

Nicola Cooper on the *Future of Collaboration*



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Nicola Cooper, founder of Nicola Cooper and Associates shares practical advice from her book *Future of Collaboration* on how businesses can adopt new methods of collaboration.



Having worked in the skateboard industry early on in her career, Cooper was introduced to collaboration and believes that this was the foundation to all her future collaborations.

During her time in Europe, Cooper really started understanding the necessity for localisation and the intricacies of personalities and archetypes, and, of course, culture.

"Past trends have come and gone and replicated themselves over the years and we are looking at a very changing landscape and a lot of these have been fast-paced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are starting to see a proliferation of new business models," she says.

Speaking at Bizcommunity's [#BizTrends](#) 02.02.2022 100% Trends virtual event, which took place online on Wednesday 2 February 2022, Cooper offers some practical advice for working with brands from her book.

Collaboration has become a lucrative business tool and often helps brands double or triple their reach. Collaborations provide brands with more and more opportunities and it's important for brands to see this as they can grow themselves and others through collaborating. She states that the global [online collaboration market is expected to reach \\$59.86bn by 2023](#).

Collaboration culture

Cooper asks, "Your company is doing cool things. My company is doing cool things. Why not do cool things together?"

She points out that there is a very fine line between collaboration and commission. It's important that businesses define these two respectively.

Commissioned work is stereotypically done via instruction from the buyer, and direction is provided to the artist. However, this is not the case with all commissions, and in some instances, the creative has full control of the direction of the product/service being created.

Cooper iterates that the involved parties must determine that they work with the brand and not for the brand.

The Power of collaboration

Collaboration is a lucrative strategic tool that provides brands to stay relevant and continue to attract pre-existing and new customers. Brands need to look at who are their aspirational consumers and how can they find that golden thread that speaks to them both.

It needs to be an authentic collaboration in order to gain that wider reach.

It doesn't matter if a brand is smaller or bigger than the other, but there needs to be a compromise in the middle without either of the two brands losing.

With collaborations, the creative direction is usually a collaborative process along with many other elements, sometimes including funding and resources. We have started seeing collaboration in the South African landscape grow incrementally. Brands should not only be going into different directions and markets but equally start speaking to the millennial, Gen-Z market.

Main pillars of collaboration

1. Product collaboration

Product collaboration is when interested parties join together to create a tangible product together. This is predominantly the most noticeable form of collaboration.

2. Cross-pollination marketing

Collaboration marketing is when two business team up and create content or entirely new ways to connect with the brands. Cooper notes that when you're working in collaborative spaces it's really important to understand what all the motives and benefits are of the collaboration and what you are actually trying to do because then both collaborators are understanding what the key objectives are and how they are going to reach those key objectives together.

Nicola Cooper is the founder of [Nicola Cooper and Associates](#). Winner of the Most Innovative Market Research Specialists at South Africa MEA Business Awards 2021, R&A Consultancy of the Year at South Africa MEA Business Awards 2020. Academic, analyst, teacher, speaker and brand consultant, a well-known presence in Africa's fashion and lifestyle landscapes. Follow [@nicolacoop](#).

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Nicola Cooper's BizTrends 02.02.2022 presentation was a summary of the Future of Collaboration Report, based on four years of empirical research study and experience by Nicola Cooper + Associates, as a straight-shooting guide to doing collaboration best. You can download the summary [here](#). Bizcommunity readers use BizTrends2022 promo code to claim your [special offer on the full report](#).

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