



Building Successful Collaborative Relationships

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XPX Round Table*

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Steps to Building a Successful Collaborative Relationship

1. *Getting to know each other*

- Understand the person's business.
- Do some research, find colleagues you have in common (six degrees of separation).
- Identify differentiators. You may have to sell your partner to your clients.
- Get to know each other personally, make sure you like and trust each other.
- Meet multiple times.

2. *Figure out how you could best work together*

- Define what type of structure options would fit your businesses.
- Identify the areas of possible overlap or conflict (figure out how to deal with them beforehand, they will happen).

3. *Practice makes perfect*

- Try a small project together to test how well you work together. If you cannot find a client project, work on one within a professional organization or charity.
- Do a review after the project and discuss the both positive and problematic aspects of the process.
- Assess your own interest in pursuing this relationship. If you have concerns, **listen to what your intuition is telling you!**

4. *Preparation for further collaboration*

- Start with a loose collaboration, then formalize at a later date.
- Discuss expectations of the relationship and make sure they are aligned.
- Figure out how to determine the lead on any one project. There must be a leader.
- Define a process for making decisions.
- Know how payments will be structured on a joint project? What is the formula for a joint project? If it is a referral, is there a referral fee?
- Will you function as independents or under one entity?
- Building a more formal relationship, will require legal advice.

5. *Making it work*

- Make it seamless to client.
- Structure regular communication throughout the project.
- Keep the stages of work in written form to evaluate and review.
- Discuss how the joint effort is going. Is there too much direction or not enough? Do it during the project, so it is possible to resolve issues before they become serious.
- Get feedback from client.

- Make adjustments in how you work together.
- Check on the acceptability of the division of labor for both parties.
- Was the communication sufficient?
- Figure out what you could do better next time?
- Evaluate the potential of this relationship. Are there more benefits than problems?
- Do you want to go forward?
- Assess what is needed for this to be a successful ongoing working relationship.

6. *Joint business development*

- Brainstorm how you can promote a joint program.
- Define and develop a joint product.
- Share the risk and profit.
- Plan what you will do for the promotion.
- Promote to your respective networks.

Know Your Potential Partner

What will this person/company bring to the table? Make a list.

Define which areas, if any, could add value to your offerings.

Are there possible areas of overlap?

What are the common target markets? Could this person/firm open up new markets for you?

How could this person/firm add value to your customer/clients?

Could this firm/person contribute to the growth of your business?

Would there be a shared risk?

What would you expect from your partner? Does (s)he agree to your expectations?

What does your potential partner expect of this relationship? Is it realistic?

What are your articulated shared goals for collaboration?

Are your values aligned?

How does this person approach a project or new client? Does it fit with your style?

How well do you both communicate? Does your potential partner seem forthcoming?

Does the person/firm have a good reputation?

Do you like, respect and want to work with this person/firm? Why?

What is your gut feeling about the collaboration?

Presenters

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