



The Human Dimension

THE LEADER WITHIN

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"We help both people and productivity flourish by developing a positive culture of shared leadership."

We find improved performance is the reward for your investing in people.

The emphasis in THE LEADER WITHIN is on the changes and growth we make within ourselves, as leadership is basically a personal growth experience over time.

'For things to change first I must change.'

How to develop successful strategic alliances:

Increasingly we are required to build relationships which extend beyond our own team or business to achieve more.

A major cause of failure in partnership or alliances are the human factors. (Read ... we didn't get on).

Here are the key factors to ensure you understand the ground rules which apply.

1. Vision:

The project or alliance needs to be a subset of a larger vision for all involved. In other words, participants need to be big thinkers and tuned into current and emerging trends. In fact, joint project needs to be designed in such a way that it also makes the different parts of the business more progressive in how it thinks/does business in general, in addition, of course, to whatever the specific benefits of the project/alliance are.

It's essential that both parties believe that there IS something much bigger that can be created by the different parts of the organization working/learning together. So, faith in synergy as well as faith in the notion of possibility is a bare minimum. If people doubt, they hold back key information and don't give the project enough momentum to help it reach critical mass. Seeing something much bigger than the specific outputs of this alliance is key.

2. Trust:

Trust is created when the key parties are able to identify (and be completely up-front about) what they have to offer, what they don't have to offer and why they need the strategic alliance partnership. If the different teams are trying to use each other, without being fully informed about the realities and potentials, then each person or group is going to hold back and struggle for position, which creates distrust.

3. Flow:

Constant discussion between both parties is essential, through e-mail and conference calls, as well as receiving input from key sources outside of the two teams such as from higher management and/or the ultimate consumer/user of the project. Flow is generated when there is a vacuum -- when team members are thrilled about learning and perfecting instead of just looking good to each other.

4. Reporting:

Daily or weekly reports created by a separate/objective agreed upon/appointed person (called The Reporter) are essential to tracking what is REALLY being created between the two groups. If you let each team write up their progress, it could be slanted to impress people. If an outsider is writing it up each week (and managing/tracking the steps of the alliance project), then both teams are answering to a higher authority. Creativity and experimentation need help.

5. Testing:

Whatever the outcome is that has been defined, the project needs to be continually tested to make sure it works in the real world and that the real world wants to buy the project/joint venture. Focus groups aren't enough; the product needs to be tested with current clients to measure effectiveness and desirability. In other words, turn current clients into the groups R&D Team from the very beginning.

6. Ground rules:

A list of the agreements, timelines, and resources needed and ground rules between both the teams and the organizations involved in the alliance are essential. Issues of confidentiality, non-performance, deadlines, scope, outputs, ownership rights, worst-case scenarios, mutual efforts and cost-sharing are wisely developed by the team members themselves - this bonds both groups because they can honour promises.

7. Measurables:

What exactly will be the outputs of the different teams? Who does what? By when? What are the measures of success? How will the different elements in the alliance know they have a winner and that the project should be fast tracked? What are the tangible benefits? What are the intangible benefits? What will make it all worthwhile, even if it's not going very well?

8. Involvement:

All parts of the organisation should invite non-team members to join in the project or at least be kept up to date via e-mail. Many great contributors don't have the time to become directly involved, but their comments/outside views can advance or ensure the project's success. Alliances/joint projects are like memes and need to be spread as they are evolving so that people are aware of them all along instead of having to buy-in when its a fait accompli.

9. Identify the value added:

The project or strategic alliance must be something that will add value to the organisation's ability to serve its customers or the marketplace. The focus needs to be on the ultimate consumer/client of the product/project, not just the organisation's players.

The focus on the end user is critical as the whole point of strategic alliances is that it improves productivity and adds value to the delivery of our services and the customer experience.

Call to Action:

What are you doing to ensure there is trust and how are you contributing to a positive outcome?

What are the wider benefits to your organisation of this approach and how would this add value for them?

Have you implemented some method of tracking your agreements and progress against success measures or agreed outcomes?

Have you actually taken the step of having written -agreements between the different parts of the alliance. This will assist when there are disagreements, or there are changes in key people who can refer to the 'way we do business' documents.

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