



Chatsworth Consulting Group

How to Build a Partnership That Works

Partnerships can be rewarding, invigorating, liberating, and strengthening...but unless you know how to build and nurture an effective partnership, they can also be a source of misery and failure. In order to develop a strong and prosperous partnership that will support you and your business, it is important to follow four “golden rules”:

- Choose the right partner
- Know your partner and yourself
- Divide and conquer
- Work on the relationship, and the business

These are the principles that have helped us build an amazingly successful partnership, and they can help you as well. They also work equally well for partnerships that aren't simply about and around a business.

Choose the right partner

People connect with partners for a variety of reasons, not all of which lead to a fruitful partnership. It is important to think through your reasons behind bringing in a partner, and it is equally important to choose the “right” partner.

You hear many stories of partnerships (and the friendships that existed prior to the partnership) that go bad. We know many people who, in many ways, can't stand their business partner – they don't respect them, they don't like them, they don't enjoy working with them – and yet they stay in the relationship. This situation can't work well for the long run.

It is important to find a partner whom you do like, respect, and enjoy, because your daily life will in many ways revolve around this person. Not only that, but your very livelihood depends on this person, so it is also important that you trust her or him. While it is possible to work with someone whom you don't really like, when the relationship is as intertwined as a partnership, it is essential that you have a strong connection and a base of mutual respect to weather the storms that will come your way.



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It is also important that you choose a partner with whom you can work well – someone who has a style and strengths that complement yours. It isn't necessary to be exactly the same, nor is it necessary to be mirror images. It works well when you've chosen a partner who bolsters and counteracts your weaker areas and who recognizes and appreciates your strengths.

Know your partner and yourself

In order to choose the right partner, and to work well with the partner whom you've chosen, it is essential to really know your partner and to know yourself. It is important to realize both of your strengths and weaknesses. It is important to acknowledge your likes and dislikes. It is important to have a thorough understanding of how both of you like to work, to collaborate, to connect, and to spend time away from the business to refresh. Only with these understandings will you best be able to manage the business and the partnership itself. A great way to build this understanding is to work with a behavioral style assessment, such as DiSC[®]. This quick assessment can help you understand, discuss, and work with your differences. We've seen it work wonders for our clients.

It is important to know how you and your partner like to get things done and handle differences. Are you a morning person? Is your partner a night owl? Do you like to read through a document and respond? Does your partner prefer to talk things through and think out loud? When you have a full understanding of how you both like to work, you'll be able to work out arrangements that satisfy both of you. And when you have an agreement on what each of your needs are and how each of you can best add to the business, you'll be able to work the business together successfully.

Divide and conquer

Which leads us to the third "golden rule" for a successful partnership – divide and conquer. The beauty of a partnership is that neither of you needs to be all things to all people. With a partnership you can divide the work, the tasks, and the clients so that each of you is more likely to be doing the work you love to do, and neither of you is as overwhelmed as if you were working alone.

We produce a bi-weekly newsletter. At first we planned to take turns writing, but as time has gone by we've fallen into a pattern – Lisa writes, Robyn edits. It works. Lisa finds inspiration sitting at her computer and musing over a quote. Robyn doesn't. But does she edit! Together we've put together a powerful product, with both of us enjoying the process much more.

Divide and conquer also allows both partners to not only do the work they'd rather do, but also at times allows the flexibility to do the work in the way that works for each partner. There is space for potentially shorter work weeks or flexible hours. There is freedom to balance your work schedule with your life schedule, because there is always someone you trust "minding the store." We recently practiced what we preach about balance and making "room for life" by each taking a month off during the summer. This would never have been possible without a strong partner and a strong partnership.

Divide and conquer – whether by strengths, likes, availability, taking turns – whatever works. A partnership is a great way to lessen the load while enhancing the end product.

Work on the relationship, and the business

The last guideline is perhaps, in many ways, the most important. A partnership is a relationship, and like any relationship it needs time and attention. When you focus only on the business and neglect nurturing the partnership itself, you run the risk of letting the partnership wither and die...or at least waste away to be less than it could be. It is essential to schedule time to keep this relationship healthy and whole.

We schedule quarterly “check-ins.” We make sure to check-in with each other and force ourselves to discuss anything that might be off or bothering us in the business or in the partnership itself. We know that both of us are more likely to avoid having difficult discussions, and we also know that if we don’t discuss issues, even small ones, they may fester and grow. We make certain we are nurturing our relationship through these check-ins, and also through simply remembering to treat each other as the friends we are and to support each other as best we can. We are lucky – our work centers around teaching and supporting these skills and behaviors for our clients, and we use them for our business and our lives.

It is possible to build a business partnership, or any other kind of partnership, that works. We’re living proof of that! By following the four “golden rules”, and by being willing to learn and grow as you go forward, you can develop a partnership that supports you, your business and your life – and makes things much more fun along the way.

For more information on building a successful partnership, contact Lisa Kohn or Robyn McLeod at 877-405-7288 or info@chatsworthconsulting.com.

Chatsworth Consulting Group, based in New York and Pennsylvania, helps individuals and organizations articulate and realize their goals. By taking a holistic approach to consulting and coaching, CCG uncovers the often-hidden opportunities for success so that clients can move forward with greater focus and purpose. Learn more by visiting www.chatsworthconsulting.com or calling 1-877-405-7288.