

THE HONEYMOON IS OVER



How to Avoid Partnership Fatigue in the First 100 Days



Robin Power, from Affinity Maker™, explores four fundamentals to get new partnerships off to a strong start.

Situation:

"We have agreed who our partners are, how do we make it happen?"

This stage, called **Partnership Implementation**, involves building on the agreement reached and putting in place the structures and processes to make the partnership work, building towards the launch.

Watch out for the following symptoms which are

indications that all is not well at the early stages of partnership implementation:

- Expectations of early delivery success are oversimplified because the consequences of the new partnership ways of working have not been thoroughly thought through
- Early mistakes and problems get blown out of proportion
- People resort to previous prejudices
- New people come into the partnership team to deliver the project, optimistic but with little understanding of what the

- contract means or what lies behind it.
- People talk of the 'honeymoon being over'

There are a number of elements which require significant attention at the early stages of any partnership to maximise the chances of early smooth running and success:

- Operational Planning
- Partnership Management
- Operations Process Development & Set-Up
- Project Management

Operational Planning

The operational plan is a detailed blueprint that explains how the evolving partnership agreement will be executed to meet the stated objectives within the expected time frame and costs. The following are usually included:

- Project timetables and deliverables
- An agreed action plan that clearly shows which partner is responsible for what and gives agreed deadlines. Agree review dates for each action point, especially where the

outcome to be achieved is long term or ongoing.

- Jointly identified and agreed significant quick wins and also those areas not suitable for quick wins that need special attention.
- A joint 100 day partnering plan – defining:
 - Governance of the Partnership
 - Decision making hierarchy
 - Conflict resolution process
 - The Communications Plan and Infrastructure

In a partnership, it is particularly important to remember that:

- All partners must be involved in the operational planning process to feel a sense of commitment and 'ownership'
- Each individual will bring different skills and expectations to the task - managing this diversity may be time consuming but - at its best - it will add considerable value
- Each individual will need to consider the implications of the action plan for their own organisation and for their organisation's own planning process and priorities.



Partnership Management

Partnership Management is fundamental to any successful partnership and applies at all stages. Partnership Management includes hard tangible components like the communications plan and soft elements like relationship building and trust.

One key to a partnership's success is a well formed partnership communications strategy which articulates the main elements of education and communication. To understand what the partnership brings, the following are useful:

- Executive briefings to all client-facing staff
- Demos and training on capabilities
- Easily accessible support materials—both physical and online

Take time to build the extended network of partnering relationships between individuals and teams.

True partnership is based on a mutual investment. It's about meeting immediate, short-term needs, but also about sensing the future value that can be created. Neither party may yet know what the future holds, but a good CEO will have a hint, a hunch, a spark of possibility that makes it worth investing in one another's capability and success. To get to that stage, where you're truly investing in a shared future, building relationships is fundamentally important. Even at the highest level, personal relationships are vital. As a CEO you have to be willing to travel to meet the other side, to see the whites of their eyes, and not leave it to subordinates. As with all relationships, a great partnership takes time and effort, but the more you put in, the greater the rewards that you reap. Work on projects together, however small; socialise; share ideas; be open and honest with your partners; put yourself in their shoes and try and help them achieve what they want.

Start building trust with reliable dealings and actions.

The first step in putting the positive intentions of the partnership into action, is agreeing the immediate things that need to be done to build trust, and get the partnership on a stable footing. You can't leap into a long term trusting partnership without first proving your partner's ability and intentions, and having

evidence of reliable delivery. It's also vital, however, to be able to articulate and agree on the longer-term aims, goals and ambitions for the partnership. Partnerships are easier to enter than they are to leave, and the long-term nature of most partnership contracts needs to be seen as an opportunity, rather than a threat. This is, indeed, often the point of partnership; the very fact of being in a partnership can produce opportunities for the future that wouldn't be available to the individual parties involved. As long as they're discussed at the right time and in the right way, both long and short-term success can be maximised. To summarise this crucial topic of trust:

1. Partnerships stay alive because of the high levels of trust, which is unquestionably both the grease and the glue of successful partnerships. Only "strategic fit" is as important as "trust" in partnership formation. For partnerships to be successful, companies must develop respect and build trust.
2. As in any long-term relationship, openness and trust between partners (and in many cases clients, too) is essential if the partnership is to develop and grow over time. This requires considerable efforts where multiple country and business units are involved and should not be underestimated when embarking on the journey.

Have the right skills and authority at the table to make decisions.

Make sure the people put on your partnership have sufficient authority to decide much of the business at the meetings. They don't have to be at a certain (or similar) level within the organisation but they do need delegated authority. Also its important that the partners are getting people with the right skills in the right place to manage the partnership and that skill gaps are not ignored.

Operations Process Development & Set Up

As a starting point, requirements need to be established for setting up operations effectively and efficiently with partners. This includes designing, establishing and refining the organisational linkages.



There should be a constant focus is process simplification and streamlining.

Operations process development and set-up plays a crucial role, for example, where two organisations are partnering and the customer experience bridges the boundary between the two organisations. A partnership can be based on innovative thinking but if the delivery is poor, the success of the partnership will be jeopardised.

Project Management

“Don’t build a house on bad foundations.” Effective project management is about making sure the recently agreed partnership has the very best foundations it can have.

Project Management is essential to ensure that the accepted offer is brought to market as was originally conceived, within the agreed time frame, cost and quality. The project management for the early stage of a partnership usually covers product / service development, operational roll out implementation and launch. Launch includes the day-to-day coordination between brands project team and the partners’ project team.

What to Do if Things Aren’t Going Well

If you are experiencing partnership fatigue in the first 100 days of the partnership, one or more of the following review processes would help identify the root cause of your challenges:

- Partnering Strategy Review
- Partnership Audit & Healthcheck
- Benchmarking of Critical Success Factors
- Review of Partnering Framework
- Process Mapping
- 360 Degree Feedback
- Review of Implementation Plans
- Contract / Memorandum of Understanding and Principles (MOUP) Review
- Partnering and Individual Styles Assessment

Benefits of Good Partnership Implementation

The main benefit is the people involved in the partnership are focused on the right issues to deliver partnering success and to mitigate future partnering risks. There is an ability and a willingness for both sides to identify and deliver quick wins for the partnership.

As part of *Maximising the Partnership Value*, the next stage in the Partnership Lifecycle, ongoing negotiations and adjustments by the partners should be made as needed to bring forth the desired performance for the partnership. During implementation, ongoing performance monitoring of the original reasons and objectives for the partnerships are critical as there may be changes in the external competitive environment and internal workings of the partner organisations.

Robin Power is a partnering and alliancing specialist and is Managing Director – Asia Pacific at Affinity Maker Pty Ltd (www.affinitymaker.com), an international boutique consulting company that helps clients create new partnerships and alliances or make existing ones work better.

Affinity Engine™

The Affinity Engine™ was designed to aid organisations who fall into two categories: those looking to establish new partnerships or alliances to grow revenue, introduce innovative products or services or reduce costs. And secondly those that have a partnership or alliance at any stage, from concept through to full functioning and are experiencing challenges to get it to function optimally.

Making Partnerships and Alliances Work is all we do. Why step into an unknown and potentially risky venture unprepared when you could arm your organization with a series of tools and techniques that would ensure the greatest likelihood of success.

Affinity Maker™ is an international boutique consulting company that helps clients create new partnerships and alliances and make existing ones work better.



*Powering Partnerships
and Alliances*

To find out more about our services or to start using the Affinity Engine™ visit our web site www.affinitymaker.com

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