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by Jamie S. Walters



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[Leading from the Core: How to "Be" Versus "Do" Leadership](#)

by Nick Craig



True leadership is that invisible, unmistakable something. My experience suggests that, as elusive as it might seem, each of us has the gift of being a powerful leader.

[Collaborate to Succeed - But Only With the Right Attitude](#)

by Amanda Crouch



Collaboration is the way forward in the global competitive economy. It requires a different business model and mindset.

Many more articles in [Partnering & Alliances](#)

[From Phase of Life to Way of Life](#)

by Jim Clemmer



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by Jon Gordon



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Collaborate to Succeed - But Only With the Right Attitude

by Amanda Crouch

As a CEO, sustaining growth in the highly competitive global economy is a key challenge. More and more business leaders are looking for the solution outside their own organisation. Many see strength not from facing the competition alone, but by building sustainable partnerships and alliances.

Yet another CEO survey⁽¹⁾ reveals that collaboration to achieve competitive advantage is rapidly becoming a strategic imperative. By 2008 it is estimated that 62 per cent of companies worldwide will be pursuing partnering opportunities⁽²⁾.

Negative fear of competition and a closed door policy is being replaced by a positive collaborative outlook. Companies recognise that by fostering close relationships across geographic and organisational boundaries they can open up new and previously unconsidered profitable opportunities and partnerships.

While some organisations around the globe are starting to reap the benefits of such collaborations, many business partnerships are still failing to deliver the promised mutual value. The reality is that partnerships exist not so much in the fine print of legal documents, but in the hearts and minds of the partners. As one public utility executive, with extensive experience in offshore BPO relationships, said in a recent GBPA survey: "Partnership success = capability x attitude."

Partnerships require not just a different model. In a boundary-less world - where one moment you are competing with an organisation and the next you are collaborating - they require a fundamentally different attitude.

From work GBPA has carried out with its corporate members, there are some fundamentals for a mutually profitable partnership. Here are the top 10 for business leaders:

1. Make sure your partner is equally committed

The success of the partnership must be fundamentally important to all parties concerned. Partnering with an ambivalent organisation is no good - the partnership must be valued in the same way.

2. Don't rely on magic to make it happen

Signing the partnership deal is one thing. Both parties then have to demonstrate their commitment to the partnership through actions. This does not happen magically - real people, real time and real skills are required to make the partnership a success. It is vital to assign committed resources to developing the relationship.

3. Share the same overall objective

A clear shared vision and overall objective for the partnership are essential. However, each party's individual interests may be different and need to be

understood and acknowledged. For example, two organisations may need to partner to enter the Japanese market. One chooses to do this to develop a new revenue stream, the other to increase brand awareness and profile.

From the outset, both parties need to be transparent about their own objectives and clear about the shared objective. And unless these are clearly documented to ensure no misunderstanding, the partnership stands little chance of success.

4. Integrity and honesty are essential ingredients to building trust

Before entering into a partnership, identify the behavioural rules of engagement. It should go without saying, that integrity and honesty are the fundamentals of a good business relationship, but so often they are never discussed and only implicit in the way organisations relate to one another going forward. The 'implied' approach is based on assumptions - and assumption is one of the key obstacles to the success of a partnership.

5. Communicate, communicate, communicate

Clarity and transparency of communication, not just between business partners but also within each of the organisations is essential. Too often businesses blame governance as the key reason for partnership failure - whereas the issue is often poor communication, particularly lack of communication through both organisations as to the partnership's objectives and benefits.

A communications plan needs to be developed for the partnership with specific roles, responsibilities and processes agreed to ensure the flow of knowledge and understanding between and within the organisations.

6. Build flexible rules

Successful partnerships mean that you will need to manage what at times seem opposed, or even irreconcilable issues. Contracts and SLAs, for example, need to be detailed and precise, and exit clauses established. Discussions on these elements often lead to resentment with organisations resorting to a protective positioning - yet flexibility is essential.

A collaborative approach to contracts where all parties involved (including the lawyers) are incentivised on the success of the partnership is the way forward - rather than an emphasis on penalty clauses.

7. Aim to harness cultural differences

Many organisations avoid partners whose cultural values are strikingly dissonant. Yet what is the point of partnering with a company too similar? Collaboration is necessary to stimulate ideas and identify innovative approaches. Some degree of diversity is essential.

The trick is to harness the differentials between you to achieve a positive outcome. Those organisations with a high degree of cultural sensitivity will be the most successful in the growing global economy.

8. Get the business model right

Create a separate, distinct virtual business entity for the partnership where all

parties have an equal stake in that entity and so will contribute to make it a success. As a separate entity, the partnership is likely to be most successful if it has its own organisational structure with separate governance, management and operations procedures outlined.

9. **Maintain the momentum**

For a partnership to succeed it must have all the energy and urgency of an individual entrepreneurial business. There must be an inherent desire from all parties for success, with clear strong leadership to instil a sense of urgency and pace.

10. **Ensure an A-class team**

People make a thing happen. People get results. For a partnership to succeed it should have the best people - both at the managerial and operational level. These people should be as committed to the partnership as the leaders of the parties involved and have the right skills to develop the full potential of the partnership.

References:

- (1) 10th Annual Global CEO Survey, Price Waterhouse Coopers, February 2007
- (2) Gartner

Amanda Crouch is the chief executive of the Global Business Partnership Alliance (GBPA). GBPA is the leading corporate membership organisation focused on developing practical understanding and knowledge of internal and inter-company collaboration and business partnering. GBPA's members are senior management from all functions in large blue-chip organisations involved in internal and external partnering. Visit www.gbpalette.com for additional information.

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