

**GURU  
GUIDE**  
with  
Vidusha and Anton

in conversation with  
**Chad Bourquin**

**4**

**HOW TO TRULY  
COLLABORATE**



# A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO THE GURU GUIDE

The 'guru guide' is an attempt to cull out decades of hard-earned expertise to be distilled into succinct, simple and practical advice.

It is NOT meant to be an exhaustive exploration of a topic: rather, pointed areas of focus which can only be discerned by a practitioner. It is not meant to be a generic set of advice: it is advice from battle-hardened professionals who have had a lifetime of experience and proven track records.

## The Guru Guide has a pre determined format:

- ✓ It aims to understand a topic/ area of focus
- ✓ It aims to give tools to help you navigate the area
- ✓ It also gives contexts and examples: so that you can customize it to suit YOU

Exploratory, intimate and insightful, the Guru Guide aims to bring to you a wealth of expertise which can only be possible through veterans whose varied and in-depth experiences offer unparalleled insights.

The brevity and simplicity is by choice, and design. Focused on Executives and Managers who want to get quick tips and techniques, who are eager to improve their craft

and trade : the Guru Guide aims to offer 'little nuggets' of advice and importantly, simple tools, which will enable practitioners to up their game and benefit from expertise which may be hard to find in a hurry.

## INTRODUCING

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**VIDUSHA  
NATHAVITHARANA**

Vidusha is currently the Destiny Architect at High5 Consultancy and Luminary Learning and the organization's founder. His areas of expertise are with strategy facilitation, HR strategy development and Leadership Training. He has conducted assignments in 15 countries regionally and consulted for the World Bank, the UN as well as some of the top corporates in Sri Lanka and the Region. He is also a member of the board of directors for Chrysalis, a social enterprise working to empower women and youth by fostering inclusive growth in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.



**ANTON  
THAYALAN**

Anton is a multi-faceted professional who has had over two decades of hands-on experience in process improvement, change management and strategic management, and currently works as the Chief Evangelist of Luminary Learning and the Transformation Therapist of High5 Consultancy. As the former AVP at HSBC DPL Anton won accolades for his superlative work there: and won the prestigious HSBC Group Service – Global Talent Management Member two years in a row. Anton currently works as a consultant focusing on efficiency and productivity improvement and process optimization for local and regional clients.

## INTRODUCING CHAD BOURQUIN

Chad is a hell of a lot more than the exuberant chiseled good looks with an evergreen boyish grin topped off with viel of golden locks falling across his face.... That's actually what gets your attention, until he opens his mouth.... Then you realize, he is possibly one of the most articulate young people you will ever meet: and that he almost never talks without careful consideration of the words that come out his mouth.

Wisdom and weighed action is possibly not what you would generally associate with a 'Rock Star', which is possibly why we love Chad so much - because he is an iconoclast in every sense.

A deeply devoted husband and parent, an absolutely entertaining and engrossing entertainer, a motivational speaker, and also, a life coach, in possession of the ability to mix wisdom and six strings equally effortlessly, Chad is possibly one of the rare combinations humanity produces not so often...

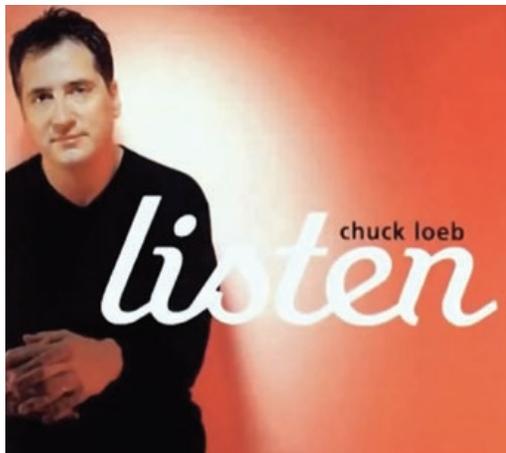
We talked to Chad first on our 18 hour webinar marathon : and were immediately wrapped: and we have remained friends since. Considering the multitude of people Chad works with on an almost daily basis, who better than him to talk about collaboration with, we thought !



# A LITTLE BACKSTORY: HIGH5'S NAME AND ETHOS WAS INSPIRED BY MUSIC...

**Fun Fact :** High5, Luminary Learning's parent company was actually inspired by a piece of music. High5 by Chuck Loeb was a track that was playing on Jazz FM when Vidusha was brainstorming for a name: and the name stuck: and High5 it was !

**Apart from the name:** High5 and Luminary also borrow quite a lot from music : the Pavarotti and Friends series of concerts where Pavarotti collaborated with such varying Artists ranging from The Spice Girls to BB King was the inspiration for the business model: as well as the huge amount of collaborations Luminary does...



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO CHUCK LOEB'S TRACK HIGH5](#)



Bryan Adams & Luciano Pavarotti - 'O Sole Mio'

51,350,083 views · Oct 10, 2009

297K 10K SHARE SAVE ...

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH PAVAROTTI AND BRYAN ADAMS SING O SOLE MIC](#)



[ONE OF THE FIRST COLLABORATIONS OF ITS KIND TOOK PLACE WHEN YEHUDI MENUHIN AND RAVI SHANKAR GOT TOGETHER.... CLICK HERE TO WATCH THEIR LEGENDARY PERFORMANCE](#)

# MUSICIANS SEEM TO COLLABORATE EFFORTLESSLY : WHY ?

I guess it's because we have something in common : music. And also, possibly more importantly, it is something we generally love more than we love ourselves...

Don't be fooled by the wonderful collaborations you see: for each one that works out there are many that didn't : as with anything else. But,... At least the honest desire to collaborate comes from a place where we want to produce something bigger than ourselves. Our ego is not as important as the piece of music we are about to co-create. Unless you come from that place - there really is no collaborating...

Musicians who collaborate generally are complimentary in their skill sets: but unique as well. Each musician generally has a 'style' and a 'feel' all their own: and they bring it with them when they collaborate : and the end result is something either one cannot do by themselves. It helps them grow musically too: and it also helps them reach audiences that they would generally not be able to...

So, why not collaborate huh ?



# **DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT SOMEONE 'STEALING' YOUR IDEAS WHEN YOU COLLABORATE?**

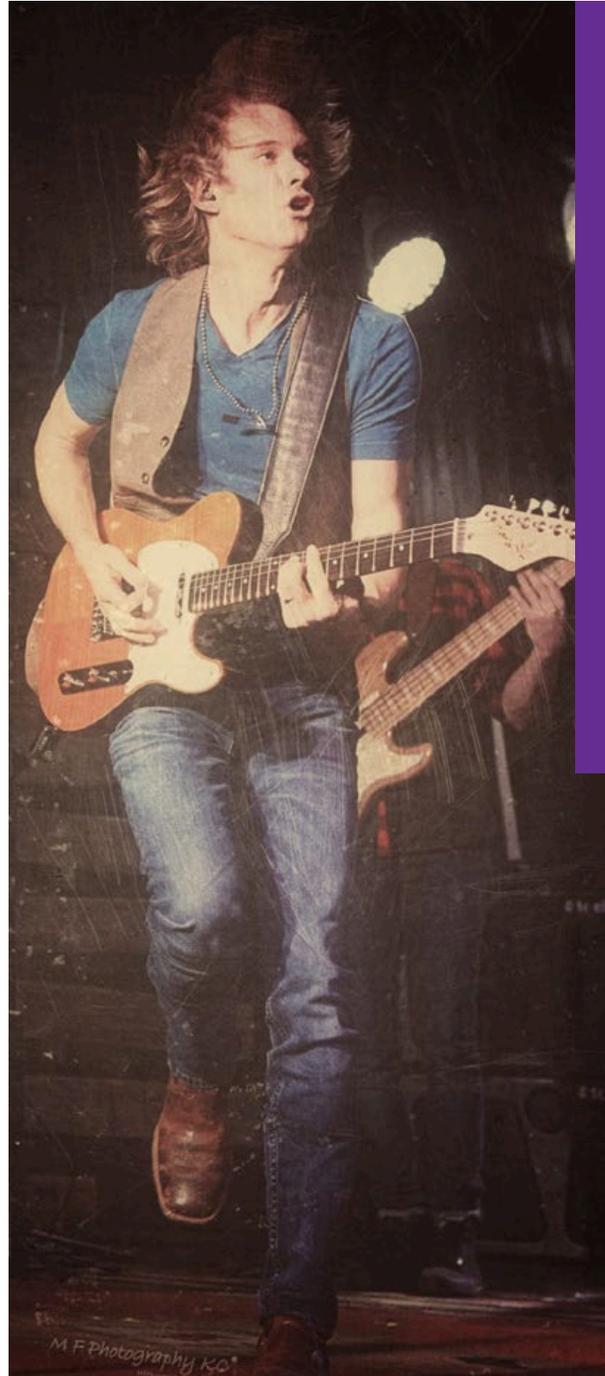
I guess that's a possibility: but how can you really steal an idea?

An idea itself is worthless isn't it? It's what you DO with that idea that really matters. Two people can have exactly the same idea - but end up with two very different outputs using the same stimulus idea. Your 'twist' on the idea is what is truly yours: and no one can really steal that, isn't it ?

See: you can't collaborate from a place of fear and doubt. You never give your best if you are constantly looking over your shoulder. So, why even start if you can trust who you are going to collaborate with?

Collaboration is rooted in trust. In confidence: both in yourself and also whom you collaborate with. Insecurities give way to a lot of negativity that doesn't help the collaborative or creative process...

So, if you think someone is going to steal your ideas : collaboration is not for you...



# WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT COLLABORATION ?



Before anything else you must have a shared vision or purpose to collaborate. The strength of that direction is what makes everything else possible - and also, becomes the bind that makes the collaborative process last until the end. If you don't have something all parties in the collaboration truly want and see as sacrosanct then, everything else will become problems: but, if this is sacred - then, we find solutions around any problem we may come (and there are ALWAYS problems to overcome !)



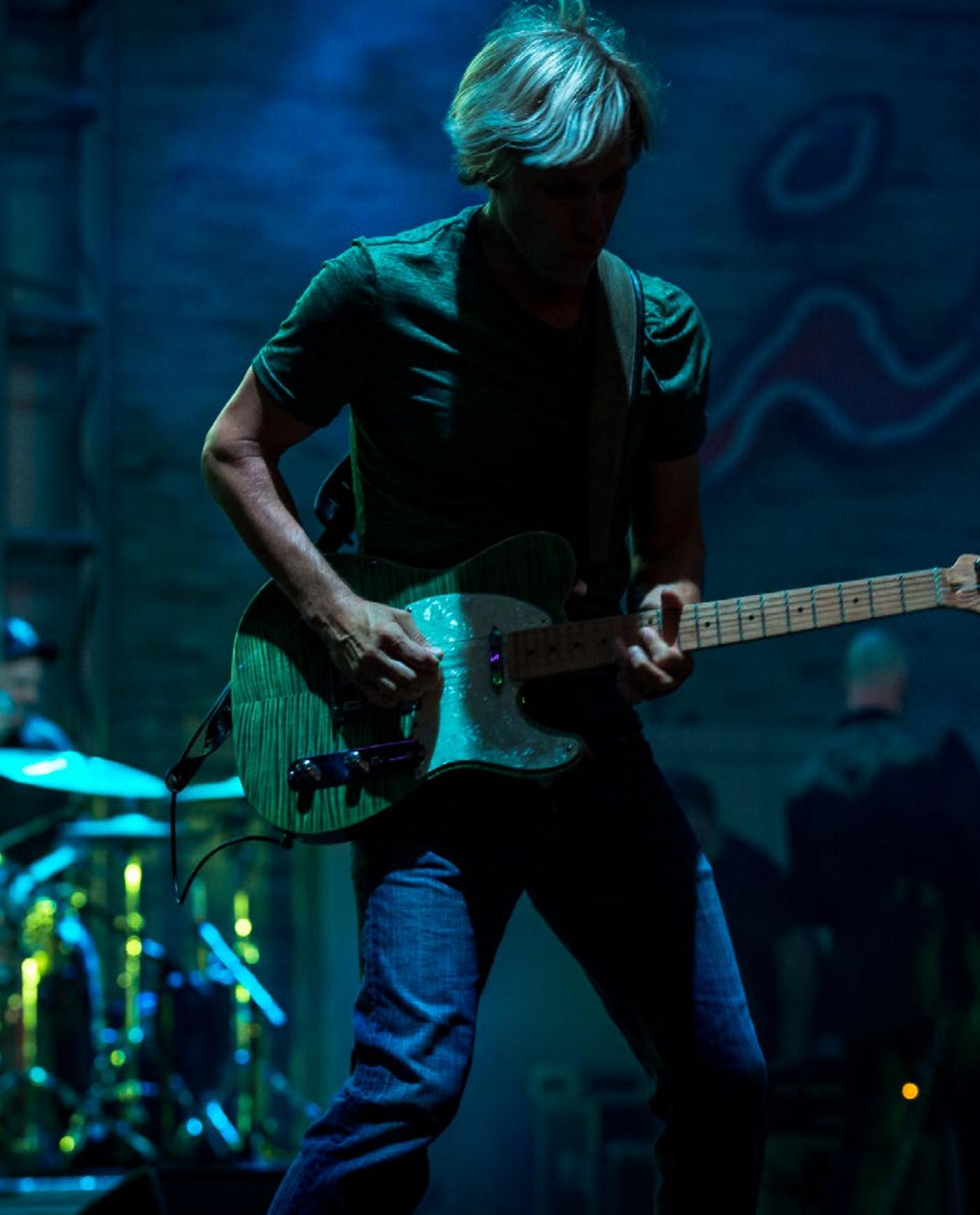
You must also have complementary skills to collaborate. It is rare to see someone who has no skill in something and someone who is a maestro collaborating. This does NOT mean that you are equally 'popular' or 'senior' - it just means you need to bring SKILLS to the table. Without skills that are complimentary there really isn't collaboration: it is more a commercial partnership. We call this 'having the right vibe' between the collaborators !



There must be mutual RESPECT and TRUST to collaborate. You must value each other's contributions: and not have ego based comparisons about who does more or whose name comes in front of whom. As the age old saying goes 'it's amazing how much you can achieve when no one is worried about who gets the credit'. Notice 'no one cares about the credit: EVERYONE in the collaborative process needs to believe in this ethos: otherwise the collaboration is doomed to fail.



I also think an element of FUN is critical for a good collaboration. The entire PROCESS should be fun. It must flow. It must evolve, it must grow: and for all this to be possible, it must not be laboured: it must 'happen.' You can't force creativity: nor can you force collaboration: and making it fun makes the labor that you put into it something that comes willingly and naturally. Having fun also means that you are not exhausted at the end of it all: and you look forward to doing it all over again the next day - and the next - and the next - until it's done...



# ETHOS 1 : THE PIECE OF WORK IS SACROSANCT

This really IS the starting point. A piece of work you truly believe in: are passionate about: excited about: LOVE to work on: and put above all else...

Above your egos...

Above your prides...

Above your insecurities...

Above anything - actually...

If those collaborating truly believe in the project you start working on it with the same zeal and enthusiasm that it becomes infectious : and self-sustaining. No one has to 'prod' the other to 'kick in': it happens automatically. You COMPLIMENT each other - and not 'compete' with each other. You add to the whole - not take away from it. You end up making something so great that you are all PROUD of the end product and have a huge sense of accomplishment...

Start with something that really gets you excited: and your collaborators equally excited about....

Don't see that 'spark'? : well then, don't start !



# TOOL 1: SCOPING

Something that all project managers will tell you to do once the initial 'idea' is established is to get a scope document in place: and this is sound advice. Any project needs to get a proper scope: and needs boundaries to work within...

Though creative collaborative projects are more free flowing, even they have scopes: possibly the only difference is that they are not as tightly defined as business projects - and timelines tend to be a bit more flexible.

## How to Write a Scope of Work Document

What

### ► Scope of Work (SOW)

An agreement on the Work to be performed.

### ► Includes:

- Deliverables / Products / Results
- Time line
- Milestones
- Reports

### ► Template: \*ProjectManago.com Template

1. Glossary
2. Problem statement
3. Goals
4. Objectives / Deliverables
5. Administration
6. Timeline

### ~~Best~~ <sup>MUST</sup> Practices:

#### 1. Be Specific

- What Terms Mean
- Who does what by when

⊗ Traps: Confusion, Miscommunication, Disputes.

#### 2. Use Visuals

- What will it look like in the end.
- What will people be able to do in the end.
- Picture is Worth a Thousand Words.

⊗ Traps: Misinterpretations.

#### 3. Get Sign Offs

- Ensure Authorized Approvers Sign Off.
- Sign Off on Critical Milestones + Deliverables.

⊗ Traps: Selective Amnesia, Disputes, Rework.

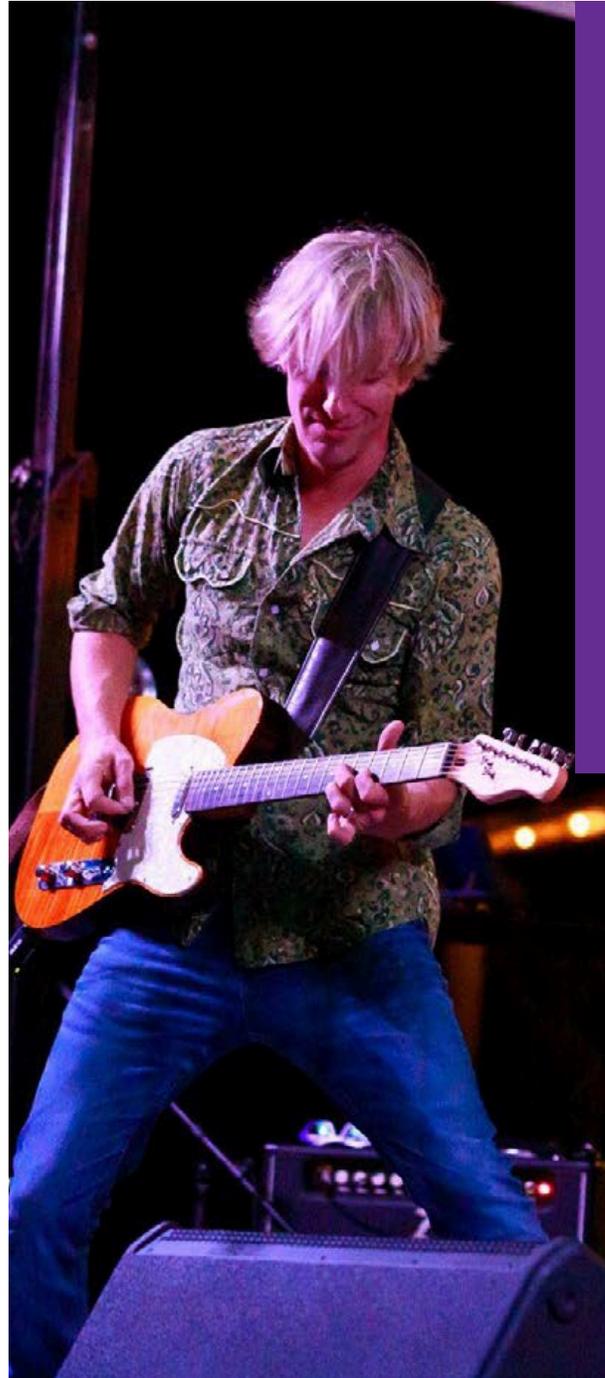
THE KEY IS THIS : DON'T LOOK AT A SCOPE AS SOMETHING 'CAST IN STONE' IN A COLLABORATION. HAVE THE BASICS PEGGED - SO THAT THE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT DOESN'T GO ALL OVER THE PLACE : BUT BUILD IN ENOUGH 'LAX' TO ENABLE FREEDOM TO EVOLVE BEYOND THE SCOPE IF REQUIRED. STRUCTURE AND FLEXIBILITY CAN BE JUXTAPOSED : AND ALSO, COMPLIMENTARY - NOT NECESSARILY CONTRADICTORY. THE STRUCTURE HELPS PUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE FIRM IN PLACE : AND THE FLEXIBILITY CAN BE BUILT INTO THE STRUCTURE ITSELF TO ALLOW THE CREATIVE PROCESS TO TAKE PLACE UNOBSTRUCTED.

## **ETHOS 2: ANY PROBLEM CAN BE SURMOUNTED**

You have to truly believe that absolutely any problem that will come up can be 'sorted out.' You will naturally face many problems during a collaborative project : and they will come in many forms. Personality and related issues are common: as are different ways and methods of arriving at the pre agreed destination. Resource limitations are also common problems - as are time related challenges.

The simple belief that if there is a problem there must be a solution is critical for collaborative projects. IF you get bogged down in the problem and can't go beyond it, projects are left half done: which is a huge waste of time and effort contributed by all who collaborate.

This is where mutual trust and respect comes in. You must be able to talk things out: and for that you must be willing to REALLY LISTEN first. Problem solving in collaborative efforts begin with the innate wanting to really understand the other party: and be willing to see things their way: and arguing about the concept or the solution or the method rather arguing with the person.... Being able to differentiate the 'idea' from the 'person' is critical.

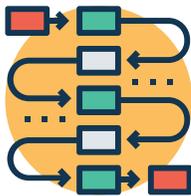


## TOOL 2: BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a super way to solve problems that come up during collaborations. The key principle behind brainstorming is to be able to collate ideas, and decide on which is best without 'arguing' about it... Arguments tend to be detrimental to a collaborative process : and often take away from it. The difference between an argument and a brainstorm is to put finding a solution at the fore : and talk around it - rather than adversarially. Finding a solution or multiple solutions is far more important than 'proving a point' and being dogmatic about your 'position.'

Having an open mind is critical.

There are many ways of brainstorming : [click here](#) to look at some of the most used ways such as :



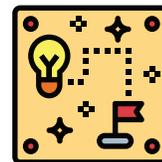
**A.**  
FLOW CHARTS



**B.**  
STARBURSTING



**C.**  
AFFINITY  
DIAGRAMS



**D.**  
CONCEPT MAPS

## **ETHOS 3: THE 'HOW' CAN EVOLVE**

Something to always bear in mind is that the WHAT is generally fixed: but the HOW usually evolves. Being able to crystallize what you want to achieve and allow how to achieve it evolve is actually at the heart of a collaborative process. After all, if you already know EXACTLY how to go about it, why collaborate in the first place ?

Getting to HOW is actually the fun part of collaborating. Different ideas will be pooled together, and you will look at each one collectively and then - and only then - decide on the best way forward. Often you will try out several methods before deciding on exactly what to do: and allowing yourselves to become immersed in the different solutions helps each person in the collaborative process grow: and also, collectively own the solution.

Don't be in a hurry to arrive at the end result: unless there are definitive and critical timelines to meet. Allow yourselves the freedom to experiment and explore: and chances are the end product will be that much better because of it.

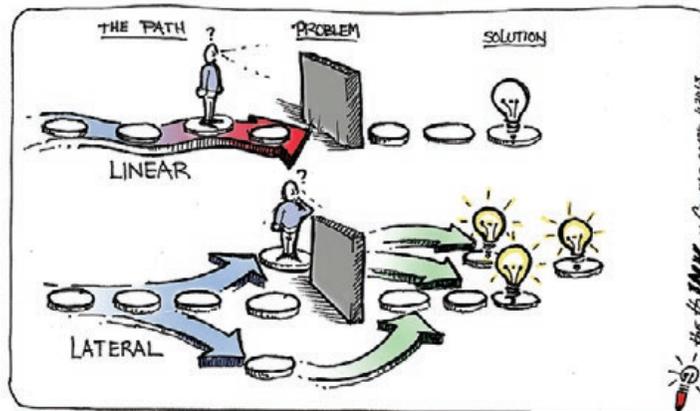


## TOOL 3: LATERAL THINKING

Dr. Edward De Bono first coined 'lateral thinking' as an alternative to the general 'logic based' thinking processes - which is possibly a breakthrough in giving a tool for 'non creative types' to become creative too...

At the heart of lateral thinking is to look at alternatives and multiple angles around an issue: rather than a 'one best way through the problem.' Lateral thinking generally produces more than one possible solution : which you can then either vote for or collectively agree on which is best.

Lateral Thinking also, importantly, enables you to challenge the traditional paradigms and assumptions you make : so as to force creativity into the thinking process.



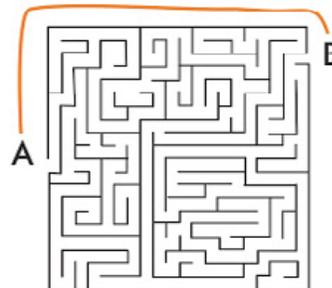
### Traditional Logic

Making assumptions  
of what the rules are



### Lateral Thinking

Disregarding  
'implied' rules



[Click here to learn more about lateral thinking and its applications..](#)

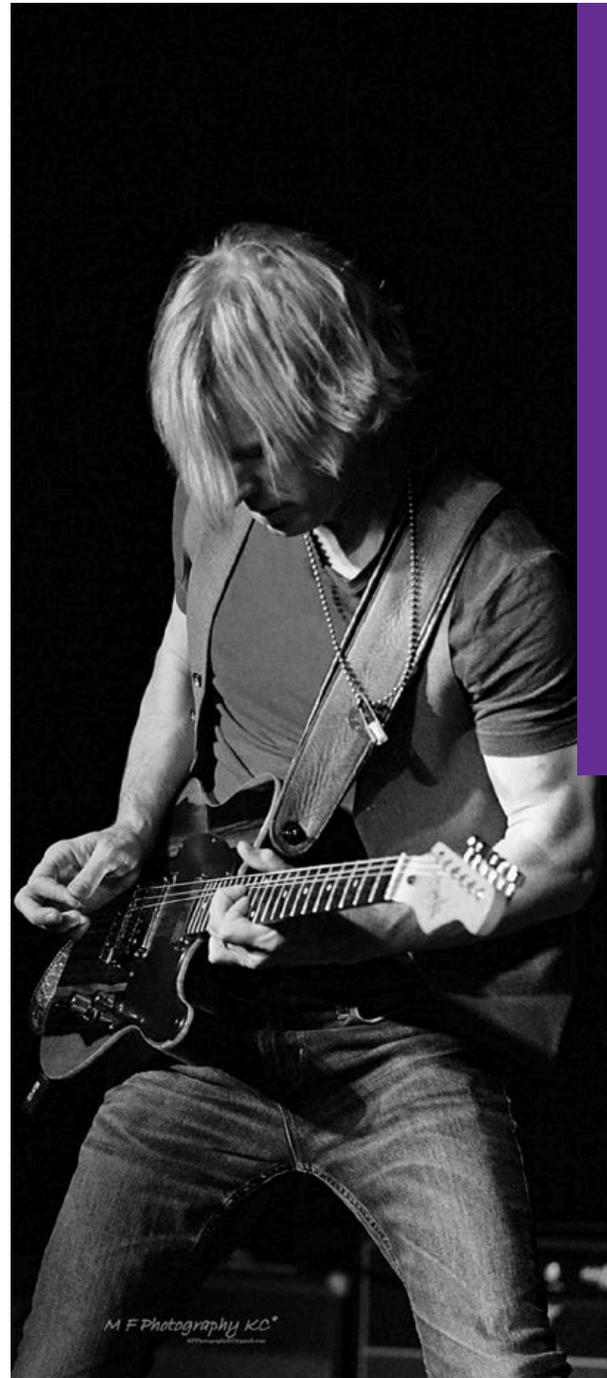
## **ETHOS 4: YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO HAVE FUN WITH THIS...**

See : you really do NEED to have FUN to collaborate effectively.

Coming up with a concept, working towards a solution and also, seeing the solution through can, and will, be rather hard work: what takes the edge off the work you do is the fun you have it with.

Business collaborations and musical collaborations are different: I understand: thankfully, I DO sit on both sides of the fence all the time. So, trust me when I say it IS possible to have fun even in a hard-nosed business project...

The key to it is this: to allow a free flow of both ideas and work methods to come through : and also, to 'muck around' a little bit. Remember, there is a difference between having fun and not being serious about what you are doing: and often we confuse the two. You can be DEAD serious about something - and yet, have fun doing it. Enjoying the process is a part of having fun, and truly enjoying each other's company is another. You don't need to be foolhardy about it: but having fun is essential...



## TOOL 4: JAMMING

Something we often do in music is to just 'jam'

Jamming is when we just play: either alone or preferably with others whom we collaborate with, and allow the 'rhythm' to take over. We play whatever comes to our mind: as long as it is keeping to the beat : and we then, when we feel like it, change the tempo, throw in arbitrary lyrics, solos and sometimes: 'spar' with each other as well...

Jamming sessions generally get 'creative juices flowing' and also, help break deadlocks and unleash new ideas...

WHY NOT 'JAM' IDEAS :  
WITHOUT A PLAY BOOK  
OR RULE BOOK.  
WHY NOT ALLOW A FREE  
FLOW OF EVEN ABSURD  
IDEAS TO  
COME : AND SEE WHAT  
HAPPENS ?



"The Thrill Is Gone" BB King, Eric Clapton, Robert Cray, Jimmi Vaughn (HD)

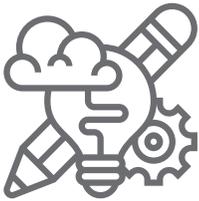
5,493,583 views • Mar 13, 2017

👍 48K 💬 2.1K ➦ SHARE ⚙️ SAVE ...

CLICK HERE TO SEE THE LATE GREAT BB KING, ERIC CLAPTON AND OTHERS 'JAM' AT CROSS ROADS

# SOME FINAL TIPS

## CREATIVE WILL POWER TANK



We all start with a full tank each day. It's important to recognize that and work to schedule the collaboration time while there is still creative fuel in the tank. Otherwise, fatigue will eventually set in and it will be more difficult to let the ideas flow. In addition, finding a morning routine that gets you centered the very first thing will also add fuel to the creative tank. Starting your day looking at your phone will send you the opposite direction.

## TRUST THE PROCESS



If we truly trust the process, we will let go of our own need to believe our personal path to a successful collaboration is the only right way. The best collaborations can begin to take on the resemblance of a dance where people ebb and flow towards the goal. At first it can feel uncoordinated as each collaborator is figuring out how to communicate with the other. But this is the magic. If we trust the process, eventually our movements will begin to align as our dance steps begin to move in concert with each other towards the goal.



## BE A MASTER ENCOURAGER:

Be a master encourager: Collaborating can make us extremely vulnerable. We think, “what if I say the wrong thing, what if I play the wrong notes, what if I...” We must first let go of the “what ifs” ourselves. But if you really want to take it to the next level, become the team member that finds reasons to encourage other team members in their collaboration. This will foster a safe place for people to express their ideas whether good, bad or ugly and know that the team will still value them no matter what the idea. And this is how you create a collaborative masterpiece. Celebrate the Wins and know when to break: If projects are longer in nature, celebrating the wins can help motivate the players to keep going until the project is finished. In addition, knowing when to take a break is just as important. There is story after story of the key missing piece of a song “magically” appearing during a bathroom break. Words, like “it just came to me” have been repeated for years about this occurrence. A physical break causes a mental break, which can be the prime catalyst to letting go just enough to let the answer in.

# BIG TIME

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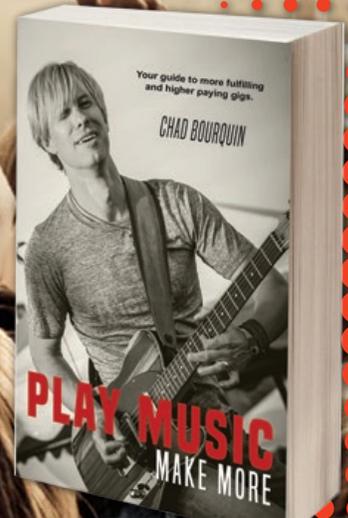


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