

Functional relationship mapping

Relationships are often taken for granted, we expect relationships to run by themselves without really a need for management. But successful relationships are hard work, regardless of the type of relationships. Supplier-customer, strategic alliance relationships, even personal relationships, they all demand a lot of attention, communication and work to stay healthy.

There are many tools to support you in managing your strategic relationships. One of them is the functional mapping or peer to peer mapping tool. In the basics a very simple tool, but the simplicity of the tool once again is a proof point that “less is more”.

The idea behind the functional mapping tool is that you use it to map out the functional relationships between your organization and your partners organization. Functional mapping is based on the fact that organizations are different and hence your peer may be on a different organizational level than at first would be expected.

You		Partner
Business line GM	↔	CEO
Project Manager	↔	Product Manager
Alliance Manager	↔	Project Manager
VP of Development	↔	Head of R&D

The obvious example to explain this is the example of a partnership between a large multinational and a small local firm. The functional peer of the CEO of the local firm may very well be the General Manager of a business unit in the multinational rather than the CEO of the multinational.

The functional mapping tool will help you to define day to day interactions and also map escalation paths where peers meet peers to resolve issues or guide strategy for the alliance. It is highly recommended to do the mapping in the preparation phase, actually even before the alliance starts.

The model used can be quite simple, like in the table on the next page. You map your people to your partners people. Describing functional role, names, titles and responsibilities in the relationship. The third column in the table often is the most interesting one. When using this status column in a simple color code in red, yellow and green you will be able to provide a status traffic light to the relation. Red for instance can mean that the two people are identified but have never met.

Interesting element in the use of this mapping and color coding is that when you discuss the mapping in your own organization and an executive sees a red mark behind his name you will immediately have his attention: in general nobody likes a red mark behind their name and will have the desire to do something about it!

Yellow in the model can mean that they are aware of each other, perhaps met a few times, but no working relationship, green is good and will mean that there is a strong working relationship and high level of trust.

It appears that many organizations do not use this basic yet powerful tool!

Functional Relationship Mapping

Partnership:

Date:

	Your company	Your partner	Status
Name			
Title			
Functional Role			
Responsibilities			
Name			
Title			
Functional Role			
Responsibilities			
Name			
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