

Hallmarks of a Successful Partnership

The special power of a partnership comes from the fact that it is *created on purpose*, it is *sustained by conscious effort*, and it *flourishes as a result of commitment by the partners*.

The following six tenets are the key components that make a partnership work:

- 1. Active support of each other**
- 2. Equal participation/shared power**
- 3. Common objectives**
- 4. Clear boundaries and scope**
- 5. Consensus and openness**
- 6. Trust and mutual benefits**

The work toward partnerships begins with each individual, through self understanding and practice. Relationships and trust take time to build and good communication requires effort. Once the foundation has been laid, partnerships will be of endless value.

Dent, Stephen M. *Partnering Intelligence; Creating Value for Your Business by Building Strong Alliances*, Palo Alto, CA, Davies-Black Publishing, 1999.



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Comparison of Teams and Partnerships

Teams	Partnerships
A team is organized to work together.	A partnership is based on building a relationship.
A team will focus on the job to get done.	A partnership is based on a mutual commitment to a common interest.
Members of a team don't necessarily have equal status.	A partnership is based on equal status between partners.
Members have questionable commitment to each other outside the team.	Partners have an implicit obligation to each other.
Teams can be any number of people.	A partnership is typically built on a 1:1 relationship.



Understanding Parent and Professional Perspectives

Both parents and professionals want what is best for the child, but perspectives and focus may differ. These differences influence perceptions, approaches and decisions. Understanding each others perspective can be helpful in building relationships and working as partners.

Parents

- Understand they have a life long commitment and responsibility for their child
- View the present as one small segment of a long distance marathon
- Assume complete responsibility for their child
- Typically do not choose this role

Professionals

- Do not typically have long term contact or follow up that last a number of years
- Address a deeper narrower segment of the child's life, compared to "running a sprint"
- Are responsible to various governing boards and/or taxpayers
- Choose this role in life



BENEFITS OF BEING PARTNERS

Why be a partner?

Being in a partnership with someone is not always easy and takes time and energy to maintain. Yet the benefits far outweigh the effort required. The benefits of partnering may not be evident immediately, but will become more obvious over time.

When we become partners and work in partnership:

1. Children achieve *better educational outcomes*.
2. Children achieve *better life outcomes*.
3. *More resources* are brought to the table.
4. *Allies are created* to work together towards common goals.
5. People are *valued and supported*.
6. *New strategies and processes* for achieving results can be created.
7. *Energy is multiplied* and goals are accomplished.
8. There is *increased capacity* to get the job done.
9. People are more *forgiving of mistakes* because loyalty is created through partnerships.
10. A *safe environment exists* for risk taking and thinking outside the box.

"I not only use all the brains I have, but all I can borrow."

President Woodrow Wilson



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Phases of Partnerships

Building a partnership takes time and occurs in phases. These phases are marked by distinct and recognizable attitudes and behaviors. Recognizing the phase in the development of a particular partnership can be helpful to reduce stress and irritation. Be aware that times of stress, transitions, changes in personnel, etc. can bring a return to an earlier partnership phase and sometimes partnerships get stuck in one phase.

In the beginning...

Colliding and campaigning:

- No trust
- No dialogue
- No listening to each other
- Personal agendas are promoted
- Hope and possibilities are elusive

In the middle...

Coordinating, cooperating and compromising:

- Willingness to compromise
- Apprehension and frustration may alternate with hope
- Sense of reliability develops
- Genuine consideration of other perspectives
- Emerging sense of respect for each other
- Suspension of personal agendas and exploration for common ground
- Turn taking

In the end...

Collaborating and creative partnering

- Questioning for understanding
- Real listening
- Open sharing of interest, fears, concerns and dreams
- Power and decision making are balanced
- Common goals are developed
- Conflict is not a threat—resolution through understanding
- Good and satisfying relationship—excitement and promise

Each partnership will be unique and reach a different phase. This is not unusual. It is important to keep moving forward and focus on the journey not the destination.

