

Alliance Management Professional Development Guide

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Association of Strategic Alliance Professionals (ASAP) is the leading global professional association dedicated to alliance formation and management. The organization provides a forum to exchange best practices and a framework for cultivating the skills and tool sets needed to manage business partnerships. One of the ASAP's objectives is to provide its members with education and guidance in strengthening their skills and competencies. The Professional Development Guide outlines the following:

- **Representative competencies areas**
These include the context, core, business and industry, and company-specific competencies that all alliance professionals should be able to demonstrate.
- **Sample alliance manager and director job descriptions**
These job descriptions show the representative skills required for alliance manager, senior alliance manager, and director of alliance management positions. They are designed to encompass the range of job demands and success factors necessary for each functional level of alliance management.
- **Skills tested in the Certificate of Achievement – Alliance Manager (CA-AM) and Certified Strategic Alliance Professional (CSAP) examinations**
These matrices show which skill areas are included in each of these examinations.
- **Resources for competency development**
This section lists the training modules and resources available for alliance skill development.
- **Emerging areas of importance for alliance professionals**
Unlike the previous sections of the guide, which outline requirements and resources that are both required and available today, in this section we provide forward-looking statements addressing the future direction of certification, standards, and industry-specific areas of expertise that we anticipate alliance professionals will need in the future.

By combining competency lists, job descriptions, development resources, and future skills requirements, we have tried to present a comprehensive look at the qualification areas that ASAP's members need to master to ensure that they are operating at the top of their game.

II. COMPETENCIES OF STRATEGIC ALLIANCE MANAGERS

The skills required by Strategic Alliance Managers to perform their role and function effectively can be classified into the following categories: Context Competencies, Core Competencies, and Company-Specific Competencies.

Context Competencies

These skills are the foundation elements that enable an Alliance Manager to perform his or her job duties effectively. These skills are important to perform the work, but do not in themselves ensure that the Strategic Alliance group is fulfilling its strategic mission for the Company.

- Communication Skills
- Time Management
- Conflict Resolution
- Contract Negotiation
- Financial Management
- Legal Aspects of Alliance Work
- Corporate Relationship Management
- Interpersonal Skills
- Change Management
- Problem Resolution/Critical Thinking
- Project Management
- Cross-Functional Team Management
- Global Thinking
- Leadership
- Team Management
- Doing Business with Other Cultures
- Influencing Others/Influencing Without Authority/Coaching Leaders

Core Competencies

These functionally critical skills are key to the success of the Alliance Manager in defining and driving an alliance. They represent the areas that are specifically tested by the ASAP exams for Certificate of Achievement – Alliance Management (CA-AM) and Certified Strategic Alliance Professional (CSAP):

I. Alliance Capabilities

- Governance Structure
- Alliance Cycle
- Conflict Resolution

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery

- Strategic Alignment Development and Design
- Selection and Qualification of a Potential Alliance Partner
- Alliance Governance
- Alliance Operations Model
- Alliance Launch
- Managing Organizational Alignment
- Alliance Metrics and Value Measurement
- Alliance Across a Value Network
- Alliance Negotiations

- Planning, Implementing, and Monitoring
- Corporate Relationship Management
- Cultural Considerations
- Termination and/or Transformation
- Cooperation Among Competitors
- Professional Development of Alliance Managers

III. Corporate Capability for Collaboration

- Fostering Collaborative Culture
- Skill Development
- Collaborative Network and Ecosystem Management

Business and Industry Knowledge

These skills pertain to the unique demands that business models and industry differences place on alliances. It is believed that such differences will require alliance managers to adopt and master different practices as a result.

I. Business Knowledge

- Business/Financial Analysis Skills
- Business strategy and Strategic Marketing
- Business Models of Different Types of Partners

II. Industry Knowledge

- Partner's Industry Knowledge
- Business Sector Knowledge and Trends
- Company Industry Knowledge
- Industry/Market Value Chains
- Sales Processes
- Marketing Processes
- Professional Services Delivery Processes

Company-Specific Competencies

These knowledge elements, which are very specific to Company and its strategy, enable the Strategic Alliance Manager to understand the role and the mission of the Strategic Alliance group and the role and mission of the particular alliance to be managed. They include:

- Company General Market Priorities and Overview
- Company Partnering Culture
- Company Organizational and Functional Structure
- Company Governance
- Company-Specific Market and Partnering Strategy
- Company Technology Initiatives
- Strategic Alliances at Company, Inc.
- Strategic Partners and Their Relative Positioning
- Nonstrategic Company Alliances (know how to access)

III. ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT JOB DESCRIPTIONS

We recognize that role definition and titles vary widely around the world and in different companies, so please note that the roles in this section are intended as guidelines and the titles are examples. In addition, the certification level for each role is best-practice advice.

Role	Mid-level Alliance Manager	Senior-level Alliance Manager	Executive-level Alliance Manager
Example titles	Alliance Manager	Senior Alliance or Partner Manager	Director or VP, Strategic Alliances
Certification	CA-AM	CSAP	CSAP
Position Description	<p>An alliance manager is responsible for ensuring that day-to-day operating requirements for assigned alliances are effectively managed and performance objectives are achieved. This entails a number of activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing and maintaining relationships with all individuals involved in the alliance • planning and coordinating implementation activities with the partner • resolving related issues • reporting results to management. 	<p>A senior alliance manager is responsible for directing all the activities for assigned alliances. In addition to the operating activities required of an alliance manager, this also includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direction of activities across the complete alliance life cycle • planning, allocating, and coordinating required resources • improving competency levels of individuals working in the alliance • ensuring that the assigned alliances continue to generate ongoing value. <p>This individual is expected to contribute to the development of tools, processes, and strategies employed by the alliance management group to ensure effective coordination across the portfolio of alliances.</p> <p>A senior alliance manager may have mentoring and/or supervisory responsibility for alliance manager-level individuals.</p> <p>Managing portfolios.</p>	<p>The director of alliance management is the functional manager for a team of alliance managers and/or senior alliance managers. In this capacity, the director is responsible for coordination of overall alliance management resources to ensure appropriate coverage across the organization’s portfolio of alliances. This entails responsibility for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall performance of the alliance portfolio • coordination of activities and resources from other groups or departments within the organization • support for all activities conducted with the partner • development and maintenance of alliance processes and tools. <p>Administrative responsibilities include staffing for the alliance management function and ensuring that all group members maintain proper alliance management credentials.</p> <p>The director may also have direct responsibility for specific alliances, in which case the director will adhere to the expectations for a senior alliance manager.</p>

Role	Mid-level Alliance Manager	Senior-level Alliance Manager	Executive-level Alliance Manager
Example titles	Alliance Manager	Senior Alliance or Partner Manager	Director or VP, Strategic Alliances
Certification	CA-AM	CSAP	CSAP
Reporting Relationships	The alliance manager will report to either the director of alliance management or a senior alliance manager.	The senior alliance manager will report to the director of alliance management.	The director of alliance management will report to a divisional or organizational executive.
Scope of Responsibilities	Responsible for one major alliance, or several secondary alliances, or part of a larger alliance team.	Responsible for one or more major alliances.	Responsible for a team of alliance managers and/or senior alliance managers. May have direct responsibility for one major alliance.

Role	Mid-level Alliance Manager	Senior-level Alliance Manager	Executive-level Alliance Manager
Example titles	Alliance Manager	Senior Alliance or Partner Manager	Director or VP, Strategic Alliances
Certification	CA-AM	CSAP	CSAP
<p>Primary Responsibilities (related alliance competency in parenthesis where appropriate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support activities occurring across alliance life cycle (I B) • Resolve operational-level conflicts (I C) • Implement successful alliance launch (II E) • Maintain organizational alignment (II F) • Manage alliance performance per alliance metrics/measurement system (II G) • Identify new opportunities for relationship (II H) • Plan, implement, and monitor operational activities of alliance (II J) • Establish and maintain relationships within and across organizations (II K) • Monitor cultural fit and adapt processes where necessary (II L) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop implementation plan across alliance life cycle (I B) • Define and oversee conflict resolution process (I C) • Define and implement strategy for organizational alignment (II A) • Advise in partner selection process (II B) • Define and monitor alliance governance model (II C) • Define metrics/measurement for alliance and monitor performance (II G) • Define and oversee process to assess new opportunities (II H) • Advise and participate in alliance negotiation process (II I) • Identify and manage potential and actual competitive situations with partner (II N) • Define and implement capability development process for alliance stakeholders (II O and III B) • Foster development of a collaborative, organizational culture (III A) • Advise on portfolio management (III C) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct management support for team, including but not limited to hiring, skill development, performance evaluation, and resource allocation • Oversee and support implementation plans across all stages of alliance life cycle (I B) • Participate in partner selection process, advising on fit to overall alliance portfolio (II B and III C) • Monitor and manage performance metrics/measurement across alliance portfolio (II G) • Participate in alliance governance process (II C) • Assess proposals for new partner opportunities (II H) • Promote development of a collaborative culture across the organization (III A) • Oversee capability development process for alliance stakeholders (III B)

Role	Mid-level Alliance Manager	Senior-level Alliance Manager	Executive-level Alliance Manager
Example titles	Alliance Manager	Senior Alliance or Partner Manager	Director or VP, Strategic Alliances
Certification	CA-AM	CSAP	CSAP
Secondary Responsibilities (related alliance competency in parenthesis where appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support governance process (I A and II C) • Implement an operational model relevant to the alliance (II D) • Support alliance negotiations (II I) • Ensure orderly transition/transformation of alliance (II M) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support relationship-building activities within and across organization (II K) • Monitor culture fit and adapt processes where necessary (II L) • Ensure orderly transition/transformation of alliance (II M) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee and support conflict resolution process (I C) • Support organizational alignment process (II A) • Support relationship-building activities within and across organization (II K)
Experience Required	<p>Overall: 8+ years of related Industry experience</p> <p>Specialized: 2+ years of experience in areas involving relationship management, including customers, suppliers, channel, and partners.</p>	<p>Overall: 12+ years of related Industry experience</p> <p>Specialized: 6+ years of total experience in relationship management, with a minimum of 4 years specifically devoted to alliances. Remaining years' requirement may include customer, supplier, channel, and partner experience.</p>	<p>Overall: 12+ years of related Industry experience</p> <p>Specialized: 10+ years of total experience in relationship management, with a preferred minimum of 6 years specifically devoted to alliances. (Other experience may be used to offset alliance management experience if appropriate.) Remaining years' requirement may include customer, supplier, channel, and partner experience.</p>
Education Requirements	BS/BA or equivalent minimum; MS/MBA preferred	MS/MBA highly desired; BS/BA or equivalent minimum	MS/MBA highly desired; BS/BA or equivalent minimum
Certification Requirements	CA-AM to be earned within one year of hire to position Must maintain CA-AM status thereafter	CSAP Must maintain CSAP status thereafter	CSAP Must maintain CSAP status thereafter

IV. ASAP ALLIANCE COMPETENCIES MATRIX

I. Alliance Capabilities

		CA-AM	CSAP		Context	Core	Company
A	Governance Structure						
	Explain alliance mission statement and value proposition	X	X			X	
	Explain alliance scope and operations principles	X	X			X	
	Explain alliance teams and roles	X	X		X	X	
	Explain alliance executive sponsorship roles	X	X			X	
	Explain executive mapping	X	X			X	
	Explain risk factors		X				X
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area					X	X
B	Alliance Life Cycle						
	Articulate alliance life cycle phases		X			X	
	Conduct partner profiling	X	X			X	
	Perform alliance business planning	X	X			X	X
	Formulate and track alliance success metrics	X	X			X	
	Perform alliance management and reporting	X	X			X	
	Conduct knowledge transfer	X	X		X		
	Drive solutions and initiative development	X	X		X		
	Identify conditions that indicate an alliance should be terminated or regenerated	X	X			X	X
	Predict how activities, metrics, and team roles may vary as an alliance matures		X			X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area					X	X

		CA-AM	CSAP		Context	Core	Company
C	Conflict Resolution						
	Outline the expected conflict resolution process		X		X		
	Assess the underlying reasons for conflict		X		X		
	Resolve conflicts at the peer level	X	X		X		
	Escalate problems through the agreed governance process	X	X		X	X	
	Recommend external sources of resolution (e.g., arbitration, mediation)	X			X		
	Invoke external sources of resolution (e.g., arbitration, mediation)		X		X		
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area					X	X

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
A	Strategic Alignment Development and Design							
	Help develop alliance strategy on a company/business unit level		X				X	X
	Communicate clearly the alignment with corporate strategy	X	X					X
	Describe alliance networks and portfolios	X	X				X	
	Design an alliance network and portfolio strategy		X				X	
	Articulate partners' business objectives	X	X					X
	Support an alliance capability building program	X					X	
	Develop a strategy for an alliance in collaboration with stakeholders		X				X	X
	Assess risks		X					X
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
B	Selection and Qualification of a Potential Alliance Partner							
	Assess the alliance management competency of a partner		X				X	
	Assess strategic, operational, and cultural fit		X				X	
	Contribute to the recruitment and selection of a partner		X				X	X
C	Alliance Governance							
	Design an alliance governance model		X				X	
	Execute an established alliance governance model	X	X				X	
	Draft statements of mission, vision, norms, and values		X			X		
	Demonstrate norms and values of the alliance	X					X	
	Develop risk mitigation measures		X				X	X
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery (continued)

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
D	Alliance Operational Model							
	Define an operational model relevant to the scope, objectives, and activities of the alliance	X	X				X	
	Implement an operational model relevant to the scope, objectives, and activities of the alliance	X	X				X	
	Assess the effectiveness of operational model implementation		X			X		
	Refine the operational model based on assessment		X				X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
E	Alliance Launch							
	Develop an effective alliance launch plan		X				X	
	Execute an effective alliance launch plan	X	X				X	
	Engage stakeholders to assemble an extended alliance team		X			X	X	
	Clarify roles of alliance stakeholders	X	X			X		
	Secure resource commitments from stakeholder organizations		X			X		
	Identify and confirm resource commitments	X				X		
	Communicate shared objectives within the alliance		X				X	
	Communicate shared objectives with virtual teams	X				X		
	Communicate what can be shared and what cannot be shared	X				X		
	Define and align to rules of engagement among team members	X				X		
	Reinforce rules of engagement within the alliance		X				X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery (continued)

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
F	Managing Organizational Alignment							
	Align alliance mission, objectives, and outcomes internally		X				X	
	Secure commitment and accountability to alliance objectives		X				X	
	Support organizational alignment between functional organizations and management hierarchy	X				X		
	Navigate difficulties that arise during alliance implementation		X				X	
	Relate alliance objectives to execution responsibilities	X					X	
	Solicit commitment and accountability to alliance objectives	X				X	X	
	Ensure portfolio strategy alignment		X				X	X
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
G	Alliance Metrics and Value Measurement							
	Assess value of an alliance relationship	X	X			X	X	
	Check progress against performance metrics	X	X			X		
	Monitor the alliance's overall impact on the business (e.g., product line, line of business, customer base)	X	X					X
	Conduct alliance evaluation/operational assessment (e.g., health check, focus groups)	X	X				X	
	Leverage alliance assessments to determine systemic-level issues		X				X	
	Manage alliance portfolio performance to achieve strategic intent		X				X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery (continued)

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
H	Alliances Across a Value Network							
	Exploit similarities among developmental, production, non-profit, and go-to-market alliances	X	X				X	
	Exploit differences among developmental, production, non-profit, and go-to-market alliances	X	X				X	
	Identify new opportunities	X	X					X
	Define alliance value proposition	X					X	X
	Execute on value creation	X				X		
	Initiate opportunity evaluation		X			X		
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
I	Alliance Negotiations							
	Explain how alliance negotiations differ from traditional relationship negotiations	X	X			X	X	
	Determine a negotiation strategy	X	X			X		
	Assemble negotiation teams and define roles	X	X			X		
	Develop the contractual terms and conditions critical to meeting the organization's alliance objectives		X				X	
	Identify contractual terms and conditions critical to meeting the organization's alliance objectives	X					X	
	Provide flexibility for changing business cycles and conditions		X			X		
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery (continued)

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
J	Planning, Implementing, and Monitoring							
	Prepare a detailed implementation plan with partner(s) (e.g., objectives, milestones, metrics, resources)	X	X			X		
	Establish effective communication channels	X	X			X		
	Implement the work plan	X	X			X		
	Track alliance progress and make adjustments as necessary	X	X			X	X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
K	Corporate Relationship Management							
	Build relationships at several management levels within and across organizations	X	X			X		
	Build trust and influence with alliance/project stakeholders	X	X			X	X	
	Map peer-to-peer relationships between the organizations to identify equivalent decision-making authority		X			X		
	Manage peer-to-peer relationship mapping		X			X		
	Celebrate successes at key milestones		X				X	
	Manage differences in company cultures	X				X	X	
	Promote alliances' value across the organization	X				X	X	X
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery (continued)

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
L	Cultural Considerations							
	Listen for regional and company cultural differences that inform business practices		X			X		
	Develop the team to recognize and understand cultural differences		X			X	X	
	Define cultural and regional issues of locations where the alliance is operating	X				X	X	
	Adapt models to address regional cultures	X				X		
	Respond to cultural norms of the alliance partner		X				X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
M	Termination and/or Transformation							
	Assess whether an alliance should be transformed or terminated	X	X				X	X
	Termination:							
	create a plan for ending an alliance	X	X				X	
	negotiate specific termination provisions	X	X			X		
	secure necessary protections and partner limitations	X	X			X		
	establish processes needed to carry on residual and future business	X	X				X	
	communicate status of the alliance transition internally and externally	X	X				X	

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery (continued)

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
M	Termination and/or Transformation (continued)							
	Transformation:							
	determine new value proposition reflecting the new strategic intent	X	X					X
	determine to what stage of the life cycle the alliance should return	X	X				X	
	communicate status of the alliance transition internally and externally	X	X				X	
	Document any lessons learned	X	X			X	X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
N	Cooperation Among Competitors							
	Identify areas of competition and collaboration (e.g., risk mitigation)		X				X	
	Protect information that should not be shared		X			X		
	Communicate rules of engagement internally and externally		X			X		
	Communicate the mission and objectives of an alliance internally and externally		X				X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X

II. Specific Skills Development and Mastery (continued)

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
O	Professional Development of Alliance Managers							
	Determine skill levels and skills gaps		X				X	
	Identify resources needed to address gaps in skills and skill levels		X				X	
	Mentor alliance managers		X				X	
	Disseminate best practices and company-specific learnings		X				X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X

III. Corporate Capability for Collaboration

		CA-AM	CSAP	Industry		Context	Core	Company
A	Fostering Collaborative Culture							
	Disseminate guidance, process, and tools (e.g., best practices and company-specific learnings) to stakeholders in the organization		X				X	
	Help senior management model effective collaborative behaviors		X				X	
	Advocate alignment of stakeholder goals and incentives to alliance objectives		X				X	
	Mentor alliance stakeholders		X				X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
B	Skill Development							
	Determine skill levels and skill gaps among stakeholders		X				X	
	Build skills in stakeholders		X			X	X	
	Identify resources needed to address gaps in skills and skill levels		X				X	X
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X
C	Collaborative Network and Ecosystem Management							
	Maintain a holistic view of an alliance network (e.g., logistics, manufacturing) to make an alliance successful		X				X	
	Disseminate guidance, process, and tools (e.g., best practices and learnings) to network stakeholders		X				X	
	Explain how industry conditions affect alliances in this capability area			X			X	X

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