

# How to Lead Partnerships

As members of Christ's body, Christians are called to collaborate, yet working in partnership with other churches or ministries can be difficult and painful. This practical workshop will take you through a simple framework for thinking through some of the most important questions when setting up a partnership between two or more ministries. It will also help you figure out how to move things forward when a partnership arrangement is struggling.

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## Overview

### Introduction

Reasons to partner in ministry (*why bother? what's unique about ministry settings?*)

Reasons not to partner (*why it's never simple*)

### What it takes to make it work

Being fit to partner (*our own organization or ministry*)

Preparing to partner (*we're all Christians but due diligence still matters*)

Healthy partnership (*creating more than the sum of the parts*)

Leading partnerships is challenging (*leadership qualities for collaboration*)

## Introduction

### Reasons to partner

- We are created by our Triune God for relationship (Gen 1 & 2)
- Resources are the Lord's, not "ours" to control.
- 'Commonwealth' of believers (throughout Acts)
- We are called to be interdependent – fellowship, generosity are marks of gospel community (body of Christ, 'living stones')
- We can often achieve more together than separately.

### Reasons not to partner

- In a fallen world, nothing is optimal. Partnerships are very hard work.
- Discernment: purpose, power, potential.

## Being Fit to Partner

- a. **Fit with Vision, Mission and Strategy:** Do you really have a clearly defined rationale for partnership that is consistent with your overall ministry objectives and ethos?
- b. **Alternative ways to achieve this:** Partnerships are hard work. Could you do this solo or contract for this capability from a supplier instead?
- c. **Internal assessment:** Understand your own capabilities, strengths and weaknesses to ensure that you know what you do and don't bring to the table, and stand ready to make best use of the abilities of your partners.

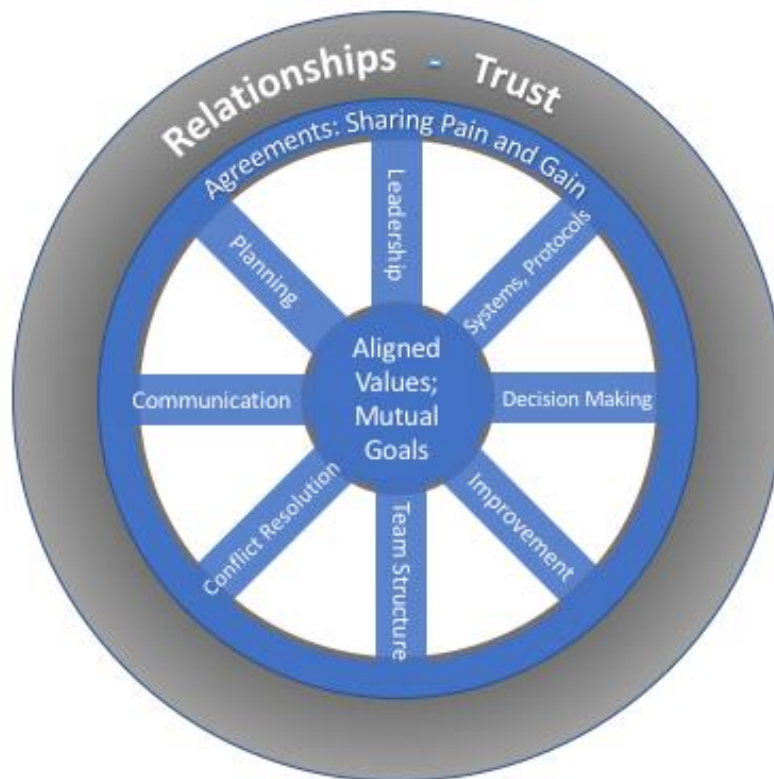
## Preparing to Partner

- a. **Assessing the opportunity:** What can we achieve together that we could not achieve separately? Is there genuinely a realistic chance of achieving outcomes or benefits that justify the effort and cost?
- b. **Assessing the appetite:** Where does this partnership/project fit amongst the priorities of the respective ministries? How much top leadership time and energy will it get? Is it 'too big to fail' for either organisation? Will there be similar levels of commitment to the project? If not, are we happy to live with that?
- c. **Assessing each other:** Test hard for alignment of values. Assess the culture, capability, capacity and performance of each other. Press hard to achieve honesty about strengths and weaknesses. Meet and assess the key people who will be involved day to day: are they credible and reliable? Is the chemistry going to work?
- d. **Creating the formal framework:** Documenting the partnership will often expose small but important differences in expectation: work through this phase carefully! Define in writing the goals, the structure, the questions of IP, the commercial deal (who brings what to the table, who takes what out later).

**d. Exit strategy:** Discuss potential exit strategies from the outset of a collaborative relationship. It will also help to anticipate and manage risks, and ensure that disengagement at the end of the collaboration is mutually respectful.

### 3. Healthy Partnership

The 'Partnering Wheel' below provides a diagnostic framework for reviewing the overall health of the relationship as it develops. Expect each element to change over time:



Goals and Values

Terms and Agreement (sharing pain and gain)

Leadership

Team structure

Decision making

Communication

Systems and Processes

Conflict resolution

Planning

Continuous Improvement

Expect each element to change over time. You could create a ‘maturity matrix’ setting out how you intend for each element to mature over time. An extract/example is shown below:

Partnering Maturity Matrix										
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Scoring Instructions: Each ROW represents a different aspect of partnering maturity. For each row please score TWICE as follows:										
Where we are now										
Where you believe we need to be for the next stage of the contract										
	Beginning		Developing		Performing		High performing		Excelling	
Mutual objective and goals	Leaders have their own goals, but do not know what they want to achieve together.		Leaders have shared their respective goals but there is no mutual objective for the partnership.		Throughout the partnership leaders understand each other's goals and share a clear mutual objective.		All individuals involved in the partnership understand the goals of each partner and are committed to the mutual objective.		All stakeholders understand the goals of each partner and are committed to the mutual objective.	
	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next
Leadership	Leaders act contractually and do not support or challenge collective performance.		Leaders occasionally raise performance issues but mainly focus on their own responsibilities.		Leaders work effectively across organisational boundaries.		Leaders work together to improve longer term partnership performance, actively challenging performance and removing the barriers to improvement.		Leaders develop joint policy that delivers transformational change and significant strategic benefits.	
	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next
Team structure	Team structure and individual roles are unclear.		Team structure and individual roles are discussed by leaders but are not agreed.		Team structure and individual roles are clear and collectively agreed by the partnership.		Team structure and individual roles are clear and the best people are selected from across the partnerships to fill them.		Team structure and individual roles are clear and adapt rapidly and effectively to the changing needs of the partnership.	
	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next
Decision making	Partners make decisions independently of each other.		Partners consult each other before making their own decisions.		Partners work together to make decisions, develop plans and manage risks.		Partners work together to identify and manage longer term risks and opportunities.		Partners make decisions and build plans together to pursue strategic opportunities.	
	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next
Conflict resolution	Issues are avoided leading to conflict and mutual blame without action to resolve them.		Issues are identified, discussed and managed as they arise.		Issues are identified, discussed openly and resolved together.		Potential issues are raised, discussed openly and resolved together using an agreed issue management process.		The toughest issues are used to transform understanding and create new learning through courageous leadership.	
	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next	Now	Next

You can see a more fully worked example [here](#).

## Leading Partnerships

Leading a partnership is inherently more complex than leading within a single organization, because you are dealing with more variables but have less direct control.

Scan	Relate	Act
Self Awareness / Emotional Intelligence		

From many years of working with strategic partnerships, the ‘extra’ qualities observed in those who succeed in leading partnerships include:

- Greater self-awareness and self-management than most
- Combination of confidence and humility
- Exceptional interpersonal skills
- Influencing – a wide range of influencing style; low need for formal power to get things done
- Intellectual agility – ability to see things from multiple perspectives, seeing under the surface and around the corner. Move between big picture and detail.

*Don't assign the person who 'doesn't quite fit your organization' to lead a partnership!*