

“You shouldn’t get into partnerships unless you really want to, or really have to.”
Bernie Colterman, President, CMG Canada

Partnerships are a lot of hard work, but the rewards for successful collaborative arrangements can be significant. Here is a quick primer on the key components of partnerships and strategic alliances:

Definitions:

- Partnerships: Collaborative arrangements used to achieve common objectives.
- Strategic Alliances: Long-term relationships, tied to a mission or mandate.
- Sponsorships: An exchange of money or in-kind services for promotional services.

Characteristics of a Partnership

- Shared authority, responsibility and management;
- Joint investment of resources;
- Shared Liability or risk-taking;
- Collaboration on common causes;
- Mutual benefits (win-win situations).

Reasons for entering into Partnerships

- Strategic
- Service delivery
- Credibility
- Promotional
- Social change
- Revenue generating
- Competitive positioning

What Types of Partnerships does the Public Sector engage in?

- Other Government Departments (horizontal)
- NGOs
- Industry Associations
- Private Sector Companies
- Marketing Organizations
- Media

Why do different organizations partner?

Public Sector	Non-Profit	Private Sector
Address gaps/ access new markets	Increase reach and impact of messages	Access new markets for increased profit
More streamlined service to Canadians Improved delivery of messages	Bundle compatible services Increase awareness about mandate	Provide end-to-end client services Enhance brand in marketplace
Build consensus between all sectors Enhance quality of life for citizens	Move stakeholders to action Provide benefits or affect social change	Shorten sales cycle Enhance bottom line

What’s driving partnerships?

Strategic

- Access hard-to-reach markets
- Leverage expertise (e.g. research) and resources
- Enhance credibility – strengthen relationships with audience (customers)
- Address service delivery gaps
- Reduced or shared risk for programs/services
- Enhance image in the market
- Achieve critical mass penetration in a particular sector

Tactical

- Greater reach and frequency of messages to target markets
- Enhanced publicity and goodwill
- Allows for regional / sector customization
- Better reach than broad-based media
- Creates value-added promotional opportunities
- Creates profile opportunities for executives/elected reps
- Tie-in community – consensus building
- Leverage an organization’s communication network
- Differentiation from other service delivery organizations

The Bottom Line...We Partner:

- To make friends (similar values, honest, loyal, first to help, reliable, available, forgiving)
- To tie our organization to another that shares a common target audience
- To realize efficiencies and enhance the bottom line (financial or non-financial)

Key Trends in Partnerships

- Partnership/alliances emerging as a core business strategy
- Consolidation of products/services to better serve the customer
- Results-driven
- Formal agreements
- For public sector – transparent, well documented

Why do partnerships fail?

“As many as 50-75% of alliances fall short of expectations or are disbanded” Royal Bank

- Incompatible vision and/or goals
- Wrong cultural fit
- Failure to share information on business processes
- Inflexibility in re-designing business processes
- Unclear roles and responsibilities
- Lackluster commitment

Why do external organizations want to partner with the Public Sector?

- Source of funding
- Credibility
- Competitive advantage
- Added value for members
- Access to research and expertise

What are the Risks for the Public Sector?

- Conflict of interest or favouritism (perceived or real)
- Loss of credibility
- Reduced flexibility / control
- Blurring of accountabilities
- Public scrutiny
- Political fallout
- Difficulties with long-term commitments

Summary:

What Drives Successful Partnerships?

1. Clearly defined goals and objectives
2. Shared decision-making (at some level)
3. Strategies to achieve early success
4. Trust and openness
5. Contribution of sufficient resources
6. Accountability levels of buy-in, participation
7. Clear, simple agreements
8. Genuine commitment based on self-motivation
9. Each partner brings something unique to the table
10. Partnership presents an image of quality and stability

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