

Partnerships: Why Some Work and Others Don't

Is partnership an overused word or do we need to consider it? If so, what are good and what are bad reasons to partner? What are the benefits and dangers? What are conditions for a successful partnership? And, what if it doesn't work? These and other issues will be covered in this workshop?

Hank Paulson, born and raised in Holland, spent 42 years working with church leaders throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Together with his wife and two children he also lived in Austria, USA and Czech Republic. From the beginning partnerships were an important part of a ministry he founded in 1971. After forty years he started 4D Ministries, to better focus on assisting and mentoring European leaders and to facilitate ministry partnerships.

1) What are some partnerships we can think of? (how about EA, ELF, local and international?)

2) What are the wrong reasons for a partnership?

3) What are good reasons to partner?

- a. Model unity among the brethren, to those inside and outside the church (1 Cor. 1)
- b. Maximize Kingdom resources (not duplicating and instead maximize finances, use of other's unique gifting and talents)
- c. Able to learn from each other
- d. Able to do things we couldn't do by ourselves
- e. Easier to function as if God is the owner and we serve in His harvest as co-laborers
- f. Sometimes easier to attract needed resources (people, finances, event approval of authorities, media coverage)
- g.
- h.

i.

j.

4) The difference between a “Joined Project” and a “Partnership”

- a. A joined project is often a short term commitment
- b. More task oriented
- c. A better opportunity to get to know each other and consider something more long term after it (long term and partner also means something different in various cultures)
- d. A joined project is like an orchestra

5) Paul speaks to Philemon as a partner (different from the way he addresses Timothy)

- a. A “dear friend and *fellow-worker*”, both being equal and *servng* the same Master (vs 2)
- b. In Paul’s prayer, he thanks God for Philemon bringing love, great joy and encouragement (vs7)

6) Partnership is relational and much like a marriage

- a. Partnerships require: much time + communication = trust. All three are foundational.

7) Questions to ask when we move towards a partnership:

- a. Do we know who we are? (mission, values, weaknesses and strengths) Do we know the strengths, weaknesses and reputation of our partner?
 - Two unhealthy partners seldom make one healthy one.
- b. Do we know the goal(s) of the partnership? Can we agree with the plan and the basic rules before we start?
- c. Are we in it for the right reason? Are we willing to contribute to the success of our partner? Is the partnership mutually transforming? Do we stimulate the other towards growth and maturity? (Eph.4). Are we willing to learn from our partner?
- d. Do we have mutual respect for each other and the organizations represented?
 - *...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2: 2-5 (NIV)*
- e. Does each one has a “partner facilitator” or “point person” responsible?
- f. Does the partnership (or do I) need a mentor?
- g. Are the organizational cultures compatible?
- h. Is enthusiastic support given by the top leadership in each partner organization? What would happen if the present partner facilitator leaves?

- i. Is the partnership willing and able to set and communicate goals, time lines and points of time for honest evaluation, keeping each other accountable?
 - j. Besides accountability within the partnership do we also promote accountability within the culture/denomination(s) we serve?
 - k. Is there an exit strategy? What happens if things change and we have to leave the partnership? (it's not "until death does us part". Paul separated from Barnabas: Acts 15:39)
 - l. Are we willing to share control and especially credit?
- 8) **How do we please God** (within in a very competitive world)?
- a. To act justly
 - b. To love mercy
 - c. To walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8 NIV)
- “When we think we have arrived, we have lost the way”** (Henri Nouwen)