposed to working individually, enables the developers to take advantage of the individual strength of each team collaborators as well as their combined strength. Team collaboration takes stress off individuals involved and allows for more consistent and effective work session. Team collaboration saves clients time and money, it can take place even from large distances between team members using desktop sharing, web conferencing and online presentation software solution. It allows team members to work and collaborate together in real time via the internet. This form of online team collaboration can drastically save companies time and money. (Ezzamel,1998). Using a web collaboration and web conferencing software, teams can employ the skills of experts in other states or countries for their project and collaborate together online. If remote support or remote access technologies are utilized, team members can collaborate together from across borders and oceans and work remotely on a common project document (Stevens, et al, 1994). When people work together in an atmosphere of trust and accountability towards a common goal, they put aside turf issues and politics and focus on the tasks to be done. This focus of resources overcome barriers helps to identify new opportunities and builds a momentum that leads to some major benefits which include better problem solving, greater productivity and more effective use of resources. According to Laroche, L. (2001), there is virtually no environment in which teams if done right can't have a measurable impact on the performance of the organization. Unless you have built a sense of teamwork among your employees, they will have no shared performance goals, no joint work effort, and no mutual accountability, which can increase productivity. Teamwork needs a very important tool according to Bradshaw, (2000) which is unity. Whether we are talking about a sport team, work team, school team, health care team, church team, or home base business team, it is essential that we get everyone on the bus and moving in the right direction. When a team comes together, they are able to succeed together but if unity is so important, then why are more team not more united. Why are there so few great teams and so many average and dysfunctional team? The answer is that it is easier to bring people together, agendas, egos, politics, power struggle, negativity, energy vampires, poor leadership, mismanagement, complaining, and a lack of vision, focus and purpose all prevents a team from uniting and performing at their highest level. There are hundreds of negative forces and factors that can sabotage the organization, teamwork unity and success. The good news is that unified team shows, it is

possible to overcome all the barriers. Unity happens when leaders are committed to and engaged in the process of building a united winning team. It requires focus, time and energy. Changing the mindset is essential. *Openness and candor*: the more reluctant people are to express their feeling and be honest with each other, the more likely suspicion and distrust will exist. When real teamwork is present, team members, because they basically trust each other are more open and honest with each other.

Acceptance of assignment: it might make us happier if we could choose all our work, however, it is unrealistic. Still, when real teamwork exists, team members willingly accept assignment. *Progress and result assessed*: Teamwork requires that members be result-directed as opposed to process-oriented. Their focus is on their objectives, and their activities are directed towards those goals. Periodically, under direction of a leader, the team assesses its progress. The knowledge serves to guide future team action. This includes identification of barriers and what can be done to rid the team off them.

Shared trust: to build a healthy team, members essentially trust one another and in spite of occasional conflicts, members get along well and enjoy each other's company. They cooperate and get the work done. *Involvement and participation*. There are three general types of people in the world: those who watch what others do: those who do not know or care about what is happening and those who make things happen. Teamwork requires that members be involved in their work and participate in team activities. .

Enterprise collaboration does not just exist; there is need for enterprise social software. It includes social and network modification to corporate intranets and other classic software platform used by large companies to organize the communication systems. In contrast to traditional enterprise software which imposes structure prior to use, enterprise social software tends to encourage use prior to providing structure. This enterprise software must have the functionality of linking groups or users and content together so as to achieve more than being alone. There are some specific social software tools which programmers have adapted for enterprise use, this include hypertext, wikis, micro blogging etc. enterprise collaboration facilitator, enterprise ergonomics: navigation more suited for the user and it saves more time. The collaborative operation as a whole removes some traditional boundaries of hierarchy and organizations increase interaction among themselves and customers, simplified integration with partners. (Ajayi, 2013).

Community collaboration occurs when groups or agencies come together to establish peaceful community. The community is composed of a multitude of entities such as homes, schools, places of worship, media, etc. everyone in the community is accountable for peaceful living.

Aimers, et al (2008) are of the opinion that every business organization has some complex involvements with other people, groups and organizations in society. Some of these involvements are intended and desired; others are unintentional and not desired. But the people and organizations with which a business enterprise is involved have an interest in the decisions, actions, and practices of the enterprise. For example, customers, suppliers, creditors and local communities are those affected by the profitability and economic success of the operating organization. Their supports and attitude towards the organization can equally be critical to the enterprise's success or failure. Community

participation has become a part of most business lifestyles. Studies shows that both large and small organizations, whether they are local firms or branches of national firms, tends to be active in community affairs because leaders bring knowledge and ability to civic and community matters. Much of these activities involve participation in local and regional groups (e.g. business councils and community association and round tables): advisers to schools, community groups, and collaborative. Through such activities, executives become familiar with local needs and issues and involved in finding ways for businesses and communities to cooperate. The relationship of business and community is one of mutual interdependence. Each has responsibilities to the other because each has social power to affect the other. This power responsibility equation applies to both parties and reminds that success is a matter of mutual support, rather than opposition. Organizations normally expect various types of support from local communities in which they operate if they share good relationship.

They expect to be accepted as participant in the community affairs because of the relationship, to provide community services such as a dependable water supply, police protection. Companies are encouraged to remain in a community and grow if they are able to maintain good relationship with the community. The variety of expectations that communities have with organizations if there is a good relationship between them as follows: Assistance for less advantage people in the community Support for air and water pollution control. Support for artistic and cultural activities, Employment and advancement of minorities, Assistance to urban planning and development, Support to local health-care programmes, Donation of equipment to local school system, Aid to community hospital drives, Support of local programmes for recycling, Support of local bond issues for the community improvement. (Fray et al, 2006)

3. METHODS

Analyses are carried out at the organizational level and units of measurement are selected purposively. The study adopts both the descriptive and inferential statistical as applicable under quasi-experimental scientific methods and data is generated using the cross sectional survey. The primary data is obtained using structured questionnaires administered to an accessible population of 75 top and middle level managers within five (5) selected manufacturing organizations, recognized and registered with the manufacturers association of Nigeria (MAN) Rivers/Bayelsa State branch and operating geographically within River State in which the study was domiciled. The predictor variable; workplace collaboration; is operationally measured using (i) team collaboration (ii) social networking collaboration (iii) community collaboration, and (iv) enterprise collaboration. All four variables are scaled on a five (5) point Likert scale and measured on 3 – indicators each giving a total of 12 – indicators for a summarized scale on workplace collaboration. The criterion variable; organizational productivity; is scaled on a similar five (5) point Likert scale for consistency and analytical purposes and measured on a 5 –indicator instrument which addresses organizational growth and production volume relative to members inputs.

Table 1: Cronbach Reliability Coefficients

Reliability of Study Instruments

Variables		Indicators	Alpha. Coeff.
Workplace Collaboration	Team Collaboration	3	.904
	Social Networking Collaboration	3	.918
	Community Collaboration	3	.880
	Enterprise Collaboration	3	.882
Organizational Productivity		5	.885

The Cronbach reliability for the variables is illustrated in table 1 with all variables carrying reliable values and coefficients for consistency as opined by Cronbach;s 1951 tests (Sekaran, 2003).

4. RESULTS

The results of this study shows the relationship between workplace collaboration which is tested using the four dimensions of Team, Social network, Community and enterprise brands of collaboration that manifested the respective degrees of significance in relationship as shown in the presented results below. Workplace collaboration is essentially critical as a socio-economic bonding strategy that has shown to improve commitment to enterprise drive for sustainable success. These results are empirically presented below in their respective analytical tables.

Table 2: Operational Measures of Workplace Collaboration

Descriptive Statistics on variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teamwork	75	1.00	5.00	4.0933	.82666
Network	75	1.33	5.00	4.1422	.78876
Community	75	1.33	5.00	4.1333	.75138
Enterprise	75	1.00	5.00	4.1556	.79286
Valid N (listwise)	75				

The descriptive statistics on the operational measures of workplace collaboration is illustrated in table 2. Team collaboration (Teamwork: $x > 3.0 = 4.0933$; $S < 2.0 = 0.82666$), Social network collaboration (Network: $x > 3.0 = 4.1422$; $S > 2.0 = 0.78876$), Community collaboration (Community: $x > 3.0 = 4.1333$; $S > 2.0 = 0.75138$) and Enterprise collaboration

(Enterprise: $x > 3.0 = 4.1556$; $S > 2.0 = 0.79286$). Output values show relatively high and significant agreement to the variables as well as low levels of response deviations.

Table 3: The predictor and criterion variable descriptive

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Productivity	75	1.20	5.00	4.1627	.69880
Collaboration	75	1.25	4.83	4.1311	.75389
Valid N (listwise)	75				

The descriptive statistics on the predictor variable; workplace collaboration, and the criterion variable; Organizational productivity is illustrated in table 3. Organizational productivity (productivity: $x > 3.0 = 4.1627$; $S < 2.0 = 0.69880$) and workplace collaboration (Collaboration: $x > 3.0 = 4.1311$; $S > 2.0 = 0.75389$). Output values show relatively high and significant agreement to the variables of the study as well as low levels of response deviations.

Table 4: Tests for Hypotheses

Statistical tool	Criterion	Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
Spearman's rho	Productivity	Productivity	1.000	
		Teamwork	.825**	.000
		Network	.588**	.000
		Community	.552**	.000
		Enterprise	.566**	.000

In table 4 the output results for the tests on the associations between the operational measures of the predictor variable which is workplace collaboration; team collaboration, social network collaboration, community collaboration and enterprise collaboration; and the criterion variable; organizational productivity. Team collaboration and Organizational productivity (H_{O1} : $\rho = .825$, $p < 0.05$): the tentative null statement of no significant relationship between both variables is rejected based on the rho and p value presented in table 4. Social network collaboration and Organizational productivity (H_{O2} : $\rho = .588$, $p < 0.05$): the tentative null statement of no significant relationship between both variables is rejected based on the rho and p value presented in table 4. Community collaboration and Organizational productivity (H_{O3} : $\rho = .552$, $p < 0.05$): the tentative null statement of no significant relationship between both variables is rejected based on the rho and p-value presented in table 4. Enterprise collaboration and Organizational productivity (H_{O1} :

rho = .566, $p < 0.05$): the tentative null statement of no significant relationship between both variables is rejected based on the rho and p-value presented in table 4.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the results of the study as shown in the analysis, it is obvious that the bane of entrepreneurial success in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta core geographical boundaries of Rivers and Bayelsa states has been poor collaboration on all fronts in the sector. Collaboration can be achieved at enterprise level, team level, community level as well as the social network level. These various levels of collaborations are critical for the performance of the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. It is expected that there will be improvements in the area of communication, co-operation, customers' satisfaction. In addition, this will lead to the reduction of dispute and work stoppage but create more productive workforce. The findings of this study "workplace collaboration" proves that the success of an organization depends on how they are able to work in team to produce a valuable product, their communication level with their customers, their relationship with other organizations to perform better and how they relate with the host community and their immediate environment. Therefore, management of the manufacturing sector in the Nigeria economy should encourage community collaboration to bridge the hostile gap between them and the environment.

Social network collaboration is also critical for the formation of a broad-based followership and interdependence among all actors and the team and enterprise collaborations are essential to build a united workforce that ultimately results to organizational productivity.

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