

# Effective Collaboration

*Jay Barber*



An essay contribution to  
*Conversation 2015*

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**Jay A. Barber**

M.J. Murdock Trust

Dr. Jay A. Barber, Jr. is President Emeritus of Warner Pacific College in Portland, Oregon, after retiring following a twelve year stint as president.

Dr. Barber has a long-term association with Warner Pacific College. In 1964 he received his baccalaureate degree from the college and later served on the Board of Trustees. Jay received his master's degree from the University of San Francisco and the Doctor of Laws Degree (Hon.) from Anderson University. Jay also served as senior pastor of the Red Bluff, California First Church of God for 16 years, during those years Jay also served two terms as the mayor.

In 1981 he came to the administrative staff of Warner Pacific College, serving for eight years as Vice President for College Advancement and, then, as Executive Vice President. Barber returned to the college as president in 1996 to deal with a troubled institution that was deeply in debt and faced censure from the regional accrediting body. After 12 years of leadership of the institution the college for the first time in its history was debt free, had grown from 325 students to more than 1500 and was in good standing with the accrediting body.

Prior to returning to the College as president in 1996 he served as the Director of the Oregon Health Sciences University Foundation, overseeing fund raising programs for the Foundation, the largest university foundation in Oregon, including its three schools and a number of research programs. Barber directed the development of corporate, foundation and major gifts fund raising programs as well as the oversight of estate planning, planned giving

Active in the community, Barber served as a director for 15 years and 2 years as chair of the Board of Directors of Mercy Corps, a relief and disaster organization based in Portland. In addition he served as chair of the Responder Life Board of Directors, a Portland based not-for-profit serving the needs of first responders and their families. In 2008 Barber was appointed the first Senior Fellow with the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Vancouver, WA. Recently Jay was elected to a second four-year term on the Seaside, OR City Council where Jay and his wife Jan currently reside.

Barber recently completed a 14 month role as the Interim Teaching Pastor for the 3,000 member Sunset Presbyterian Church in Beaverton, Oregon.

Barber currently provides consultation services to a wide range of not-for-profit organizations in the Northwest assisting with strategic planning, fund raising strategies, board development, staff recruitment and coaching with new and emerging leaders. His special interest is in providing coaching with CEOs, Presidents and Executive Directors of not-for-profit organizations based on his 40 years of experience in those challenging roles.



## Effective Collaboration

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What are the vital characteristics of effective collaboration and how can they become the norm rather than the exception? Why is concerted action a much more difficult path for organizations? We know collaboration as the action of working with someone to produce or create something. In our culture today we have many examples of the amazing results when people work together to achieve a vision, goal or project. Many of these examples have only come about because of the willingness of workers and leaders to work together toward a common end: to collaborate.

### Some examples:

**The International Space Station:** The Station is a partnership between 15 nations. The ISS is a \$100 billion research laboratory, weighing 460 tons, orbiting 240 miles above the earth. The Station is staffed by rotating crews of Russian cosmonauts and American astronauts. The staff is shuttled to and from the Station by a Soyuz rocket and docking space craft (Russian) and most of the technology for maintaining the Station in orbit since November 2000 has been developed in the United States.

Speaking different languages and coming from vastly different cultures the rotating crews have worked and collaborated together to accomplish scientific research, space walks to accomplish repairs to the Station and to test the impact on the human body of prolonged existence in space. This has taken place even in times when the two governments (US and Russian) have been in significant political conflict in places around the world (Syria, Ukraine etc.).

This is an excellent example of effective COLLABORATION.

**Medical Research:** There are many examples of significant medical breakthroughs that would not have been possible without the dedicated work of research scientists who were less concerned about being recognized for amazing cures and more concerned about collaborating with other scientists to cut the time and effort short toward saving and changing lives. The Polio vaccine, the eradication of small pox and a cure for AIDS/HIV are but a few examples.

An example that I was personally involved with was the discovery of Gleevec by Dr. Brian Druker, now the head of the OHSU Knight Cancer Center in Portland, Oregon. Druker and

his colleagues discovered that the drug, which was discovered in the 1950s by researcher Peter Nowell and David Hungerford, had an almost 100% cure rate on myelogenous leukemia. After 60 months of the test group taking the “by mouth” treatment there was a 98% cure of the leukemia. In addition, many other effective treatments came out of the research and treatment.

The point is that all of this happened as researchers, scientists, and research institutions—as well as fundraisers who helped underwrite the early research (that’s where I came in!)—collaborated to bring about this major discovery. COLLABORATION MADE IT HAPPEN!

**In Government and Politics:** In the last many years, examples of effective collaboration in national politics have been few and far between. With a deeply divided Senate and House and a President with a very different agenda, collaboration has been nearly impossible. In a time of widespread frustration with “politics-as-usual,” collaboration represents a more promising way forward if any progress is going to be made on the political front.

In *Collaboration and the Ecology of Democracy*, authors Daniel Kemmis and Matthew McKinney write that “[w]hat has moved so many people to take on this hard work of collaboration has been the widespread perception that, in all too many cases, the existing governing framework was proving itself incapable of getting the job done. To put it bluntly, the problems that people expected the government to solve were not getting solved.”

**In the Not-for-Profit Arena:** So the not-for-profit community has begun to show the way in communities all across the nation on how to address difficult issues...and through collaboration bring about change. Not only is our government not going to solve the problems in our culture, many leaders have concluded that it has not been appropriate to expect government to play that role.

In our neighborhoods and in whole communities groups are collaborating to bring about dialogue, change, and long-term culture shift.

**Some examples:**

- **Shared Hope International (SHI):** This organization is based in Vancouver, Washington with offices in Washington, DC and is led by former Congresswoman Linda Smith. During a trip to India 16 years ago she was appalled to see the pronounced volume of human sex trafficking taking place there, especially involving children in some cases as young as 10 years old.

With the help of some of her early supporters she established SHI and started to bring about rescue for many of these children and young people by establishing “safe houses”



in collaboration with an organization based in India and Nepal (Teen Challenge). This effort would not have been successful, now 16 years later, without collaboration.

Congresswoman Smith then became aware of the enormity of this very same problem in the United States. Three years ago, SHI established the “Protected Innocence Initiative” with the vision of changing the laws in all 50 states which often criminalized the trafficked “victim” and did little to punish the “buyer” or the “trafficker.” This effort was pursued in collaboration with the National Association of Attorneys General.

Recognizing the need for an “army” of groups that are working on this issue all across the country to begin to collaborate, SHI has organized for the last three years a gathering of these groups in Washington, DC to testify before congress and begin to link arms to bring justice and restoration. The JUST Conference is bringing nearly a hundred groups together to collaborate and mobilize groups that are involved in delivery, investigation, prosecution, outreach, and community mobilization. Focused on one issue: ending minor sex trafficking in the United States, not-for-profit groups, police, judicial, attorneys, legislators are all working together to accomplish the same end. Working separately there is no way the progress that has been achieved could have come about. In November 2014 Shared Hope International announced that laws in 43 of our 50 states have been changed to accomplish the goal of “bringing justice” to the victims of minor sex trafficking in the United States.

- **Black Parent Initiative (BPI):** Founder Charles McGee, a black parent himself, saw how many black families fell through the cracks of the complex issues of housing, education, and family services provided by the county systems. In launching the BPI, Charles recognized early that only through collaboration would they achieve the goal of inspiring and mobilizing parents of black children to achieve excellence.

By establishing linkages with social service agencies, children’s services, and law enforcement he discovered that they recognized the need for collaboration and assistance in being able to provide services that were culturally sensitive and effective for the families they were serving. Collaboration, listening, being willing to change approaches have resulted in great benefits for all involved.

Recently collaboration has been established with the Parent University. Classes are provided to black parents with classes over an 8 week period addressing critical issues of financial health and educational navigation and support.

## The Challenges of Collaboration

The crucial ingredient of successful collaboration is COMPROMISE. Being willing and able to meet potential partners “halfway” is essential. Organizations that approach collaboration with “my way or the highway” do not succeed at collaboration.

The four keys of collaboration success are: 1) clarify the purpose 2) let form follow function 3) involve the right people 4) write down your agreement. In this context, collaboration is a “mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.” Clearly, this is what has happened with Shared Hope International and Black Parent Initiative.

The challenge comes when organizations do not have “common goals” and are unable to compromise in some way their own mission to be able to accomplish a greater good. In the area where I serve I often observe outright conflict between similar organizations that are serving the same constituency in the community. Their service and outcomes would be much more effective if they each could find areas where they could compromise and work together.

Aung San Suu Kyii, the Burmese leader who served 15 years under house arrest as a result of her opposition to totalitarian government leaders, said “If you want to bring an end to long-standing conflict, you have to be prepared to compromise.” Suu Kyii received the 1991 Nobel Prize for Peace and was released from house arrest in 2010.

Unwillingness or inability to compromise is the key factor in the failure to achieve effective collaboration.

## Seven Keys to Effective Collaboration

1. **It is about us, and we; not I, or me.** Personalities and personal agendas have to be set aside (aka, compromise).
2. **True leaders have to model collaboration.** It can't just be “talk;” it has to result in real change.
3. **It's about creating win/wins.** Working together means accomplishing much more than any organization can accomplish alone.
4. **Generosity is the new currency in our culture.** If my idea is going to change the world I am going to be willing to share it broadly. Ideas are “open source” when we collaborate.
5. **Collaboration means you are giving up something.** (There's that “compromise” idea again!)
6. **Appropriately understand the scale of your impact and influence.** It is incredibly important to understanding the scale of your vision versus a bigger vision. (Being willing to compromise your vision for the sake of the bigger vision).

7. **Define the wins, and create clear expectations and agreements.** Make sure all parties involved are clear on what is expected, and what looks like success.

Finally, what we are doing together in this *GHC Conversation 2015* is essentially a moving collaboration of 17 “humble and courageous leaders” to address a single conversation—Wise Action in Community: Generosity, Leadership, and Concerted Action. The final product of our work will be the result of conversation, listening, compromising, and collaboration. I am honored to be a part of the process.

*“All compromise is based on give and take, but there can be no give and take on fundamentals. Any compromise on mere fundamentals is a surrender. For it is all give and no take.”*

-Mahatma Gandhi

Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversations* are one central element of our work. GHC was founded on the belief that every individual and each organization is capable of bringing about profound change in the world. We are personally and professionally committed to learning and, by choice, place ourselves where we can partner with like-spirited leaders, engaged continually in a process of discovery to deepen presence, impact, and value. We seek to be in the community of wise change makers.

These *Conversations*—and our client work in planning, strategy, philanthropy, and coaching—are all designed to strengthen adaptive organizations for inevitable change and greater impact.



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Offices in Milwaukee, WI. and Hilton Head Island, S.C.

[www.garyhubbellconsulting.com](http://www.garyhubbellconsulting.com)

Corporate Office:  
3143 East Hampshire Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53211  
414-962-6696