25 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

Insights on 25 Elements Companies Apply to Create and Manage Highly Successful Alliances and Partnerships with Other Companies
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Peter J. Simoons
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Peter Simoons is a business coach who specializes in working with entrepreneurs, business leaders and alliance professionals to help them consistently improve their success with partnerships and strategic alliances in the collaborative business world.

Peter's previous experience include decades of working in partnerships and new business development. In his final corporate assignment, Peter was the Global Alliance Executive responsible for the alliance between two multinationals. As an entrepreneur and Certified Strategic Alliance Professional (CSAP), his clients have included industry leaders such as Microsoft, DSM, Reckitt Benckiser, Office Depot, Philips, World WaterNet and eVision Industry Software.

It is Peter's strong belief that the business world is changing and that collaboration has become the name of the game. Collaboration with peers, with stakeholders, within the team,
within the organization hierarchy and outside the organization in strategic alliances has become an essential factor towards success.

Simply entering into collaboration, however, is not enough for it to succeed. To thrive in the collaborative business world, you need to hone your personal leadership skills and become well versed in elements such as stakeholder management, relationship development and organizational collaboration. At the same time, mastering personal productivity and balancing work/life integration is also essential.

In short, Peter asserts that your personal relationship will make the difference in your life, your organization, and your collaborations with your clients and in your career, now more than ever.

In 2013, Peter walked the Camino to Santiago de Compostela. This pilgrimage brought him a life-altering experience and many stories, which often come back as anecdotes in his daily work. Peter is the father of four kids and lives in the Amsterdam area in the Netherlands. As an avid photographer, Peter captures many stunning views and amazing moments.

More details about Peter Simoons and his work can be found at http://petersimoons.com
**Introduction: 25 Tips for Successful Partnerships**

Many of the innovations that changed the way we live today are the result of successful business partnerships. The partnership of Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, for example, gave us the Mac, the iPod and the iPhone. The partnership of Bill Gates and Paul Allen resulted in Microsoft. Popular American ice cream brand Ben and Jerry's came out of the partnership between Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield. Technology giant and the biggest search engine on the Internet, Google, is the product of the partnership between Larry Page and Sergey Brin. Business partnerships have become the strongest pillars and the undeniable catalysts of change in our society today.

Many business experts, however, compare business partnerships to marriages. Some work while some don't. The question is this: What is it that makes some companies so highly successful in all the partnerships and alliances they create, while some never flourish at all?

On the outside, they may seem simply lucky – they seem to have something that others don't have. The reality is that successful companies just do things differently: They follow a structured approach and stick to it consistently.

What is it that successful companies do differently which guarantee that whatever partnerships they enter into thrive and meet their set goals? They tend to apply 25 elements as part of their structured approach to creating and managing their alliances and partnerships. I shall be elaborating these 25 elements as we go along, but for now, let's get a few things about strategic alliances clear.

In the first place, what does the phrase "strategic alliance" even mean? For the sake of clarity, here's the definition we are going to use:

*A strategic alliance is a strategic cooperation between two or more organizations, with the aim to achieve a result one of the parties cannot (easily) achieve alone.*
As per that definition, a strategic alliance is focused on long-term goals. Partners contribute some of their resources to attain success. In exchange, they will receive a portion of the control and benefits from the alliance. Alliances are created with an eye towards growth, with both parties working towards that growth.

From that definition, we can also conclude that pure sales transactions do not make an alliance. In pure sales transactions, one gets to sell something in exchange for revenue in whatever form. However, that relationship is purely transactional; it happens for that moment alone and not for the long haul. The seller and the buyer have not entered a collaboration that will result in something of value that cannot be achieved by the seller or the buyer alone.

So, organizations form alliances and partnerships so they can achieve something they cannot easily achieve alone. How is that possible? There are three main reasons that can explain the power behind partnerships, and these three reasons are:

1. **Knowledge transfer.** One reason why companies enter into partnerships with other companies is so they can gain knowledge or intellectual property they need that the partner company has. This mutual exchange of knowledge can lead to the creation of something new. For example, Philips is a leading manufacturer of household appliances. Sara Lee/DouweEgberts is a coffee company. Together in the Senseo alliance, they were able to create a balanced coffeemaker with dedicated coffee supplies.

2. **Market development.** Another reason why companies form alliances is to develop new markets or extend their own markets for their products. Alone, one company will find it difficult to enter their target market without the knowledge and assets of their partner. A good illustration of this is the partnership of Starbucks and Pepsi formed in 1994; together they created the market for bottled cold coffee drinks.
3. **Efficiency.** More often than not, it's better to partner with an organization that already has the systems and resources you need to improve your product than to expend capital in developing these systems and resources on your own. This is what Rolls Royce did in 2003, when they established an alliance with several logistic partners; this alliance led to an increase in Rolls Royce's on-time delivery time and greatly reduced costs without making a dent on profits.

Your alliance will be able to attain the knowledge transfer, market development and efficiency you desire if you follow a structured approach to forming your alliance right from the start. There is a principle called the 80% rule:

The companies that follow a structured alliance management process consistently report a better success rate with their alliances than the average - up to 80% success. The companies that approach alliances in an ad hoc fashion report only a success rate of 20%. That is the 80% rule: 80% of ad hoc unstructured business partnerships and strategic alliances fail, while on the other hand 80% of the companies that follow a structured approach create successful business partnerships and strategic alliances.

The alliance lifecycle framework as described by the Association of Strategic Alliance Professionals (ASAP) contains such a structured approach. The framework identifies the following seven steps for alliance success:

1. **Alliance specific strategy:** in this phase you will set the business context, align with strategies, think about the value proposition, and make the fundamental decision whether you should do it yourself, acquire another company, or establish a strategic alliance for the opportunity you have in mind.

2. **Partner analysis & selection:** is the phase where you will due your partner selection and due diligence. You will assess which organization will be the best partner for you and your opportunity.
3. **Building trust & value creating negotiation**: is about the formation of the alliance. You will work to build trust with your partner and form an alliance where the values of both partners are respected and each strategic vision is represented.

4. **Operational planning**: is the phase where the two partners will jointly create an operational plan that will lead the day to day operation of the alliance.

5. **Alliance structuring & governance**: this phase has its focus on creating the governance structure and the organizational and legal frameworks. This phase will normally be concluded with a contract.

6. **Launching & management**: is all about alliance operation; the newly established business partnership is in execution.

7. **Transform, Innovate or Exit**: is about innovating the alliance and transforming it to a new form or shape or exit when needed.

An alliance lifecycle framework can best be viewed as a toolbox where every step in the lifecycle will have its sub-steps supported by tools based on best practices. Smaller companies with a demand for a more lightweight and agile framework can as such use the same framework as the large organizations do, however apply a different selection of tools better suited to their situation.

Alliance formation is not an easy task. My 25 tips for successful partnerships as described in this book highlight the most important elements to take into consideration when creating or managing alliances and partnerships.

Here is a quick overview of these 25 tips:

1. **Know your initial reason for entering into a partnership** and focus on that initial reason during the formation of the partnership. Once formed and operational, growing
the scope of the partnership into other areas is generally easier than initially creating a partnership that has a continuously expanding scope.

2. **Be clear on your reason for partnering.** Many companies just jump into a partnership because they view it as an opportunity. Others enter the partnership because they like each other and feel they can create something beautiful together. If you're not clear on your reason for partnering, you may end up making a false start and landing on the wrong side of the 80% rule.

3. **Do a proper fit analysis on your potential partner,** as it will help you select the right partner. It will show you which areas you are the same and which areas you are different from each other. The differences will be the points you'll have to pay attention to during the alliance management phase.

4. **Ensure a three-way value proposition.** Without value proposition, there will be no room for a healthy partnership. The value proposition needs to deliver value for the three parties involved: your partner, your own organization, and the customer.

5. **Create a contributions, needs and benefits matrix** before entering the first conversation with your proposed partner. This will help you create a clear picture of how your partnership will look like as well as assist you in preparing for a solid first meeting. Remember: Those who forget to prepare are preparing themselves to be forgotten.
6. **Ensure solid executive sponsorship.** Your partnerships are not there just for fun. They are supposed to be of strategic importance to your organization. This means your top management has to sign off on it as early as possible to save you time and resources as well as to speed up alliance formation and management.

7. **Set a cadence of governance.** Being clear about roles and responsibilities is one thing. However, managing the stakeholders is another. You need to create a schedule that defines who in your partnership needs to have contact with whom and at what frequency.

8. **Understand the cultural differences.** Your partner will be from a different company with quite likely a different culture. Even within your own company, different cultures will appear. Understanding these differences inside your own organization and your partner's organization is the first step towards a successful joint partnership culture.

9. **Agree on a set of alliance core values and operating principles.** It will help bridge the differences in culture and operating styles. It's good practice to review the core values and operating principles in steering committee meetings to ensure everyone is reading on the same page.

10. **Be clear on the roles and responsibilities** in both your own and your partners' organization. All too often we tend to make assumptions about roles and responsibilities. Clarify these roles and responsibilities early on and maintain that clarity with the help of a simple peer-mapping tool.
11. **Build and maintain your business plan** from the early stages on. Business or operating plans are the backbone of your partnership. Start building one before you actually approach a partner and keep on refining the plan during the creation and management phases. A partnership will thrive with an active plan and not with a "desk drawer" plan.

12. **Make sure the objectives for partnering are aligned for both partners.** There's no need to have the same objectives, but the objectives of the partners in the partnership need to be in line for them to be successful.

13. **Agree on an exit plan** during the negotiation phase. It may sound counterproductive, but it's better to agree upon the way to exit in the early stages when the atmosphere is good and you don't feel the need for it. After all, it's better to know how the fire escapes works before a fire occurs.

14. **Prepare your partnership to follow a structured process.** A structured process contains the roadmap to successful partnerships. Keep it pragmatic in a way that fits with your organization.

15. **Be flexible in transitioning the partnership when circumstances change.** You will start the partnership with an intention and scope based on what you know and your strategy at the time of creation. However, circumstances, the market or the opportunity may change. As such, it will be good to transform the partnership into a new form or shape to ensure future success.
16. **Sharing is the foundation for partnering.** Without sharing, it will be difficult to create a partnership or alliance. However, do know what you share, when and with whom. Sharing your intellectual property without a proper non-disclosure agreement in place is not the smartest thing to do.

17. **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Communicate and check your communication to ensure that the message you meant to communicate is properly understood.

18. **Create an internal strategic alliance definition.** All too often we assume that my understanding of a term is also your understanding. Don't make assumptions but ensure that you have one common understanding in your communication of what a partnership or strategic alliance is. Creating your own internal definition helps to align people and departments while going forward.

19. **Be clear with your prospective partner on the terms you use.** If the partner talks about a joint venture, do they really mean sharing stock or are those the words they use to describe what you would call a partnership? Clarity precedes mastery.

20. **Build and maintain trust.** Trust is hard to build but easy to lose. You have to build and maintain trust constantly in your partnerships.

21. **Avoid hidden agendas.** Hidden agendas are partnership killers. The trust in an alliance is killed the moment you have a hidden agenda or you start feeling your
partner has one. You will always doubt what the other really means, and you will never completely trust your partner, and vice versa.

22. **Manage your stakeholders.** Ideally, everyone involved in a partnership should be supporting the partnership enthusiastically and working to move it forward. Unfortunately, there will be stakeholders in your alliance who won't like it or like it less than you do. You need to work these stakeholders to transform them into champions or cheerleaders for your partnership.

23. **Make sure all stakeholders are on board** by the time of alliance launch. All too often we see alliances going through difficult times because the alliance management teams forget to bring all stakeholders on board. Making a proper stakeholder analysis before the launch will help prevent this problem.

24. **Measure alliance performance on leading indicators to adjust outcomes.** Revenue is important, but it is an outcome, a lagging indicator. When measuring your alliance's progress, measure the leading indicators toward alliance success and revenue instead of just looking at the result at the end of the line.

25. **Measure and evaluate your progress.** At the beginning of an alliance, you have set some clear goals. Along the way it is important to know how you are doing so you can adjust where needed and, thus, stay on the right course to alliance success.

These are the 25 elements you need to meet in order to create and maintain successful alliances and partnerships for your business. Without most of these elements, whatever
partnerships or alliances you forge for your business will flounder instead of flourish. We shall elaborate on each of these 25 elements along the way.
Tip 1: Know Your Initial Reason for Entering into a Partnership

When you form a close and personal relationship with someone, either a marriage or a long-term relationship, do you take the time to think of the benefits you will receive when you enter that relationship, or are the words "I love you" reason enough for you? Many long-term relationships and marriages do succeed because the people involved love each other. But any marriage counselor will tell you that for such relationships to work, the couple has to find reasons to love each other and to work on those reasons constantly so they can live together in harmony.

The same principle applies with business partnerships and alliances. You have to figure out what your reason for entering the partnership in the first place before you actually sit down for your first meeting with your potential partner. This initial reason for a partnership will define its scope, and it will be one of the leading elements in the process of creating the alliance or partnership. This reason will be one of the factors that will help you see this partnership through.

Of course, once you start talking to your prospective partner, you will learn to know their organization better, and they will learn to know your organization more as well. These exchanges may lead to spotting new opportunities for partnering, and it may be very challenging to decide not to include these opportunities in the creation of the alliance.

For sure, additional opportunities can be included as a list with potential areas for later expansion. However, it is essential to limit the scope of the initial alliance for now, as it will make the process of alliance creation easier. Laurence Capron and Will Mitchell indicate in their book *Build, Borrow or Buy: Solving the Growth Dilemma* (2012) that the cost of coordinating the alliance will also rise substantially when the scope expands. In a research study they surveyed among telecom companies, 65% of the executives involved in alliances report high cost and coordination tensions with their partners. The most successful firms were the ones using alliances for focused collaboration only.
Capron and Mitchell concluded that an alliance will be most effective and manageable when a limited number of functions, activities and people are involved. To quote:

"Limiting the points of contact helps you control the alliance's direct and indirect costs, by avoiding duplicative investments in R&D, plants, staff, and coordination activities." (Ch. 4).

It also indicates that, from an alliance management perspective, a limited scope is desired when starting an alliance or partnership.

The takeaway here is you should focus on the initial reason and the initial scope for partnering during the formation of the partnership. Once the partnership is formed and operational, you can expand the scope of your partnership into other areas more easily rather than creating a partnership that has a continuously expanding scope from the get-go. When you create your list of potential areas for growth during alliance formation, you can then decide at what stage the alliance partners will evaluate if an expansion is desired.

*Decide your initial reason for entering the partnership and focus on that reason in the formation process. You can expand the scope of your partnership later.*
Tip 2: Be Clear on Your Reason for Partnering

It can't be emphasized enough how important it is to find your reason for partnering before you actually enter into the partnership. Without a clear and fully defined reason for partnering, you won't really know if the alliance you are forming will be beneficial for your business in the long run. It's like taking a road trip across the country without an intended destination or a road map.

Unfortunately, many companies small and large dive into partnerships for the wrong reasons or without deciding on a good reason for the partnership first. They don't ask the essential question: "Is partnering the right solution for our growth?" This choice should be answered early on in the process.

The decision to grow organically, acquire the technology or to partner with another company should be fed by your company's strategy. Moreover, your department's strategy should be in line with that overall strategy. In the early stages of a potential partnership, you should already determine what tool the answer is for the goal you have in mind. Each of your choices – to build, to buy or to partner – will have their own advantages and disadvantages in growing your organization.

This equally applies to larger companies as well as to solo entrepreneurs. You may not call it a strategy if you're a solo entrepreneur. Perhaps you may call it your mission or your purpose in business. Whatever you call it, the growth steps you make should be in line with your reason for being in the business in the first place.

In the book *Start with Why* (2009), Simon Sinek describes how companies and people who know their "why" are, in general, more successful than those who don't. Sinek illustrates a golden circle with the "why" in the middle. This "why" circle is then surrounded by another circle labeled "how," and the "how" circle is lastly enclosed by another circle labeled "what."

Every organization should know its reason for being. They should know and be driven by their "why." The sad thing is many companies are working from the outside of the circle in –
they know what to do and how they do it, but only a few know why they do it at all. On the other hand, highly successful companies with a great following and a loyal customer base work from the inside out. They know why they do what they do, and this "why" drives their "how" and leads into the "what."

A similar thinking applies to creating partnerships and strategic alliances on multiple levels. If your company knows why you are doing what you are doing, you know the how and the what. Initially creating partnerships and alliances will be part of the "how," but also within the "how" you will need to know the "why" of choosing a partnership over another way of growing the company. Do know exactly why you choose to be in an alliance before establishing one!

In other words, be clear on your reason for partnering in the first place. Many companies just jump into a partnership because they see an opportunity or simply because the people running the companies involved like each other and feel the need to do something together. Or they have been approached by another organization with a proposal to partner.

These reasons are actually the worst for starting a partnership. The partnership proposal may look very attractive to those involved, and this often results in a partnership created too quickly. In such situations, it's essential to go back to the first stage and question your strategic rationale. Be very clear on your reason for partnering and ensure a good start at the right side of the 80% rule.

Just like with marriage or long-term relationships, you may find your potential partner attractive at first. But once the attraction has faded and you have gotten the chance to look at your partner more closely, you may find that being with them does not help you grow at all.

*Be clear with how the partnership will benefit you before you even start negotiating the partnership.*
Tip 3: Do a Proper Fit Analysis on Your Potential Partner

When choosing a partner for a relationship, any relationship, do you take the time to get to know them? Or do you simply decide you like them and hope for the best? Obviously, taking the time to get to know a potential partner is considered ideal. Right from the start, you develop an idea of whether or not this person is compatible with you and shares the same values with you. Simply deciding you like a person and hoping for the best more often than not leads to disappointment and wasted time, especially when you find the other party to be incompatible with you.

Partner selection is an important element in the alliance creation process. You need to select your partner properly because this selection will form a part of the solid foundation for your alliance's success. It's far too common to develop an initial liking for your counterpart upon meeting them at a conference, at a bar or on the plane and feel that your respective companies should work together based on this mutual liking. However, alliances that spring from these situations seldom lead to successful partnerships.

How then do you identify if your potential partner is truly right for you? The answer is in conducting a proper fit analysis between you and your potential partner. This proper fit analysis will help you select the right partner. It will also teach you where the two of you are different. Additionally, these differences will be your points of attention during the alliance management phase. After all, it's better to have points of attention than points of tension.

The proper fit analysis doesn't have to be a cumbersome process. As I described in my book, The 4-Step Guide to Successful Partner Selection, there are basically four essential steps in successful partner selection:

1. The strategic rationale
2. Needs and contributions
3. The ideal partner profile

4. Approach the partner

By following these four steps, you will increase the chance for successful partner selection. When you have selected the right partner, the chances of your creating a successful alliance or partnership also increases.

Even if you are planning to talk to only one potential partner and if you have no intention to approach others at all, it will still be good for you to follow these four steps and to practice the belonging exercises as described in my book. These exercises will teach you how to know your potential partner better before establishing a relationship with them.

When done right, the exercise will show you some of the possible differences between your company and the partner. From that perspective, you will also realize the points of attention for managing the partnership during its operation.

Remember that every tall building has a number of floors located underground. These underground floors are needed in combination with the building's foundation to keep it stable. Every partnership needs its design and groundwork to end up on the success side of the 80% rule. Thus, partner selection is one of the basic and essential elements for creating successful alliances and partnerships.

*A proper fit analysis ensures you choose the right partner for your endeavor, which in turn ensures success with the partnership.*
Tip 4: Ensure a Three-Way Value Proposition

In an ideal world, altruism or selflessness – the capacity for doing something without expectation of anything in return except for the sheer pleasure of being able to serve others – is a good virtue to possess. Being selfless makes us akin to angels.

We don't live in an ideal world, however, and it is only natural for us to expect something in return whenever we do a good deed, even if it is only the sheer pleasure that comes with service. Rarely do people give something for nothing. So before you approach a potential partner with a proposal for a partnership or alliance, you have to answer a question they will be sure to have: "What's in it for me?"

Inasmuch as you have to determine the reason why you would want to partner with someone, you have to figure out what benefits your potential partner will get out of partnering with you. This concept is called the value proposition.

The value proposition is where it all starts. Or at least, that's where it should all start. Without value proposition, there is no room for a healthy partnership. You will need to have an idea of the value proposition before approaching a partner. For sure, the value proposition may develop as the partnership gets underway; after all, your partner will also bring some assets and advantages to the table. But before that happens, you have to have a view on the value proposition before going ahead with forging your partnership.

A lot of business gurus talk about the win-win proposition. In any two-way relationship, building a win-win situation is definitely correct. Both parties need to win as a result of the value proposition.

However, the value proposition in a partnership needs to deliver the goods, so to speak, to the two cohorts that formed the partnership. The benefits have to extend to the third party in the partnership as well, namely the customers. Hence, the value proposition needs to be a WIN-WIN-WIN-WIN – a win for your organization, a win for your partner, and a win for your customers.
It's important to be clear about the value proposition from all three angles. The value for all partners needs to be in balance in order to achieve considerable success. Balance in this case does not necessarily mean everything is equal for all parties. You can have an agreement that one party gains more value from the partnership than the other. But when that's the case, it should also be in line with the contributions of the partners in your relationship.

Compare the balance in a value proposition to a tripod used in photography. If one of the three legs of the tripod is unstable, the resulting photo will be out of focus. More importantly, the camera the tripod is supporting may fall and break.

Defining the value proposition is an exercise with multiple phases. First, during your initial phase, you will determine the value proposition as you would like to see it. It will be very hard to find a partner without an idea of the value proposition.

Secondly, during your conversation with the potential partner and while designing the alliance, you will need to refine the value proposition as you go along.

When the alliance is launched and in progress, it's also important to review the value proposition every now and then. Situations may change, markets may change, and perhaps insights may change as well as you and your partner get to know each other better. It's good practice to review the value proposition during the existence of the alliance. During this review, you may likely discover new and exciting opportunities that will affect your partnership.

*Before you enter any partnership, make it a point to answer the question "What's in it for you?" not just for you but also for your potential partner and customer. That's how you figure out the value proposition.*
Tip 5: Create a Contributions Matrix

"Those who forget to prepare are preparing themselves to be forgotten." This is a popular saying among coaches and productivity gurus, although I'm not even sure if it's an official adage. If you forget to prepare to do your work, you are preparing yourself to be forgotten by those you work with.

The same is true for partnerships and alliances. In every step you make with a partner or prospective partner, you need to prepare carefully. You need to prepare to get the best out of the steps you make. You need to prepare to get the best for you, for your partner, and for your customers. You need to prepare to make a lasting impression with your partner and be remembered, even when you decide not to pursue the joint partnership.

In the previous chapter, we talked about answering the question "What's in it for me?" The answer is this: You have to create a contributions, needs and benefits matrix.

A contributions, needs and benefits matrix is an extremely helpful tool you can use to get ready with your meetings with your partner, including your very first formal meeting as potential partners. This matrix is basically a 3x3 chart as shown in the example below. In the matrix, you simply list the contributions you will bring to the partnership, as well as the contributions you will expect from your partner.

Additionally, you should also list down the needs you expect the partnership to meet for it to be successful. You also assess what you feel your partner will need and list these too.

Finally, you write down what the partnership will bring in terms of benefits – benefits to you, your partner, and your customer.

This matrix will create an overview of how the partnership is balanced. It will provide a definitive answer to the question everyone will be looking at first: "What's in it for me?"
What is the best way to use the contributions matrix? The answer to that is simple: Come prepared to the meeting by doing your homework. Fill in the matrix before the meeting with your view of the partnership. Then, during the meeting, discuss the matrix with your partner and adjust it where needed. This will help create clarity quickly. It will also help you build trust with your partner. In every other stage of a partnership creation, openness and transparency are needed for this document to become a joint document between you and your partner.

When done right, the contributions matrix will easily turn into a joint document that will help build the foundation of your partnership. Of course, you may be looking to build a light but solid partnership without too many documents. Even so, you will always need two basic documents. One of these should be the contributions matrix, the other one being your business or action plan for the partnership.

The contributions matrix provides you with the bigger picture of what your partnership is supposed to be. It will also help create the foundation of your partnership, as well as the trust between you and your partner.

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1 For a free download of a template of the contributions matrix go to http://petersimoons.com/alliance-weekly and register for the Alliance Weekly newsletter.
Tip 6: Ensure Solid Executive Sponsorship

Before you get busy with forming a relationship with your prospective business partner, you have to ask yourself this first: Are the higher-ups within your organization on board with the potential partnership or alliance?

Partnerships are not there for fun. Partnerships are of strategic importance to your organization. That means your top management needs to support the partnership and you want to ensure that you have the support of an executive sponsor. This executive sponsor will have a role towards his counterpart in the partner organization, with whom they will need to build a relationship and trust, and find a way to work together. Otherwise, without executive support and sponsorship, the relationship between your respective organizations will simply fail.

The role of an executive sponsor is broader than just building relationships and trust. The sponsor will be your executive champion, evangelizing about the alliance and getting the other executives in your organization to come to your side. Your executive sponsor shall also provide strategic guidance; the guidance they will provide will be the escalation point when the alliance manager faces issues that cannot be overcome on their level.

At the end of the day, the executive sponsor will be responsible overall for the performance of the alliance. In daily practice, it will most likely mean that he has a delegated responsibility to the alliance manager. The executive will remain on the background maintaining oversight, while the alliance manager will be held accountable for daily results.

This means that the alliance manager will need to build a close working relationship with the executive sponsor. There should be a constant information flow of the alliance's progress without overloading and without under-informing the sponsor. In other words, the executive sponsor will be the alliance manager's best friend within the organization.

Given how essential the executive sponsor is in the alliance, it's important that they be selected carefully. In smaller organizations, this might be relatively easy. You'll probably only
need to go to one of the top executives in the organization. But whatever the size of your organization is, it's paramount that you think about the value of the alliance to the business area of your would-be executive sponsor.

On the other hand, it's just as necessary for you to have a look at the said executive's clout and longevity in the organization. Think about it – what can they really accomplish towards the success of your partnership?

I have seen two completely opposite examples of how executive sponsors are chosen in my client organizations. One client always chose the most senior in line to be their sponsor. The advantage of this choice is that the executive will have a stake in the alliance. The results of the alliance will consolidate into their overall results. The downside is this client was a typically large company where job rotation was, on the average, once every three to four years. This necessitates changing the sponsor every three to four years as well. In an alliance with a company that was still being led by the founders after many years, this resulted in a complaint about "frequent changing of executives" by the client.

In another example with a different client, they generally made the choice for sponsor with sufficient seniority in general company management. Here I experienced that an executive sponsor moved from overall global responsibility for one product line to overall global responsibility for another product. In both cases, the executive remained sponsor for the partnership and was personally measured for its overall results.

In the end, choosing the sponsor will also depend on the company's culture. For instance, what would have worked in the second example I have stated above would have done nothing for the first example.

When an alliance is of strategic importance to your organization, the chances it can flourish without executive sponsorship are minimal. The alliance may grow in the early stages while still under the radar screen, but the reality is you already started off in the wrong mode at
that point. Executive sponsorship needs to be ensured early on before moving into partner selection. Otherwise, any alliance forged is doomed to fail or fated to a false start.

Executive sponsorship is essential to the success of the partnership because it's the embodiment of the organization's support for the endeavor.
Tip 7: Set a Cadence of Governance

Did you know that in any orchestra, the most important member is actually the conductor? The individual musicians making up the orchestra may know how to play their piece, but they can't achieve the unity and harmony required in playing a symphony without the conductor's guidance. The conductor is the one with the plan of how the symphony should sound, and so they have to direct when and how every note should be played to create the desired unity and harmony in the symphony.

Managing an alliance is like managing an orchestra. It requires a lot of attention, and the alliance manager is the conductor who needs to assure that all the team members are in tune and playing from the same music sheet. Even for an experienced alliance manager, it can be a challenging task to keep together everything the partnership needs to stay alive. One way to keep the alliance on a steady track is to set up a clear cadence of governance – a series of periodic meetings that enable you to manage the alliance activities in a systematic way.

Even in the best-managed alliances, ad-hoc alliance management is sometimes required when crises emerge unexpectedly and require immediate attention. However, in general, you want to avoid ad-hoc alliance management. Setting up a cadence of governance is helpful in averting such situations.

When setting up the cadence of governance, you map out who will meet whom and when. Included in the setup is what the topics on the agenda for the regular meetings are. It can be a matrix model as simple as the sketch shown below. This one is basically a 3x6 matrix – in the rows you set the regular agenda items and the attendees for the meetings. The leftmost column, on the other hand, contains the ad-hoc contacts, the next one the weekly contacts, then monthly, quarterly, and so on.
The model can be adjusted based on the needs of your particular alliance. You can add dates to it, be more specific about agenda items and attendees, as well as add other useful elements to the model. Of course, you can also make the layout as fancy as you like. However, do keep functionality in mind. The matrix needs to provide a clear overview that will support the management of the alliance.

In one of the alliances I managed in a large corporation, we used such a model. At first, I had a call with my partner counterpart on a weekly basis to discuss the progress of the overall alliance and its sub-projects. Later on, we moved this status meeting to a bi-weekly call. Our executive sponsors were set to meet twice a year and, hence, in the matrix we added another column to include the six-month cycle.

The cadence of governance is very easy to use. It's a pragmatic tool to help you manage your alliances. I recommend that you set up the model early on in the process of your designing the alliance governance and to communicate it to the teams. As the alliance matures, the cadence may need to change, as is the case in the example mentioned above.

*The cadence of governance keeps your alliance activities on track as well as lets everyone involved communicating and accountable for their tasks.*
Tip 8: Understand the Cultural Differences

When two people begin occupying the same space – as roommates or dorm-mates, as co-workers using the same office, as a couple living together – one of the many possible sources of conflict that can spring between them is the way they do things. One person may be messy, while the other is fastidious to a fault. One may be a vegan, while the other is a dedicated meat-eater. Each one of them has a culture of their own, and if the parties involved don't make the effort to understand their cultural differences and make a compromise, the relationship is sure to break down.

The same is true with building business partnerships. When establishing a partnership with another company, you are bringing two different cultures together. These are the kind of cultures that are not primarily driven by geography, but simply by "the way we do things around here."

Even your next door neighbor company will have a different culture than your own company has. In larger organizations, you will see that even within the company different cultures appear. Every department will have its own micro-culture with its own habits and values, which might differ slightly from the culture of other departments and from the overall company culture.

Company cultures might even be driven by the culture of the country itself. For instance, a French company will likely have a different internal culture than an American company. Think about elements like how you deal with timeliness and eating lunch, for instance. In some cultures, a meeting should start punctually on the hour to be considered on time; for some, starting ten minutes after the hour is still on time. In some cultures, it's acceptable for a person to take a sandwich to their desk so they can eat lunch while working; for others, afternoon tasks are impossible without a proper, multi-course meal.
Sometimes, culture is not an issue; you are two of a kind and working together is seamless for you. However, more often than not, the two cultures require attention and the alliance will probably create a third culture within the companies.

Understanding cultural differences inside your own organization and your partner's organization is essential. It's the first step towards a successful joint partnership culture.

Sometimes, your partner will offer you a helping hand so you can learn about their company culture firsthand and with their guidance. Sometimes, you have to do your own homework to discover how your partner's organizational culture works. For instance, an Internet search on the key phrase "company culture" will bring up pages describing different companies' unique culture.

Whatever you find about the culture of your prospective partner online or elsewhere, you need to realize that this is the desired, marketing-justified, description of their culture. This might not be the actual culture that exists within their offices. On the other hand, it might in fact be their culture indeed, but you will still need to assess it yourself. After your assessment, you should, jointly with your counterpart in the partnership, create a collaborative way of working that fits both company cultures, thus creating the third culture mentioned earlier.

*Merging cultures with your partner and finding a way to do things together shall push you even further towards your partnership's success.*
Tip 9: Agree on a Set of Alliance Core Values and Operating Principles

You and your partner will be able to accomplish so many things just by trying to bridge your organizations' two distinct cultures and create a third culture that's all your own. This shared culture will build a way for you and your partner to understand each other on a deeper level.

However, it's not just your culture, the way you do things that you should find a compromise with when you start your partnership. You and your partner have to agree to a set of core values. With a shared set of core values, you and your partner put yourself on the same page in determining what's truly important in your relationship.

When the alliance is ready for kickoff, agreeing to a set of core values or operating principles is a good way to set expectations between two or more partners with different cultures and operating styles. You could argue that this should already have been covered in the legal contract that forms the foundation of the alliance. The problem with contracts, though, is lawyers often draft them with a protective mindset for their client. These contracts in general are sizeable documents, and people only look into them after the signing when the alliance starts going sour.

A set of core values and operating principles should be captured on one sheet. Additionally, this sheet should be easy to access. This sheet will guide the daily operation of the partnership. It will help bridge differences, especially when they are reviewed on a regular basis, such as during key partner meetings.

When you talk about what your core values and operating principles should be, you should be clear on the meaning of the words you use. For instance, if your operating principles contain a word like "quickly," it's important to jointly understand and define what "quickly" means for both parties in the alliance. Suppose your principles include a notice that decision-making will be done quickly and your company has a startup mentality, then "quickly" can mean as fast as between here and the elevator during the next hallway walk. But if your partner is a
large organization, "quickly" can mean that it may take three consensus-driven, hour-long meetings to come to a quick decision.

In Norma Watenpaugh's 2009 article on creating value from innovation and the role of alliances, she mentioned that the key operating principle in the Rolls-Royce Starfish alliance is that there was no limit to profit for each of the partners. On the other hand, the SAS whitepaper on the outsourcing partnership between Proctor& Gamble and Hewlett-Packard described this partnership as containing elements like "look and strive for win-win" and "communicate openly, often and clearly."

It is the best practice among alliances to review the common values and principles as the first agenda item at key partner meetings. Be clear on the meanings of the words you use! Clarifying until you agree on a common meaning will help cross bridges and create trust within the partnership. Values will then become the governing principles for your alliance and will help foster win-win thinking and behavior.

*Agreeing on a set of core values and operating principles with clear definitions of terms creates understanding and trust within your partnership.*
Tip 10: Be Clear on the Roles and Responsibilities

Anyone who has been in a marriage or long-term relationship would know that maintaining such a relationship takes a lot of work. Even if the partners involved in the relationship have been together for a number of years, there will always be some kinks that need smoothing over. If those kinks are left as they are, they will become a source of conflict later on.

Business relationships are the same. Sadly, they are often taken for granted. We expect relationships to run by themselves without any real need for management, but successful relationships always require hard work regardless of the type of relationship they may be. Supplier-customer, strategic alliance relationships – they all demand a lot attention, communication and effort to stay healthy.

There are many tools that can support you in managing your strategic relationships. One such tool is the functional mapping tool. It is a simple yet powerful tool that proves that "less is more" – it will help you identify and create clarity in the roles and responsibilities in both your own and your partner's organizations.

The idea behind the tool is that you use it to map out the functional relationships between your organization and your partner's 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.

The obvious example for explaining this is the 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 its actual CEO.

The functional mapping tool will help you define day-to-day interactions, as well as map escalation paths where peers meet peers to resolve issues or guide strategy for the alliance. It's highly recommended that you do this mapping in the preparation phase, even before you launch
the alliance. You don't want to find out who the right peer is only in the middle of a crisis that requires escalation!

The model you can use for your functional mapping tool can be quite simple, like in the table below. You map your people to your partner's people, describing their functional role, names, titles and responsibilities in the relationship. The third column in the table is often the most interesting one. The easy color-coding of red, yellow and green in this status column is akin to providing a status traffic light in your partnership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOU</th>
<th>PARTNER</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Role: Name: Title:</td>
<td>Functional Role: Name: Title:</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities:</td>
<td>Responsibilities:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Role: Name: Title:</td>
<td>Functional Role: Name: Title:</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities:</td>
<td>Responsibilities:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Role: Name: Title:</td>
<td>Functional Role: Name: Title:</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities:</td>
<td>Responsibilities:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Red, for instance, can mean that the two people are identified but have never met. What makes this color interesting in the context of the functional mapping tool is when you discuss the mapping in your own organization and an executive sees a red mark behind their name, they will immediately have their attention. In general, nobody likes a red mark behind his or her name. They will want to do something about it immediately.

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2 For a free download of a functional mapping template go to [http://petersimoons.com/alliance-weekly](http://petersimoons.com/alliance-weekly) and register for the Alliance Weekly newsletter
On the other hand, the yellow color in the model can mean that the two people identified know of each other and have perhaps met a few times, but there is no working relationship between them. Meanwhile, green is good and means there is already a strong working relationship and a high level of trust between the two peers.

The functional mapping tool is a highly underrated tool because it seems that few organizations actually use it. That's why it almost always comes as a surprise whenever this tool pops up as a topic for discussion in workshops. It's really recommended that you use the functional mapping tool and that you fill it up right during the preparation phase, before you launch the alliance.

*Define the roles within your partnership using a functional mapping tool so you'd be clear with who is responsible for what and who coordinates with whom.*
Tip 11: Build and Maintain Your Business Plan from Early Stages Onward

So you and your prospective partner have agreed to enter into an alliance and do business together. Now what? What are you going to do together, and how are you going to do it?

These questions will be answered effectively with a business plan. Business or operating plans are the backbone of your partnership. Your alliance's business plan will drive the execution of the decisions made during your strategic rationale and alliance design. This plan needs to be active – that is, it should serve as the foundation for operational actions rather than a mere static document that, once created, ends up in a (virtual) desk drawer.

The most obvious moment to work on the business plan is usually in the design phase of the alliance. However, it's even better to start building the plan in the earliest stage of the strategic rationale. You need to capture whatever you're thinking in that stage of the development and include your thoughts in the business plan as well. Thus, when you and your prospective partner begin working together in the alliance design phase, you can jointly put together your thoughts and notes from these early stages and transform them into the draft plan.

Once the agreements are made, at least on the term sheet level, they will be connected to the earlier plans and drafted out in the roadmap for execution as the alliance business plan. Additionally, during the management phase of the alliance, you will have to evaluate and refresh this business plan, as insights will change as time and the alliance move forward.

Given the breadth and scope that alliances could take, there is not one single template that covers all that should be covered in an alliance business plan. For your own organization, however, it may be beneficial to create a master template that will allow future business plans to be created in a faster mode. Still, do remember that every alliance is different and every alliance may require other specific elements to be in the business plan.
The following list of elements can be used as a checklist to compile your business plan. Not every element will be equally applicable for every alliance. A sales engagement plan, for instance, will be needed for a joint sales partnership but might be less important for an R&D partnership.

- Strategic Objectives/Imperatives
- How are you creating value?
- For what target customer are you creating value?
- Win/Win/Win Value Proposition
- Scope and roadmap
- Value Creation Plan
- Go-to-Market Plan
- Sales Engagement Plan
- Competition and Coopetition
- Initial Target Accounts
- Resource Commitments
- Payment Schedules
- Schedules and Budgets
- Project team and accountabilities
- Executive Sponsors and role
- Metrics and Measures
- Expected financial performance/ROI

*Your alliance business plan is the roadmap that will show the way your partnership is supposed to take.*
Tip 12: Make Sure the Objectives for Partnering Are Aligned

While answering the question "What's in it for me?" and while developing your contributions matrix, it should be clear to you that both you and your partner have your own reasons for wanting this alliance you are building. When teaming up with your partner, you will both have your objectives for entering this partnership. For you, the objectives will be based upon your company's strategy or goal. For the partner, hopefully it will be the same.

However, for you together, it's important to align the objectives. There's no need to have the same objectives, but they need to be in line. Working together in this partnership means the two of you should find a way to work in tandem so both of you will get what you want out of this alliance even if your purpose is not the same as your partner's.

In many cases, the prospective partners' objectives will be in line when they start a partnership. Still, there are many partnerships established for the wrong reasons. Think about the situations where strategic decisions do not drive the partnership. Instead, the management drives the partnership – the management is on friendly terms with the other company and feels their companies should work together on a joint project. In these cases, the objectives may not be in line.

Incompatible objectives, more often than not, put the partnership at risk of slowing it down at the very least. At worst, incompatible objectives lead the partnership to failure. Compatible objectives, on the other hand, will strengthen the partnership and, with that, its chance for success.

Just as it is important to start a partnership with aligned objectives, it's also important to monitor and maintain the alignment of these objectives as the partnership matures. Circumstances may change, and so might the objectives for which each partner is staying in the partnership. Later on, we will talk about how important it is to measure and evaluate your
alliance's performance based on these objectives, but for now let's emphasize that it's essential to evaluate and adjust objectives where and whenever such is needed.

You and your partner's objectives need to be aligned to guarantee that you're both on the same page and going the same direction towards the success of your partnership.
Tip 13: Agree on an Exit Plan during the Negotiation Phase

Many couples opt to draft a pre-nuptial agreement before they get married. While some people believe that signing a pre-nuptial agreement puts the couple on a mindset that their marriage will not last and eventually fail, the fact is that pre-nups do make sense. Pre-nups are exit plans. You'll never know what will happen in the course of the marriage, and the pre-nup ensures that the couple's assets will be protected in the event they decide that they do want to end their marriage.

When you are in conversation on creating a partnership or alliance with a potential partner, it's good to discuss the exit plan as well. It may sound counterproductive to discuss how to break up while you're still dating, but this is actually the best moment to discuss delicate matters like dividing the results and assets of the partnership and how you will handle that when breaking up. In that way, your decisions on these matters won't be colored by whatever personal feelings you may have upon the dissolution of your partnership or alliance.

It is a fact that many partnerships fail. Hence, you need to design an exit plan that you and your partner will use when you break up before you actually break up. You should look at it as an essential element of your negotiation and design phase. There is often a debate if this plan needs to be part of the business plan or the alliance contract. I would prefer the later, as the business plan has its focus on building the alliance and the contract in general is only needed when the business plan lacks clarity or when the alliance is not delivering on the promise.

Leaving an exit scenario out of the equation in the early phases can be a costly omission. Think of how ugly a divorce can get when there isn't a pre-nuptial agreement in place. In general, lawyers and mediators will not step in for free to help you solve the issues that have occurred. Hence, an exit plan is also a cost-avoiding part of the design phase.
Even if the alliance turns out successfully, it's still good to have the exit plan in place. In one case with my customers, there was a product alliance that combined products from the partner with products from my customer into a new product line with a separate, jointly owned brand. After four years into the partnership, both partners expressed in a steering committee meeting that the alliance had served its purpose and that it was time to dismantle and part ways. Based on the predefined exit plan, this was an easy and clean exit. Both parties knew what needed to be done; one of them wanted to continue with the established brand and acquired the brand rights from the other partner. The exit was professionally handled and concluded with a final evaluation to allow both partners to capture the learnings from their partnership.

"A good preparation is half the battle" is a saying that's applicable to all elements of the alliance preparation. No matter how odd it may seem to plan the exit when you're still dating, it's actually the best moment.

An exit plan created at the design phase of the alliance allows you to enjoy an amicable split from your partner in the event the partnership has run its course.
Tip 14: Prepare Your Partnership for Following a Structured Process

Remember how we mentioned earlier, that you need to be in the winning side of the 80% rule if you want your partnership to succeed? The fact is 80% of ad hoc unstructured business partnerships fail, while 80% of the companies that follow a structured approach towards creating partnerships emerge successful.

Would your company invest in something that you know will have a four out of five chance of failure?

Most of the time, the 80% failure rate contains the companies who create alliances in an ad hoc fashion and dive into opportunities for alliances in a chaotic, unstructured way.

However, there is another side to the 80% rule, and that is the success side. The companies that follow a structured approach to establishing and managing alliances and other business partnerships reach a success rate of up to 80%. These companies have made investments in building up skills and competencies before approaching alliances. Subsequently, they create and manage alliances in a structured way, often based on the alliance life cycle methodology.

The value is obviously in the success side of the 80% rule, while no value is created on the 80% failure side. In fact, failure may even destroy value. A partnership is created to achieve a goal you cannot achieve easily alone. The partnership has to become valuable and successful to be truly worth the effort.

Following a structured process may sound cumbersome to some people. For many, the words "structured" and "process" feel like an endless exercise where no room for creativity is left. To be honest, I have been among them, but I have learned that a structured process does not have to be like that. A structured process can be an umbrella process that guides you through the essential steps of creating a partnership. It saves you time while safeguarding quality in the end.
Many large companies that have entered into successful alliances have documented their processes. Often supported by academia, these processes usually consist of six or seven main steps. The Association of Strategic Alliance Professionals (ASAP) captured the best practices of their members into a seven-step strategic alliance process. These seven steps are the main steps you should follow, and they are often subdivided into smaller underlying steps.

Large companies in general have more bandwidth and manpower to follow the steps of such an extensive process. Following these steps is definitely necessary when creating the alliance involves more than one department. For instance, departments that have their say on legal and intellectual property will be part of the alliance formation. But for smaller companies, since they often don't have the bandwidth or the need for such an extensive process, only a simple yet comprehensive process is required.

This is the complete, seven-step process as described by ASAP:

Step 1: Alliance-specific strategy
Step 2: Analysis and selection
Step 3: Building trust and value creating negotiation
Step 4: Operational planning
Step 5: Alliance structuring and governance
Step 6: Launching and management
Step 7: Transform, innovate and exit

In working with clients, I generally split this large and extensive process into three main steps that nonetheless cover the essentials for building successful alliances. These three steps are:

1. Strategy
2. Planning
3. Operation
In strategy, we check the strategic rationale and answer the question of whether partnering is the right choice for the solution the company wants to implement. This step also contains the partner analysis and selection. Many small business owners will be hesitant to do this exercise, as they might feel that they already know the answers. Still, it is important to do these sanity checks on plans and partners, and these checks do not have to take long.

In the planning phase, we negotiate the contract with the partner and jointly set the planning for the partnership. The business plan will be defined and the kickoff of the alliance will be scheduled.

The kickoff is the actual start of the alliance and the start of the operational phase. In this phase, the partnership or alliance will need to be managed to deliver according to the agreed KPIs and to reach the goal that the partnership envisioned.

As said, for some people, a structured process may sound cumbersome, but it can be followed in a pragmatically applied fashion. In a recent engagement with an entrepreneur, it took us less than 15 minutes to validate his strategy and choice for partnering. Subsequently, we went into partner analysis, which took longer and resulted in some surprising conclusions for the entrepreneur. The outcome was not what he had expected, but thanks to a thorough process, he was making solid decisions on how to go forward and with which candidate partner.

Even when you already have a partner in mind, or even when you are already approached by a partner, it is good to do the analysis. This will help you become aware of potential elements that may require additional attention during the alliance's operational phase.

*Following a structured process will help you create the roadmap to successful partnerships.*
Tip 15: Be Flexible in Transitioning the Partnership

French essayist Francois de La Rochefoucauld once wrote that the only thing constant in life is change. As clichéd as it may sound, it is indeed true. Change happens whether we like it or not, and we have to brace ourselves to embrace that change in order to move forward.

Partnerships are started with an intention and with a scope based on what you know and based on your organization's strategy at the time of creation. However, circumstances change, the market or the opportunity may change, and strategies can change. When this occurs, it will be good to evaluate and transform the partnership into a new form or shape to ensure future success.

Let's take a look at the example provided by the Senseo alliance between Philips and Sara Lee. In this alliance, the companies involved – Philips and Sara Lee – appear to have reached a transition point when Sara Lee decided to split into two separate and publicly traded companies by early 2012. One of the companies would be concentrated on the food service business of Sara Lee while the other would focus on becoming a coffee and tea company, with brands such as Senseo, Douwe Egberts and Pickwick.

This is a change of circumstances that none of the partners could have foreseen when the Senseo alliance started. With this change in circumstances, the partners could have continued to work like they did before. However, within the new Sara Lee coffee and tea company, the importance of the Senseo brand also changed. It was no longer one of the many brands within the overall company, but in the new narrowed company focus, Senseo became one of the few key brands in the portfolio.

In January 2012, Philips and Sara Lee announced that they have renegotiated the Senseo alliance and signed a new contract that will run through 2020. In the new contract, Philips will transfer its 50% ownership of the Senseo brand to Sara Lee, allowing the new coffee company to gain full ownership of the brand. Sara Lee's executive chairman mentioned that the Sara Lee coffee business would, from now on, be based on a strategy around the Senseo coffee brand.
In this example, the alliance appears to have reached a transition point, and both partners have been flexible enough to find a new way of working together after a change in circumstances. This flexibility is essential.

In your alliance, if the circumstances change, what do you do? You can break up the collaboration because the initial opportunity is gone. However, if the basic collaboration between the two partners works well, then there should be more attractive solutions than simply breaking up. In such a situation, it might be good to actively look outside the box and start searching for new opportunities and new ways of working together. It will allow you to leverage the effort you've already done, and it will allow you to maintain the trust and working relationship that you've already built with your partner.

The transition of a partnership will enable you to extend the relationship and to leverage all the investments made in the partnership. It must be noted, however, that a transition is no magical solution for failing partnerships. There will be situations where changing circumstances can thankfully be used to leave a partnership that probably would never have been successful anyway. A good practice is to evaluate your partnerships regularly. This will enable you to adjust your course towards success or proactively steer it towards an exit or a transition.

*Being flexible allows you to easily adapt and embrace changes that your partnership may need to survive and flourish for the longer haul.*
Tip 16: Sharing Is the Foundation for Partnering

When you're tasked to work on a project with someone, it's inevitable that you have to share some of your time, effort, expertise and resources with your task partner. After all, you are working on a single project, and its success or failure will reflect upon the both of you. By sharing, you get to save on time and resources and guarantee the success of the task at hand. As the saying goes, two heads are better than one.

When teaming up with a partner, the purpose is to create a result together that you can't easily achieve alone. Sometimes, the partnership is there to create market access, to form new products, or for reasons of cost efficiency. In all situations, it's essential that you share information with your partner, just as it is essential for your partner to share information with you.

For some, sharing comes naturally. These people are open and transparent, so feels natural for them to share. However, it may be more difficult for some because they are the type who prefers to exert control. The more controlling a person is, the more difficult it is for them to share. Beyond personal behavior, sharing can also be influenced by the culture and procedures of the organizations involved in the partnership.

Sharing will bring some challenges, and it does require a certain balance. After all, you do need to share enough information to fuel the partnership for success. Nonetheless, you wouldn't want to throw your crown jewels out on the street. This will be a delicate balance for you to maintain – when is sharing just enough to make the partnership thrive?

When I work with my customers, I have confidentiality as a standard clause in my general terms. Whatever we share will remain between my customer and myself. In partnerships and alliances, you are not working based on general terms. Many corporations require non-disclosure agreements to be signed before anything can be shared. This is actually good practice that sets the boundaries for what can be shared and what can't.
However, once the boundaries are set, you should try to be as open and transparent as possible in your alliance. Communicate frequently and share the information needed to move the alliance forward. It will be the fuel that will propel your alliance towards success.

Within set boundaries and limits, sharing information is essential in pushing alliances forward towards success.
Tip 17: Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Communication is perhaps the most essential element towards building a successful partnership or alliance. George Bernard Shaw once said: "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." He has a point. Communication is one of the key success factors in partnerships and alliances. Maybe it's even the cornerstone of any relationship, whether it's political, personal, friendly or professional.

Whatever the relationship type is, communication is the bedrock. Think about that for a moment.

Now, if communication is the cornerstone of any relationship, why are we so lousy at it? We often tend to mix up communication with tools and technology and forget about the basics. Remember that communication game we played as kids? While sitting together in a circle, an adult would whisper a phrase in the ear of the first kid, who would then whisper it in the ear of the second kid, and so on. At the end of the circle, the message is guaranteed to be completely garbled and different from the original message. It's lots of fun for children, but it nonetheless is a very true daily practice for many adults. More often than not, it's even the essence of our daily communications.

We take communication for granted. We send off an email, a text message, a tweet, a Facebook private message, a WhatsApp message, or another electronically sent missive instead of sending something personal. Worse even, we handle our mail when we are supposed to pay attention to a conference call or meeting, so we skip one communication for another. And we still think we have communicated our message, completely assuming that our partner has taken the same understanding of what we have written. In the words of Mr. Shaw, we have the illusion that communication has truly taken place.

However, do we ever check if our message has been understood? Communication is two-way. It's not just a matter of transmitting. It's just as important to ask for confirmation and to make sure that the message you want to be understood is indeed understood. Once you've
received that confirmation of understanding, you then respond to the response and true communication happens.

Communication tends to get better and easier when we begin to know our business partner better. We can only learn to know our partners better when we invest in the relationship, and communicating properly is investing in the relationship. Make time for your business partners and get to know them. They may represent a company, but in the end they are human beings like you, with human interests. Knowing the human behind your partner will improve communication, and with that you can improve the relationship a lot. Business gets done more easily, and you will build trust and credibility.

Communication in business is like communication with friends. So, do you know what is important for your friends personally? Do you know what drives your business contact? Do you ever give a compliment to a friend? Do you ever give a compliment to your business partner or colleague?

*Clear communication between you and your partner opens a smoother and easier path towards relationship building and partnership success.*
Tip 18: Create an Internal Strategic Alliance

Definition

As mentioned in the previous chapter, clear communication is the cornerstone towards the success of your partnership. Part of the art of clear communication is using terms that you and your partner, in theory, both understand and have a clear definition of.

All too often, we assume that your understanding of a term is also their understanding of the same term.

Unfortunately, the world is not that simple.

You need to make sure that you are properly understood, or you need to make sure that you and your partner are both connecting the same meaning to a specific term.

For example, do you feel that a "joint venture" is a joint company with a separate legal entity that you and your partner established together and that you both have equity in? Or do you feel it's a temporary, short-term partnership with another company that is focused on a product or a project?

These are two completely different ways to look at the term and how they are both used. They are two meanings of partnering which are both within the collaborative business spectrum, but they are also each on a different point and with different implications.

The same applies to the in-company use of terms. I have seen many organizations where one department had a different understanding of what a strategic alliance is from another department. Both meanings can still fit nicely within the collaborative business or alliance spectrum, but having a different understanding of specific terms can create undesired complications.

In one situation, a business unit of a client was working to establish a marketing alliance with a reseller. This unit was seeking support from the central strategic alliance department. This
central department, on the other hand, was established to support business units that wanted to create strategic alliances. In their opinion, a strategic alliance is a partnership where a new product is being created together with a partner.

Even though the same strategic alliance principles can be applied to a marketing alliance, the expectations were not set properly as a definition. With that, the scope of their support was not made clear inside their own organization. This led to a lot of confusion and irritation that could have been prevented by establishing a clear, internal definition of the term "strategic alliance."

As you can see, you shouldn't make assumptions that the person you are communicating with knows exactly what you're talking about when it comes to what strategic alliance means. Instead, you must ensure that you have one common understanding in your organization of what a partnership or strategic alliance is. Creating your own internal alliance definition helps align people and departments while going forward with the creation of the partnership or alliance.

Here is the definition I most often use for a strategic alliance: "A strategic alliance is a strategic cooperation between two or more organizations, with the aim to achieve a result one of the parties cannot achieve alone." What definition do you use for your partnerships and alliances?

Creating a specific definition of strategic alliance that is universally understood within your organization will help align the parties involved with the goals for which the partnership or alliance will be formed.
Tip 19: Be Clear with Your Prospective Partner on the Terms You Use

In the previous chapter, we have established the importance of having a clear internal definition of strategic alliances, of making sure that the people within your organization are on the same page with you as to what a strategic alliance means.

In the same light, it's also essential to be clear with your partner on what you mean with the terms you use. Like in the example given in the previous chapter, the term "joint venture" is known to have a different meaning to different people. Coming from a corporate background, people tend to have the perception that a joint venture is a separate entity where two or more companies are jointly holding the shares. However, coming from a small business background, people tend to think that a joint venture is a joint project between two small businesses and that this collaboration will last as long as the project lasts. Clearly, these are two different perceptions for the same term.

Similarly, many companies use abbreviations in their organization and in their sector. When you are in the same sector, there is a chance that you connect the same meaning to an abbreviation. But that doesn't always necessarily happen. When I worked for IBM, we used to have a tool on the intranet called "whatis." With this tool, you could fire off a question to the tool to find the meaning of an abbreviation. Many times, "whatis" came back with more than one meaning to one abbreviation; in some cases, it even came up with six different meanings for another. If a company as large as IBM already has so many different meanings for a single term, then how will it be if you are from outside a company and you're looking to partner with that company?

When I am involved in assignments with a client that brings me to conversations with the partner, it's relatively easy for me as an outsider to name the elephant in the room. Partners aren't always frank enough to ask what a term they just used means for the other party. Being an outsider myself, I see this happen quite often. I can play dumb by asking the question for
clarification. I can easily mention that the term just used is unclear to me, and I can ask if they can clarify what they mean by it. Many times, I have seen the body language from the partner relaxing after my question. Obviously, the term was not completely clear with them, either.

Being an outsider with my clients, I may find it easy to ask for clarification. But for the companies who are looking to partner together, it is essential to clarify the terms used in case of any doubt. Better ask, look dumb and avoid confusion rather than assume you know the term and later on realize that your partner meant something completely different. Clarity precedes mastery!

*Agreeing on a clear definition of the terms you use with your partner removes many obstacles to communication and pushes your partnership or alliance forward more smoothly.*
Tip 20: Build and Maintain Trust

Johan Rudolph Thorbecke, one of the most influential Dutch politicians of the 19th century, once stated: "Trust comes on foot but leaves on horseback." It means that while trust takes time and effort to build, it's quick and easy to break.

Collaborative business relations are, in general, built for the long term. Long-term relationships require a high level of trust among the partners to flourish. Short-term relationships, on the other hand, do not need that level of trust. In a transaction where I buy a bottle of water from a vendor, I only need just that amount of trust for the vendor to hand me the bottle the moment I hand them the money. That is the end of the transaction and, thus, the end of the requirement for continued trust. But in collaborative business relations, we need continuity in trust among the partners. After all, we are pursuing a goal that we cannot easily achieve alone.

How do we build and maintain trust? Again, as the Johan Thorbecke quote suggests, trust is difficult and vulnerable, hard to build and easy to lose. In the article "Leadership and the structure of trust," first published in the May-June 2011 issue of The European Business Review, authors Paul Lawrence and Robert Porter Lynch discuss the four innate drives that every individual is influenced by:

1. **The drive to acquire.** This drive comes from the basic need to own at least a minimum of essential resources.

2. **The drive to defend,** with its focus on defending yourself and your loved ones.

3. **The drive to bond,** to create long-term relationships.

4. **The drive to create,** to learn and to build.

According to Lawrence and Porter Lynch, every individual has all four drives but in a different balance. They position these drives on the ladder of trust, which has a neutral level and often characterized as a belt. The drives to acquire and defend are the basic levels that need to be
fulfilled for every individual. However, if an individual has a very strong drive for acquiring and defending, they might have a focus that is too much on the negative side. They might also display trust-busting behavior. On the other side of the belt are the drives to bond and create. Individuals with strong development on this side show strong trust-building behavior.

Let's take a look at this figure on the ladder of trust drawn by Lawrence and Porter Lynch containing the four drive compass that was included in their article. There you will recognize behaviors that influence trust building as well as trust-busting activities. Hidden agendas are a recognizable behavior we all have seen before, and it's harming the level of trust we create. Openness in our relationship and sharing information, on the other hand, helps build trust.
The Lawrence and Porter Lynch article is truly worth the read, and the ladder of trust is a useful tool to help recognize people's behaviors. The ladder of trust tries to counter other people's behavior with your own behavior so that you can build and maintain trust.

Nevada Management Professor Bret L. Simmons also has an article and a lecture published in 2013 that's worth looking into when it comes to establishing trust. He says we have no control over whether or not people trust us. However, we do control how trustworthy we are. At first, people will not look at the question of whether they trust other people, but they will judge us based on the trustworthiness we show. This is a behavior we can fully influence ourselves. When combining this with the drives described by Lawrence and Porter Lynch, we see that working on the drives to bond and create will also increase our trustworthiness.

*Trust is hard to build and easy to destroy. But while we cannot force other people to trust us, we can at least show them that we are worthy of their trust.*
Tip 21: Avoid Hidden Agendas

In the previous chapters, we have been emphasizing the value of communicating clearly and openly with your partner and of using terms whose definitions you have mutually agreed upon for the sake of clarity. More importantly, we have stressed just how essential building and maintaining trust is towards the success of your partnership or alliance. Thus, in creating and maintaining partnerships or alliances, it is absolutely important that you avoid hidden agendas. Hidden agendas are trustbusters – they destroy whatever trust and goodwill you have built with your partner.

The biggest challenge with hidden agendas is the fact that they are hidden. I know it's an open door, but if they weren't hidden, we wouldn't have issues with them. Just imagine how much easier it would be if your agenda and your partner's agenda are fully transparent. It would be clear to you what their intentions are, and it would be clear to your partner what your own intentions are. There won't be any doubts whatsoever.

Alliances, partnerships and any other type of collaboration need trust to be successful. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we have no control over whether or not people will trust us. However, we do control how trustworthy we are.

Hidden agendas are partnership-killers. The trust in an alliance is killed the moment you have a hidden agenda or the moment you begin to feel your partner has one. You will always doubt what the other really means, you will always second-guess their intentions, you will never completely believe in your partner anymore, and vice-versa.

Always be transparent in your intentions for the partnership. Above all, avoid hidden agendas. If you ever suspect your partner to have a hidden agenda, try to obtain clarity by asking questions. Find out the true meaning behind their intentions. This is not an easy task, but it is an essential element in building and maintaining a healthy partnership.
Hidden agendas have no place in building a thriving partnership or alliance. They are detriments to your success that should be avoided at all cost.
25 Tips for Successful Partnerships and Alliances

Tip 22: Manage Your Stakeholders

Inasmuch as we tend to think of organizations as inorganic entities, the fact is that organizations are made up of people. People have their own individual quirks and behaviors. The people in your organization who will have a stake in your partnership or alliance can influence the growth and progress of the partnership or alliance with their quirks and behaviors.

In an ideal world, everyone involved in a partnership would be enthusiastically supporting it and working to move it forward. Unfortunately, the world is not always ideal, and there will be stakeholders in your alliance who don't actually like that the alliance exists. Or they may not have any objections to the existence of the alliance but they are not as keen on it as you would like them to. You need to work on these stakeholders to transform them into real supporters for your partnership.

In an alliance, the alliance manager will need to spend a substantial amount of time in their organization to align the stakeholders to the goals and objectives of the alliance, as well as to secure their support to go forward in the execution. Norma Watenpaugh of Phoenix Consulting Group, in her 2011 article "Alliance Stakeholder Alignment," describes a useful matrix for managing internal alignment. This matrix might help you understand and manage the task of getting these stakeholders aligned with the partnership's goals more effectively.

As you can see, the matrix is a two-by-two. In this matrix, you can classify the stakeholders based on their behavior and buy-in, and you can approach them accordingly.
Champions are the kind of people you would like to have in your alliance. As the alliance manager, you should be a champion and so should your executive sponsor. Champions are highly accountable and highly committed to the success of the partnership. They are the ones driving the partnership forward.

Cheerleaders are great supporters for the partnership, but they have no accountability for its success. You want these people on your team for their positive attitude towards your endeavor. If you give them more accountability towards the success of your partnership, you may be able to transform them into champions.

Hostages are somewhat stuck. They don't believe in the alliance, they don't have any commitment to it, but they are still accountable for the success of the alliance because of their job responsibilities. They will most likely fulfill their minimum obligations, but they will not take any proactive measures to secure the alliance's overall success.

Snipers are the dangerous ones you need to look out for. It might not always be clear to you who they are. They do not support the alliance and they have no accountability for its success. They might actually even benefit in seeing your alliance fail. Their goals will be in conflict with the goals of the alliance.
Maybe you recognize these people in your own partnerships. By classifying the stakeholders in the matrix described above, you will learn who you need to deal with and how. You will have to prioritize dealing with the hostages and snipers. Having them look for other assignments may not be the best solution, and you may not even be in the position to ask them to do so.

More often than not, a stakeholder who is not supportive of the alliance behaves that way because they don't have enough of the information they need about the alliance. The reason this stakeholder does not support the alliance may be because they may not understand the nature of the alliance, the benefits the alliance will bring to your organization, and the stakeholder's particular role in its success. A good approach to dealing with this stakeholder and getting them to come to your side is to meet with them early on and address their concerns. Maybe you can convince them of the value of the partnership and hence convert them into cheerleaders, maybe even champions.

*Getting all the stakeholders aligned and supportive of the alliance very early on in the alliance's formative phase is an essential key towards its future success.*
Tip 23: Make Sure All Stakeholders Are on Board at Alliance Launch

What describes a good start of an alliance? That question is one I often ask in my workshops, and I always receive a wide variety of answers. When I asked this question in a workshop in China, the answer I got from one of the attendees was at first received with a lot of laughter by his colleagues. He, on the other hand, was dead serious when he answered "have cocktails together." In the discussion, it became clear that celebrating the start of the alliance is very important in China.

A celebration is a good way to help ensure that all stakeholders are on board the moment the alliance kicks off. It will offer the stakeholders the opportunity to start a relationship with their counterparts from the alliance partner. Having all stakeholders on board is an essential element to starting an alliance.

All too often, we see alliances going through difficult times because not all stakeholders are involved. An alliance manager will have to do a lot of corrective work afterwards to repair this omission and bring these stakeholders on board.

Managing a proper stakeholder analysis before the alliance launch will definitely help prevent this problem. In the article "Alliance Stakeholder Alignment," Norma Watenpaugh maps team members against the two dimensions of "commitment" and "accountability." This map leads to the two-by-two matrix you saw in the previous chapter, where you can identify where team members are and what dynamics they may bring to the team. Mapping stakeholder alignment is one activity that you can do during the design phase of the alliance as well as during the lifetime of the alliance.

Mapping stakeholder alignment is just one part of the task you need to do before the alliance launch. The other part is working on the stakeholders to actually bring them on board. You basically need to move them in the mapping from a non-supportive quadrant (hostages and
snipers) to a supportive one (cheerleaders and champions). The earlier you start with this stakeholder analysis and with exerting the effort required to bring and keep your stakeholders on board, the easier the alliance will be. That celebration during the alliance launch might really be a good means to help keeping the stakeholders on board.

All your alliance stakeholders must be on board before you launch the alliance. Doing so will take away many hurdles that can block the partnership's success.
Tip 24: Measure and Evaluate Alliance Performance

An airplane is off its course most of the time. Wind, turbulence and air traffic are all factors why an airplane can't fly in a straight line from Airport A to Airport B. Yet it arrives at its destination thanks to constant corrections along the way. An airplane only reaches the right destination because of measurements and evaluations of the data acquired, upon which the pilot or the autopilot adjusts the airplane's course.

The same principle applies with alliances, partnerships and other collaborative business relationships. In the beginning of the collaboration, you have set some clear goals. After all, you started the collaboration to reach a goal you can't easily reach alone. As the partnership progresses, you have to know how you are doing. Wind and turbulence may show themselves to a partnership as setbacks and unexpected competition. Only by measuring progress and evaluating the outcomes of these measurements would you be able to adjust the course of your partnership if needed.

There are several ways to measure an alliance. I will highlight three of them.

One way to measure an alliance's performance is the **balanced scorecard**. The balanced scorecard finds its origins in the work of Robert Kaplan and David Norton. It was originally intended as an internal tool for strategic planning and operational performance. The balanced scorecard can also be used as an alliance dashboard.

The dashboard looks at four areas of performance:

1. **Strategic** – measuring the key performance indicators (KPI) connected to the corporate objectives of both organizations.

2. **Operational** – providing the performance of the key processes in the alliance.

3. **Financial** – indicating the financial contribution of the alliance, if the alliance is still on target from a financial perspective.
4. **Relationship** – measuring partner health, loyalty and satisfaction.

An article on the January-February 2010 issue of *Harvard Business Review* entitled "Managing Alliances with the Balanced Scorecard," written by Robert S. Kaplan, David P. Norton, and Bjarne Rugelsjoen, extensively described how Quintiles and Solvay used the balance scorecard to manage their alliance.

The second way to measure an alliance's performance is the **health check**. A periodic health check will help you get clear insights on the alliance's status. The health check can be done based on a set of predefined criteria, by which both partners will score their view of the alliance. Criteria can include elements like the progress of the alliance, trust in the partner, and the responsiveness of the partner. By comparing the scores from the partners, the areas for improvement can be easily identified.

The third way to measure alliance progress is by conducting **alliance review meetings**. In these meetings, the partners will be evaluating the state of the alliance and define the areas for improvement. An alliance review meeting is less structured than the health check and, therefore, contains the risk that only elements that are easy to identify will be discussed.

It is good practice to have an alliance review meeting facilitated by an external independent party. An external party will be neutral and will see issues the involved parties may not necessarily be able to identify. The external independent party can talk about the elephant in the room.

These three ways to measure and evaluate alliance performance will allow you to adjust your course for the alliance to reach its goals.

*You can only tell if the alliance is heading towards the direction it's supposed to take if you consistently measure and evaluate its performance.*
Tip 25: Measure Alliance Performance on Leading Indicators

Once you've got your alliance or partnership formed and running, how then do you determine if your endeavor is headed towards success or not? Do you measure the success of your alliance or partnership based on the revenue it generates, or do you consider other factors showing its success?

For many alliances, revenue is an important element. However, many people tend to forget that revenue is an outcome. It is the result of all the elements we have done before in the alliance and in creating the alliance.

When measuring alliance performance, we need to measure leading indicators versus lagging indicators. We need to measure those elements that can be adjusted to ensure alliance success and revenue as an outcome.

Filling up an alliance balanced scorecard, which we discussed previously, can be a helpful tool to keep track of the alliance's performance. The measurements on strategy and financials are outcomes, while measurements on operations and relationships are leading indicators. The leading indicators are the ones that will tell you where to adjust and where to optimize the outcomes of your alliance.

Financial metrics are relatively easy to gather data on, and that forms the risk of measuring what is easy to measure. The relationship elements are often seen as the soft elements. However, the soft elements are the ones that lead to the hard results. Hence, they need to be measured and adjusted where possible.

It is advisable to acquire outside help to assess the relationship elements. Only an independent assessment will help you get a clear view of the relationship. Being fully honest on how one party views the relationship with the other is one of the most difficult things to do when
you are actually talking to the other. An independent outsider can help you objectively assess the relationship and work with the alliance partners to create an improvement plan.

Many alliances fail due to relationship issues that could have been prevented by timely health checks and proper course adjustment. Make sure you are measuring the right elements in your alliances.

The white paper "Enabling Transformational Alliances – Best Practices in Partner Health Diagnostics" by Norma Watenpaugh dives into the topic of partner health assessments more thoroughly. It is recommended for further reading on this topic.

Instead of basing the alliance's success on the revenue it generates,
you need to evaluate possible relationship issues to determine if
the alliance is still healthy and working as it should.
Conclusion: Creating and Maintaining a Partnership that Works

Companies form partnerships, alliances and other types of collaborations so they can more easily achieve something great that they cannot otherwise achieve alone. The corporate world is full of examples of partnerships that led to the creation of so many innovations that changed the way we live today.

Inasmuch as your organization needs to partner with another organization to build something remarkable, you can't just jump into a partnership blindly, with your reason for partnering based only on the fact that you like your counterpart. There are factors you need to consider before you enter into a partnership, alliance or any kind of collaboration, and the 25 tips described in this book cover all these factors.

First, you need to determine your initial reasons for partnering and be clear on these reasons. Do you really need to form a partnership at this time, or do you just feel like it's a good opportunity for you to do so?

If you really need to form a partnership and believe it will be beneficial to your organization, then you need to figure out what your expectations of the partnership will be and how you want your potential partner to contribute. Beyond that, you have to decide what value you can bring to the partnership as well as how much value collaborating with you will bring to your potential partner.

You also have to seek support from an executive sponsor, ensure that your organization is clear on what it means to form a strategic alliance with another organization, and work on the stakeholders so everyone involved will be on board with the idea of partnering with another organization.

More importantly, you have to find the right partner. It's not enough that you like the organization or your counterpart in that company. You have to make sure that the two of you are
the right fit. Once you have determined that you and your potential partner are indeed right for each other, then you have to get to know one another and find ways to meet and bridge where you have gaps. You have to understand your partner's organizational culture and how it's the same or different from your own. You also have to create a third culture relevant to your partnership, agree on a set of alliance core values and operating principles, and agree upon the same definition of terms you will be using to communicate. Of course, your business plan has to be in place as well.

You additionally have to find ways to manage the partnership once it is underway. You get to do this by being clear on the roles and responsibilities everyone involved have and by setting a cadence of governance. Since circumstances surrounding the partnership can change any time, you have to make sure that your partnership's objectives are constantly aligned and you are flexible in transitioning the partnership towards the changes it needs to take.

In any transaction with your partner, it's absolutely important that you are clear in communicating with them and make sure that your communication is understood. Sharing information is essential, but you nonetheless have to protect yourself by establishing boundaries and implementing measures such as signing non-disclosure agreements. You do need to build and maintain trust with your partner, as well as ensure that there are no hidden agendas that can break down your relationship.

To ensure that your partnership or alliance is going towards the direction it should take and that it continues to be satisfactory for everyone involved, you need to measure and evaluate its performance. Beyond performance, you have to look at the leading indicators for its success. And because relationships do run their course, you have to be prepared with an exit plan should you need to take it.

These are the factors you need to take into consideration when creating and maintaining an alliance that's headed for success. Follow these 25 tips and you're sure to find success and satisfaction with any alliance your organization forms.
References


