

Getting Practical: Harnessing the power of collaboration

Interactive Session

Thursday, October 21, 2010 – 11:30-12:30am

Speakers

- >> **Andrea Baldwin**, Director of Advisory Services, CBSR
- >> **Bob Elton**, Executive Chair, Powertech Labs Inc.

Key Messages

- >> Collaboration occurs when two or more interdependent parties work together to create a common vision, jointly own decisions and outcomes, and collectively share risk, resources and benefits.
- >> CSR issues are complex and require new and creative solutions.
- >> It is wiser to involve all stakeholders from the start of a project, than to have to address issues as they arise because you didn't include multiple perspectives from the beginning.

Worth Repeating

- >> “When you ask BC Hydro customers what’s most important they say typical things like cost, accessibility, etc. But then they add ‘we want you to act in the best interests of British Columbia.’” – Bob Elton

Summary

Andrea Baldwin introduced CBSR’s Collaboration Assessment Tool, noting that CBSR identified collaboration as an emerging topic relevant to business and chose to amplify it through the Summit program. Collaboration builds on last year’s Summit theme of Transformation.

Baldwin noted that there are four approaches to collaboration: program, strategy, business-model, cross-sectoral. It is critical to ensure that company investment and impact-levels are aligned. The highest impact and investment is made through more complex cross-sectoral collaborations and the lowest impact and investment is made through program level collaborations with fewer partners. There are four areas of focus for a collaborative organization:

- Leadership
- Governance
- People
- Process

Baldwin also discussed the business case for collaboration around CSR:

- CSR issues are complex and require new, creative solutions

- Companies must learn to operate on a system wide basis and collaborate across internal and external boundaries
- Companies must cultivate a culture that rewards and encourages long term thinking

Bob Elton, the former CEO of BC Hydro discussed collaboration in relation to the power company. BC Hydro is geographically bound, thus must commit to relationships with stakeholders throughout the province.

Elton provided an example of positive collaboration related to dams:

- You can vary the output of a dam power station, but it varies the water level of the downstream system and affects the people who work and live there (boat operators, fishers, residents etc.) and they don't like the variance
- BC Hydro created a multi-stakeholder process, facilitated by a third party, to decide what the best solution was for everyone, which was then approved by a third party regulator
- Saved a lot of money preventing a series of bilateral disputes
- Very reasonable compromises were made

And an example where collaboration was not addressed properly:

- When the reservoirs were built, First Nations people who lived on the land were put on a reserve on the wrong side of the lake without access to electricity and few roads = not much collaboration
- This has resulted in resistance to similar developments
- Thus BC Hydro is still developing and working on relations with First Nations people

Turning Technologies was also used throughout the session to engage the audience in survey questions related to collaboration:

Q: To what extent is your organization currently collaborating with external organizations to advance its sustainability efforts?

- 44% somewhat
- 38% great deal of collaboration
- 4% not at all
- 13% very little

Q: Which of the 4 approaches to collaboration has been most effective for your organization?

- 24% program impact
- 12 % strategic impact
- 9% business model impact
- 9% cross-sector impact
- 44% combination of approaches
- A few who didn't know