In their book *Boundary Spanning Leadership*, Chris Ernst and Donna Chrobot-Mason discuss how reflection fosters respect between groups where boundaries collide. They state that to lay the foundation for groups to work together toward common goals they must first feel secure in their own group and then acknowledge the validity of the other group. Think about a group with which your group needs to improve its working relationship. Ernst and Chrobot-Mason present the following five tactics that groups can use to better understand each other.

- **Create opportunities for groups to listen and learn about one another.**
  - What opportunities exist now for your group to learn more about the other?
  - Where and when could individuals in your group gain knowledge about how the other group works? For example, is there an opportunity for an exchange of individuals or short-term assignments?

- **Ask questions to uncover deep differences.**
  - How can the two teams explore the root of the challenges when attempting to work together?
  - What are the values, assumptions, or perceptions that might form a wedge between the two groups?

- **Allow commonalities to emerge from differences.**
  - What do the two groups have in common?
  - How can your group explore the commonalities between the two groups?
  - How can the two groups explore commonalities together?

- **Counter the tendency for groups to want to make “other groups like us.”**
  - Identify what the other group brings that your group doesn’t possess.
  - Expecting the other group to abandon their own ideals usually leads to a standoff. What can your group do to embrace the other group’s characteristics?
  - How does your group benefit by accepting the other groups values, needs, and views?
  - How does the other group benefit by accepting your group's characteristics?

- **Slow groups down to speed them up.**
  - Why is it important to take this effort on slowly?
  - What small steps could be taken to start things out?
  - What skills does everyone on both teams need to refresh before beginning this kind of work, e.g., active listening, creative problem solving, the process of dialogue.

Typically, two teams work through these steps together. If the situation is very difficult, a neutral facilitator may be necessary. Can you work with the leader of the other group to plan for a meeting of the two groups?

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