

Three sums that add up to collaboration activity...

$$1 + 1 = 1\frac{1}{2}$$

- Service-led, silo, back-office structures
- Merger of current ways of doing things
- Primary focus is reduction of duplication
- Gains in overhead and service waste reductions

$$1 + 1 = 2$$

- Sharing of new activity, cross-sector and frontline
- Encourages collaborative working - e.g. co-location
- Primary focus is community provision at shared cost
- Gains through asset sales or reduced cost on new projects

$$1 + 1 = 3$$

- Gestalt, innovative, blurs boundaries and responsibilities
- Multi-portfolio staff able to work cross-sector
- Primary focus is on new ways of working and delivery
- Improvement gains through transformed service delivery

Applying them as discussion tools is an excellent way of supporting decision makers in recognising how much pain and change they are willing to allow the collaboration or new shared service to make to themselves and their organisation.

Using these sums is a useful piece of shorthand to evaluate, with the partners' leadership, what they initially desire when they suggest shared services as an option.

Applying them as discussion tools is an excellent way of supporting decision-makers in recognising how much pain and change they are willing to allow the new shared service to make to themselves and their organisation.

1+1=1½ collaborations are all about reducing cost in the way things are done now

You can identify a 1+1=1½ shared service where organisations merge their current ways of doing things.

The primary focus is on cheaper ways of working and gains in overhead and service waste reductions.

It is accepted that there will be no reduction in service quality. Thoughts of improvement of service quality are desirable but not a "must have".

There is disruption within the partnership organisation as posts are made redundant and remaining staff are extracted from their current workplace and parachuted into a centralised location, new way of working, or a single contact centre.

The theory is that less staff can do the same, or more of the current way of working, through collaborative resilience.

This is often the default strategy, especially in times of financial stress.

The problem is that they continue to deliver the services the way they are structured now, rather than see the collaboration as an opportunity to create new, better, lower-cost services fit for the future.

1+1=2 is more of a collaboration and valuable for organisations when tackling new service delivery requirements.

1+1=2 collaborations are the sharing of new activity, with mirror and non-mirror partners and in both back and front office working.

They tend to be more citizen/resident centric and about accessibility to services.

Sometimes called the Debenhams¹ structure, you can recognise it in the Kent Gateway co-location of different service frontline contact points (District Council, DWP, County Council, Voluntary Sector) in a library (Thanet), or a shopping centre (Maidstone).

The primary focus is on customer convenience at shared cost with most gains through redundant-asset sales, whilst sharing the overheads of the new location.

Assets no longer required can be sold off and there is not the same trauma of the staff reductions in 1+1=1½ projects, so it is less turbulent for unions and staff alike.

The citizens/residents, and partner employees, see sense in the co-location as an option. **1+1=2** is also valuable for organisations when tackling new service delivery requirements.

Rather than individually recruiting and setting up processes to deliver new services, partners start with the initial question, “Why can’t we share the new service delivery?”.

1+1=3 collaborations are about “transformational public purpose”

They are about collaborative transformation and innovation. The gestalt² kicks in and boundaries and responsibilities between organisations become blurred.

Multi-portfolio staff are able to work cross-sector and the norm is disturbed.

For example a trained contact centre agent could potentially represent Fire & Rescue, a District Council’s benefits unit and the local Housing Associations, to a specified level of decision making in a customer services phone call.

The gains can also be through smarter ways of working. For example a group of partners (eg housing, social care and Citizens Advice) providing a jointly funded, low-interest payday loan offer, to prevent local tenants falling into the grips of payday loans.

And your point is?

Using these “sums” with your leadership will enable them to articulate more clearly what they want out of your activity.

With no training or development, they may view collaboration transformation or shared services as a simple activity to develop and deliver.

Using these three, familiar, mathematical metaphors will help them articulate their thinking and help you open their minds to some of the complexity that is created by stepping into the world of shared services.

We use them in our *Leadership From The Top* in-house sessions as catalysts for debate. Board members do challenge us and create new examples under each of the sums and sometimes even new sums.

The point is, when they do that, they are becoming truly involved in the development process and not just signing off on mis-understood or unwanted outcomes.

The leaders, begin to lead in the shared service development and that is key to the success of your project.

¹ Debenhams does not sell stuff, it co-locates franchises who sell stuff for the convenience of the shoppers

² Gestalt talks about the whole, being greater than the sum of the parts