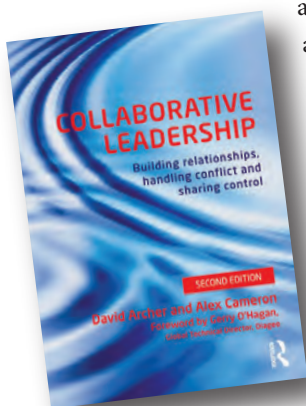# Book Review:

Collaborative Leadership:
Building Relationships, Handling Conflict and Sharing Control (2nd edition), by David Archer and Alex Cameron, published by Routledge

By Jeff Shuman, CSAP, Ph.D.

Executives and business writers alike are finally recognizing collaborative capability as *the* core organizational capability. It is a necessity as companies are transitioning from a primarily inward to increasingly external focus and from loose collections of one-to-one relationships into complex collaborative networks and ecosystems. This is good news for alliance professionals. After all, we are in the catbird seat. We are the individuals most knowledgeable about collaborative capability.

A number of books have been published recently, aiming to provide thought leadership for this transformation. Many demonstrate their recent awakening to collaboration, treating it with a lack of sophistication alliance professionals will find frustrating. One book I have found that demonstrates more than a cursory understanding of the subject is **Collaborative Leadership: Building Relationships, Handling Conflict and Sharing Control** (2nd edition), by David Archer and Alex Cameron, published by Routledge.

Archer and Cameron have been working in this field for more than 10 years and have been writing about the *how-to* of effective collaborative leadership since 2008. This 2nd edition of their book, originally published in 2009, provides an easily accessible guide for current and aspiring leaders in today's interconnected and increasingly collaborative world. The book is packed full of the processes and tools and points to the skills one needs to build complex relationships, handle conflict and to share control in order to promote effective collaboration where it is needed most.

The myriad stories and examples Archer and Cameron provide are based on the challenges of collaborative leadership across various combinations of public, private, academic and NGO (non-governmental organizations or not-for-profit) alliances and partnerships. The cross-sector examples are particularly useful, as this is an area with unique challenges new to many alliance professionals.

One of their tools is the Organizational Partnering Indicator, based on the terminology from the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator. Archer and Cameron show how to apply the Myers-Briggs language and concepts to the culture of an organization. While the approach they take is interesting from an academic perspective, I find the specificity provided a wee bit too formulaic and limited in practical utility.

Archer and Cameron demonstrate a real hands-on understanding of the nitty-gritty aspects of making collaboration work, thus many aspects of their work are more useful. They clearly appreciate what I see as the secret sauce of collaboration – the give and get of sources of value. Further, their treatment of how to assess collaborative relationships is straightforward and hits all the key elements.

Overall, *Collaborative Leadership* is a worthwhile read for both novices and veterans alike who want to get beyond the hype of collaboration and focus on how to produce results from collaborative work.